

THE MYSTICISM  
OF THE  
FOURTH GOSPEL.

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by

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## F O R E W O R D

The varying attitudes to the subject of mysticism taken by thinkers of equal repute may be illustrated by the remarks of two professors. To one of them, one of his students confided the fact that she was beginning the study of the fourteenth century mystics. "Ah", he said, "you have entered upon a wilderness". To another, I told the subject of this thesis. "I congratulate you", he said. "You have a subject that will edify your inner man, and thicken your preaching for years to come".

This essay, however, claims to contain no more than prolegomena to the subject which stands on its title page. Any treatment of the mysticism of the fourth gospel which could claim to be adequate, would assuredly give large space to those mystical movements which were contemporary with the writing of the Gospel - to Philo, to the mysteries, to the Hermetic writings - and to the mysticism, Hellenic, Hellenistic, Jewish and Oriental which

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preceded it. It would isolate at once those portions of the Gospel which could be called mystical and would then proceed to study them in the light of their environment.

But it seemed to me as I surveyed the field, that a preliminary task waited to be done. It has become customary for writers on mysticism, and on the Fourth Gospel alike, to speak of the Fourth Evangelist as a mystic. ("A mystic of the first rank among the earliest missionaries", says Miss Underhill.<sup>1</sup> "Perhaps the greatest of all mystics", says Canon Streeter.<sup>2</sup>) Scarcely anyone using this language, however, has taken the trouble to justify its use or to tell what he means by it. Miss Underhill, in her book "The Mystic Way", makes a not altogether successful attempt to justify it, and Canon Streeter, Dean Inge, Rufus Jones and others have made suggestions. It seemed to me that perhaps too much had been taken for granted. How could one study "the mysticism of the fourth gospel" until he had discovered whether it was legitimate to use the term mysticism in that connection? How could one expect to build a house when the ground had not been cleared?

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1. "Mysticism", p.543

2. "The Four Gospels", p.366

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I have confined myself, therefore, to the task, perhaps simpler, certainly less spectacular, but I think necessary, of clearing the ground. I have tried to isolate one by one those traits which are most characteristic of the mystical type of religion and to inquire in each case in how far that trait is also characteristic of John's Gospel. If the work is well done, it ought to be clearer in the future how far it is legitimate to speak of the Fourth Evangelist as a mystic, and what is meant when we do.

The greatest difficulty, of course, from the beginning was the vagueness with which the word, "mysticism" is used. I have used the word always as synonymous with "Christian mysticism", and have found its characteristics in that Christian mystic stream, from Plotinus to William Law, whose history is sketched by Miss Underhill in the appendix to her magnum opus.<sup>1</sup> In the mysticism of that stream I have found the norm with which to compare the gospel.

Questions, of course, at once arise. What right have I to take that stream as exhibiting the characteristics of mysticism better than some other or more accurately than all the mystic streams combined?

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1. "Mysticism", pp.541-562



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I have not claimed that it does. There are various ways of arriving at a definition. One way is to take all the things that have ever been called by the name you wish to define, and by a process of elimination to seek to determine what characteristic is common to them all. That course of procedure usually results in a definition so bare as to be useless. Another way is to take what seems to you the highest example of the thing to be defined, and make your definition fit that. But such a definition is always in danger of being too specialized. A third way is to take what seems to you a representative group of cases of that which you are studying and to build your definition on it.

The third method is the method I have followed. Granted that this main stream of Christian mysticism is not all of mysticism, nor yet, perhaps, mysticism at its highest, nevertheless it contains that of mysticism which is most relevant, and in it may be seen mysticism as it actually is. Whether that is what one ought to mean when he says "mysticism" let the doctors argue. In practice that is what most of us do mean. We mean the type of religion exhibited

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here. In how far, we ask, is the Fourth Evangelist in harmony with this?

But from the other side, also, a question rears its head. It is not now, have you included enough or the right things in your search for the characteristics of mysticism, but have you not included too much? There are very different kinds of people in this so-called "main stream of Christian mysticism". How do you know that those traits which you have selected are characteristic of all of them? Have you not in your generalizations created an "average mystic", whom all of them would disown at some point or other, who is neither flesh nor fowl nor good red herring? I can only say that I have tried not to make generalizations without adequate basis. Certainly not all mystics would possess all the characteristics of mysticism here set forth. But I have endeavored to set down as characteristic only those things which do seem to characterize the group as a whole. I can only hope that I have not failed too egregiously.

Finally, one other question. Most of these mystics belong to the Roman Catholic communion and to the middle Ages. May not many of these characteristics

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be the result of these facts, rather than essential mystic traits? Undoubtedly this is so. It is extraordinarily difficult to distinguish the essentials of a movement from the accidents of time and place. But if we discover that the Fourth Evangelist is like these mystics in enough points to establish a kinship and yet differs in particulars, perhaps this fact in itself will be a partial indication of what is essential in the religion of these mystics and what is due to the accident of time.

I have merely sought in this thesis to determine by comparing John's Gospel with the teaching of the generally accepted mystics, in how far and in what respects it is right to speak of the Fourth Evangelist as a mystic. Nothing further has been attempted or expected. Comparisons, however, are sometimes illuminating. If as a result of this one, either mysticism or the Fourth Gospel should be better understood the making of it will have been so much the more worth while.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MYSTICISM

"In mystical theology, the soul holds loving converse with God in his loving-kindness, to the end that it may unite itself with him." - St. Francis de Sales

He would indeed be a hardy person who would venture to add another to the many definitions which have been made of mysticism. Leaving aside entirely those for whom the word means the occult, the vague and dreamy, or the supernatural, there are scores of definitions of mysticism as a type of religion. Nearly thirty years ago, Dean Inge in the first appendix to his Bampton lectures<sup>1</sup> collected a long series of them, and with very little trouble a list as long or longer could be made today, consisting entirely of definitions which have been composed since that time.

A few are here subjoined, beginning with Dean Inge's own.

1. Inge (Christian Mysticism, Lecture I).

"Religious mysticism may be defined as the attempt to realize the presence of the living God in the soul and in nature, or more generally, as the attempt to realize in thought and feeling, the immanence of the temporal in the eternal and of the eternal in the temporal". (p5). He then lists four propositions or articles of faith which he takes to be fundamental for mysticism. These are:

(1) "The soul (as well as the body) can see and perceive". (p.6)

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1. "Christian Mysticism".

(2) "Man, in order to know God must be a partaker of the divine nature." (p.6)

(3) "Without holiness, no man may see the Lord". (p.7)

(4) "The true hierophant of the mysteries of God, is love". (p.8)

2. William James (The Varieties of Religious Experience, Lectures XVI and XVII.)

James proposes the famous "four marks which, when an experience has them, may justify us in calling it mystical". These are:

(1) Ineffability

(2) Noetic quality

"These two characters will entitle any state to be called mystical . . . Two other qualities which are less sharply marked but usually found are:

(3) Transcendency

(4) Passivity." (pp.380-381)

3. Von Hügel (The Mystical Element of Religion).

On the Experimental and Mystical side "religion is felt rather than seen or reasoned about, is loved and lived rather than analyzed, is action and power, rather than external fact or intellectual verification" (I, p.53). Baron von Hügel nowhere puts a definition of mysticism into so many words, but his treatment is particularly valuable for the insistence that mysticism is an element of religion, as well as a type.

4. Rufus Jones (Studies in Mystical Religion, Introduction).

"I shall use the word mysticism to express the type of religion which puts the emphasis on immediate awareness of relation with God, on direct and intimate consciousness of the Divine Presence. It is religion in its most acute, intense, and living stage." (p. xv)

5. A.B. Sharpe (Mysticism: Its True Nature and Value).

Mysticism is "the experience, real or supposed, of actual quasi-physical contact with God". (p.6)

6. A.S. Pringle-Pattison (Encyclopedia Britannica eleventh edition, in loc).

"Mysticism is a phase of thought, or rather perhaps of feeling, which . . . appears in connexion with the endeavor of the human mind to grasp the divine essence or the ultimate reality of things,

and to enjoy the blessedness of actual communion with the highest." (vol.XIX, p.123)

7. Evelyn Underhill (Mysticism, Chap. IV).

"Mysticism, in its pure form, is the science of ultimates, the science of union with the Absolute, and nothing else, and the mystic is the person who attains to this union, not the one who talks about it." (p.86) Then she, like William James, proposes four "rules or notes which may be applied as tests to any given case which claims to take rank amongst the mystics". These are:

(1) True mysticism is active and practical, not passive and theoretical.

(2) Its aims are wholly transcendental and spiritual.

(3) The One is for the mystic not merely the Reality of all that is, but also a living and personal object of Love.

(4) Living union with this One - which is the term of his adventure - is a definite state or form or enhanced life." (p.96)

Later (5) is added "True mysticism is never self-seeking". (p.109)

8. W.K.Fleming (Mysticism in Christianity, Chapter I).

Eight marks are here noted:

(1) "Mysticism is experimental". (p.9)

(2) "The mystic is athirst for God." (p.10)

(3) "Therefore, because he is in love with the Divine, Immediacy of Communion is the mystic's longing." (p.10)

(4) "This longing for contact with the Absolute led directly to a repeated emphasis of belief in the One-ness of God." (p.11)

(5) "To this root conviction . . . . the mystics added the corollary of belief in the unity of all existence in God." (p.11)

(6) "But in the systematized mystical theology of the later medieval Church, the world in which God is primarily reflected was the world of the human soul." (p.13)

(7) "Mystics in general taught the scala perfectionis, the ladder of perfection." (p.18)

(8) "The mystical temperament is ~~marked~~ out by the capacity for the experience of ecstasy." (p.24)

9. E.Herman (The Meaning and Value of mysticism)

"Mysticism is a direct inward apprehension of the Divine", (p.17)

10. Charles A. Bennett (A Philosophical Study of Mysticism)

"Mysticism is a way of life in which the conspicuous element is the immediate experience of God." (p.7)

11. James Bissett Pratt (The Religious Consciousness, Chapter XVI)

"I propose, therefore, that for our purposes, mysticism be defined as the sense of the presence of a being or reality through other means than the ordinary perceptive processes or the reason." (p.337)

"Religious mysticism differs from other forms in that it has a religious object." (p.338)

12. Thouless (An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion, Chapter XV)

"A mystic is a person who experiences a particular kind of mental prayer". (p.226) This particular kind of mental prayer is named contemplation and contemplation is defined as "the ineffable perception of God," "the experimental knowledge of God's indwelling and presence within us", "the direct apprehension of God". (p.226)

13. Selbie (Psychology of Religion, Chapter XIII)

"In its barest form mysticism stands for that type of religion in which there is an immediate apprehension of and communion with the ultimate reality, or God." (p.245)

14. Leuba (The Psychology of Religious Mysticism Chapter I)

The term "mystical" will mean for us "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." (p.1)

15. Otto - (The Idea of the Holy)

"Essentially mysticism is the stressing to a very high degree, indeed the overstressing, of the non-rational or supra-rational elements in religion" (p.22) Later he says, "A characteristic common to all types of mysticism is the Identification, in different degrees of completeness of the personal self with the transcendent Reality . . . . . Identification alone, however, is not enough for



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Mysticism; it must be Identification with the Something that is at once absolutely supreme in power and reality and wholly non-rational". (p.22)

The reason for this plethora of definitions is probably to be found in the fact noted by Professor Pringle-Pattison at the beginning of his Encyclopedia Brittanica article,<sup>1</sup> that in the case of mysticism exact definition is practically impossible. In the nature of the case, no definition is likely to be wholly satisfactory. Each man makes his own, which satisfies him and no one else.

For this difficulty which everyone finds in defining mysticism there are, I think, two main reasons.

1. The first is that mysticism cannot be sharply distinguished from other types of religion. It shades off on every side into religion's main body.

It is nearly as difficult to define religion as to define mysticism itself. But if we say that religion usually, if not always, has to do with some sort of communion or intercourse between man and that which he takes to be Divine, we see at once why it is difficult to distinguish sharply between mystics and other religious folk. For mysticism also has to do with communion between men and their God. Indeed, Rufus Jones is not far wrong when he says that mysticism is simply religion at its "most

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1. "Mysticism", Encyclopedia Brittanica (11th edition), volume XIX, p.123

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Mysticism; it must be Identification with the Something that is at once absolutely supreme in power and reality and wholly non-rational". (p.22)

The reason for this plethora of definitions is probably to be found in the fact noted by Professor Pringle-Pattison at the beginning of his Encyclopedia Brittanica article,<sup>1</sup> that in the case of mysticism exact definition is practically impossible. In the nature of the case, no definition is likely to be wholly satisfactory. Each man makes his own, which satisfies him and no one else.

For this difficulty which everyone finds in defining mysticism there are, I think, two main reasons.

1. The first is that mysticism cannot be sharply distinguished from other types of religion. It shades off on every side into religion's main body.

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1. "Mysticism", Encyclopedia Brittanica (11th edition), volume XIX, p.123

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acute, intense, and living stage".<sup>1</sup> When that which is central to most religion, the desire of man for communion with the Divine, reaches a certain stage of intensity and passion, then you have the beginnings of religious mysticism.

But the religious man does not take on wholly new traits the moment he steps across that line. He is likely to believe much as he has been wont to believe, he may continue to act much as he has been wont to act, with the result that among the mystics there is found a most bewildering variety of theological beliefs and ecclesiastical programs. One may be inclined to attribute to a man's mysticism what is really the result of his religious environment. One may, on the other hand, find it difficult to put into words just what it is that separates him from his brother religionist with whom he has so much in common. Mysticism is not only a type of religion, but in its essence it is an element of most religion. That is one thing which makes definition difficult.

2. And, secondly, mysticism is difficult to define because it is a spirit rather than a system. There are systems which are called mystical, systems of philosophy and systems of spiritual discipline. But one does not become a mystic either by accepting a so-called mystic

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1. "Studies in Mystical Religion", p.XV.

philosophy or by following the "mystic way". Plotinus is the mystic philosopher par excellence, but there are many neo-Platonists who are not mystics. St. Theresa's "Interior Castle" and "The Ascent of Mount Carmel" by St. John of the Cross are manuals of the mystic way, but many devout followers of these two would scarcely be called mystics. Mysticism in its essence is not Doing so much as Being, not thought or act, so much as feeling, not system so much as spirit. You can walk around a system and view the walls thereof. A spirit is notoriously hard to catch in any cage of words.

But while these difficulties may warn us away from fruitless attempts at exact definition, they will not excuse us for using the word mysticism carelessly. We are to be making an effort to discover in how far this word is applicable to the Fourth Gospel. What are the characteristics of mysticism which we must find in the gospel if we are to conclude that it is legitimate to use the word in that connection?

1. It is illuminating to notice that in practically every definition given above, one idea recurs, the idea of immediate communion of the human with the Divine. It is "the attempt to realize the presence of the living God". (Inge). It contains a "noetic quality", a quality of immediate awareness (James) . The emphasis is on "immediate

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awareness of relation with God" (Jones). "Quasi-physical contact with God" (Sharpe). "To enjoy the blessedness of actual communion with the highest" (Pringle-Pattison). "The science of union with the Absolute" (Underhill). "Immediacy of communion" (Fleming). "Direct inward apprehension of the Divine" (Herman). "The immediate experience of God" (Bennett). "The sense of the presence of a being or reality" (Pratt). "The ineffable perception of God" (Thouless). "Immediate apprehension of and communion with the ultimate reality" (Selbie). "Any experience taken by the experiencer to be a contact or union of the self with a larger-than-self" (Leuba). "Identification of the personal self with the transcendent Reality" (Otto).

We are, then, almost certainly correct in taking that as the fundamental characteristic of mysticism. The work of no religious teacher can properly be called mystical unless it has at its heart a belief in and an experience of the closest sort of relation between the human and the Divine. Communion is never a strong enough word for the mystics. "Union" is what they seek and union is what they think they obtain. It is this for which we shall look first in our study of John's Gospel.

2. About the second matter of which I wish to

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speak, there is less unanimity. Miss Underhill is emphatic in her contention that the true mystic is moved in this quest for union solely by the motive of love.<sup>1</sup> Other writers give love a less exclusive place. Dean Inge, for example, with his eye on the philosophic mystics gives large place to the desire for knowledge,<sup>2</sup> which Miss Underhill dismisses as leading to theosophy or magic, not mysticism, and Professor Leuba finds various self-regarding motives mixed with the motive of love.<sup>3</sup> But whether love be given an all-exclusive place or not, I think it is right to say, secondly, that the characteristic emotion of the mystic in the presence of the Divine is the emotion of love.

One or two questions arise.

(a). What are we to say of the mystics who think of God in impersonal terms? Can their emotion in the presence of the Divine be called love? It is difficult for us who always think of love in connection with the personal to see how this can be, and yet perhaps a reference to two of the mystics least personal in their thought of God will prove enlightening.

(1). Plotinus. Plotinus does not think of the Divine as personal in **any** ordinary sense. He calls It

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1. "Mysticism", pp.83-85

2. Cf. chapter I of Inge's "Plotinus".

3. "Psychology of Religious Mysticism", Chapter V.

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"the One, the Principle of the Universe, the Good and the First";<sup>1</sup> he says that It is "difficult to tell of, since even Existence and the Ideas resist our penetration, though all our knowing is based upon the Ideas";<sup>2</sup> he calls it "this Wonder, this One, to which in verity no name may be given".<sup>3</sup> One would say that such a conception of the Divine is too bare to arouse love. And yet, when Plotinus writes of his "vision of the Supreme", what is the emotion suggested? I very much mistake, if it is not love.

"The Soul restored to Likeness", he says, goes to its Like and holds of the Supreme all that Soul can hold . . . . . It abandons Being to become a Beyond-Being when its converse is in the Supreme. He who knows himself to have become such, knows himself now an image of the Supreme; and when the phantasm has returned to the Original, the journey is achieved. Suppose him to fall again from the Vision, he will call up the virtue within him and seeing himself all glorious again, he will take his upward flight, once more, through virtue to the Divine Mind, through the Wisdom There to the Supreme. And this is the life of the Gods, and of Godlike men, a life without love of the world, a flight of the Alone to the Alone".<sup>4</sup>

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1. Mackenna - "Plotinus", Volume I, p.156

2. Ibid, p.156

3. Ibid, p.142

4. Ibid, pp.157-158

The quality of the emotion here exhibited differs from what it would be if the Object of the soul's longing were personal, but I have not been able to discover a better name for it than love. It is the cry of the Soul, homesick for the Eternal and where Heimweh is, love is never far away.

(2). The same phenomenon may be observed in the "Mystical Theology" of Dionysius, the Areopagite. Dionysius carried to its extreme the negative way of apprehending the Divine. He calls God "Him whom neither being nor understanding can contain";<sup>1</sup> he says that He transcends all positive attributes of the universe, "wherefore there is no contradiction between affirming and denying that It (or He) has them, inasmuch as It precedes and surpasses all deprivation, being beyond all positive and negative distinctions";<sup>2</sup> for him God is "wholly Unknowable".<sup>3</sup> It would seem that here, if ever, philosophic abstraction has spirited away all that one could love.

But in this same chapter, Dionysius writes of his experience. "Through these things His incomprehensible presence is shown walking upon those heights of His holy places, which are perceived by the mind; and then It breaks forth, even from the things that are beheld and

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1. Rolt, "Dionysius", p.191

2. Ibid, p.193

3. Ibid, p.194



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those that behold them, and plunges the true initiate into the Darkness of Unknowing wherein he renounces all the apprehensions of his understanding and is enwrapped in that which is wholly intangible and invisible, belonging wholly to Him that is beyond all things and to no one else (whether himself or another), and being through the passive stillness of all his reasoning powers united by his highest faculty to Him that is wholly Unknowable, of whom thus by a rejection of all knowledge, he possesses a knowledge that exceeds his understanding."<sup>1</sup> The soul has plunged into the bare and fearsome dark, and lo, it is not repellent, but there is a warmth of enfoldment there like that of a lover in the arms of his Beloved. "Belonging wholly to Him that is beyond all things and to no one else" - they are the very words of love in this unlikely setting.

It appears, then, that even the thought of God in impersonal terms does not keep out of mysticism the emotion of love or something close akin. We therefore propose as the second characteristic of mysticism, the presence in some form or other of the emotion of love.

(b) But a second question is raised by Otto's reminder<sup>2</sup> that the characteristic emotion of the mystics is wrapped up with that which he calls "creature-feeling". Is love the proper name for a feeling that frequently has in it so much of awe?

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1. Rolt, "Dionysius" p.194

2. In "Das Heilige"

If by love be always meant the quality of emotion expressed by the term, erotic, then the word is no more adequate to express the emotion Dr. Otto has in mind than it is to express the Heimweh of the mystic philosopher. But love will include Heimweh, and love will also include this passionate adoration that looks up as from an immeasurable depth toward its Object. The feeling of an exile for his home, the feeling of a Bridegroom for his Bride, the feeling of a creature for the Benefactor who showers it with all things good, the quality of these is different, but all of them are Love. Indeed, the emotion which we know as love frequently consists of all of them at once. Love is a complex emotion, far richer than any single manifestation of it reveals. He understands mysticism but poorly who has not heard the mystics sound in their thought of God the entire diapason of love.

3. The third characteristic of mysticism has to do with the mystics' conception of God. Is there any characteristic mystic God-concept? At first sight it appears that there is not. Put Plotinus and Madame Guyon side by side, or Dionysius and William Blake - what possible element can be discovered in common in their ways of conceiving God? It seems as though mystics differed quite as much in that matter as religious people generally.

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And yet further thought will show that there is one fact concerning God about which all mystics must agree. God must be a God who can dwell within the human soul. This will become obvious if it is remembered for a moment that the essential characteristic of mysticism is its belief in the possibility of Divine-human union. There can be no union with a God who can not dwell within. Indeed there can be no union unless the Divine is already in some measure within the soul. I would say, if it were not so likely to be misunderstood, that the characteristic mystic doctrine concerning God is the doctrine of divine immanence. If immanence is not thought of as necessarily opposed to transcendence, it will, I think, be safe to say so.

The mystic predilection for the doctrine of divine immanence shows itself plainly in the tendency, so frequently marked among the mystics, to pantheism. It is not necessary to labor that point. It is what one would expect and the expectation is justified.

But even where there is no danger of pantheism because the idea of the personality of God is firmly held, this mystic doctrine of divine immanence modifies the conception of personality. It is perfectly possible for a mystic to believe in the personality of God. It is not possible for a mystic to think of God as "just another Person beside him-

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self", as much outside of him and separate from him as the stranger whom he jostles on the street. Other than himself, God may be. Entirely outside him, God never is. In the fact that he ceases to think of personality as impermeable the personalist who is also a mystic differs from at least some other believers in a personal God.

And in the same way, those mystics who insist most upon the Divine transcendence differ from non-mystical upholders of the same doctrine in the presence of a belief in the Divine Within.

There is a school of mystics, of whom the best-known is Dionysius the Areopagite, who carry the belief in Divine transcendence so far that God is placed above everything known and can only be approached along the via negativa - the way of denial. It would seem impossible that here there could be anything corresponding to what I have called the characteristic mystic doctrine of the Divine Within. I have said that I hesitated to use the word immanence because I did not wish to oppose it to transcendence. But it is worth noting - though the point will be discussed in a later chapter - that our language is poor just at this point. We have only one word to do the work of two. We use the word "transcendence" to mean aboveness. That is its root meaning. But when we oppose it to imma-

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nence, we think of it as meaning withoutness. Withoutness and aboveness, however, are not synonymous. Withoutness is a spatial term, as is immanence or withinness. Aboveness may be a spatial term (originally, of course, it is) but it is also qualitative. If transcendence means withoutness, it moves on the same level as immanence. Then there is point to the question whether or not they conflict. But if it means aboveness in the qualitative sense, then it moves on a different level. And in that case talk of its conflicting with the idea of immanence is irrelevant.

But in its origin, at least, this mystic doctrine of divine transcendence moves on the latter level. It is a purely qualitative matter. It arises out of the mystic's adoring love. God is to him above all things in value - that is what he means by the *via negativa*. God cannot be spoken of in terms of this, or this, or that because He is so much greater than these things that it would be absurd.

Perhaps this is the way all doctrines of Divine transcendence begin, by the instinct that evaluates the Divine far above all earthly things. If so, they soon become for the non-mystical mind spatial as well as qualitative. God is far, far away - in place as well as value. But for the mystic this transition is not made. If he uses spatial images, and there is no doubt that he does, it is

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only by implication from the realm of value. The soul may be represented as going on a long journey outside itself, but the journey does not really differ from that of the soul which goes within. Both without and within are for him picture-words which have lost their spatial significance. At the end of the mystic journey there is always the same God, the God who dwells within. The mystic may seem through reverence to be putting God farther and farther away. Actually he knows that on occasion He can be nearest of the near. And that is what makes him a mystic.

4. Characteristic, also, of the mystics, though not always schematized according to a single pattern, is what is known as "the mystic way". It is the way that leads to union with God, the way from the condition in which the soul is to the condition in which the mystic experience of union becomes possible. Divided in the simplest manner it consists of three stages, purgation, contemplation, and union. At each of these we must look for a moment.

a. Purgation. The mystic has sometimes been accused of having a deficient doctrine of sin. And where the mystic is also a philosopher, this is likely to be true. For the tendency of the mystical philosopher to exalt God as the One Reality, leads him to think of sin habitually in negative terms.

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But practically, there is no more doughty fighter with sin than the mystic. His consuming ambition is to reach God and be united with Him and at the very beginning of his quest, sin, black and menacing, stands in the way. "Never did eye see the sun unless it had first become sunlike."<sup>1</sup> Sin, usually identified with the lower Self, must be purged away before any progress can be made.

The process of purgation is a process of self-discipline. Not all mystics go about it in the same way, but the methods ordinarily followed may be classified into two, the positive and the negative. The positive would include all those in which something is done to the self to render it tractable, from the most horrible self-mutilations and tortures, through the doing of distasteful things, down to the mere practice of a spiritual gymnastic. The negative would include self-denials - fastings, the denial to the self of its own will, the practices of poverty and chastity. The mystic is not always an ascetic, though very frequently he is. But there has never been a mystic who had not in some way conquered sin at the beginning of his course and become the master of himself. The entrance to the mystic way is always by purgation and only those who have become humble walk very far along the path.

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1. Mackenna, "Plotinus", volume I, p.89

b. Contemplation. The second stage of the mystic way is known as the *via contemplativa*. Thouless makes it the definitive mark of mysticism, and chronologically it fills up most of the way, overlapping the purgative stage on the one hand and reaching its climax in the unitive stage on the other. It would be a mistake to suppose that all mystics follow any particular contemplative discipline, but it is not wrong to say that all mystics **are** by nature contemplatives, however they express it or however more than that they may be.

But what is contemplation? The word is defined by Miss Underhill as "a self-forgetting attentiveness, a profound concentration, a self-merging, a real communion between the seer and the seen".<sup>1</sup> It might, provisionally at least, be called a passive concentration on the Divine. Mystics, as a class, are profoundly sceptical about the powers of accomplishment of either the senses or the reason. Not that they necessarily despise either of these. The senses do enable us to see the outer world, but it is only as with a veil that the outer world reveals to us God. The reason enables us to apprehend many things which the senses cannot reach, but God transcends the reason and cannot finally be apprehended by it. Knowledge of the Supreme, says

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1. "Mysticism", p.360



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the mystic, is not the result of the activity of either of these ordinary ways of gaining knowledge. But if when you have reached the limit of effectiveness of both the senses and the reason, you will lull them both to sleep ("Close", says the *Theologia Germanica*, "the left eye and open the right eye of the soul"<sup>1)</sup>) and in this state of quiet concentration gaze into the Unseen, waiting alert and eager but patiently for the vision, assuredly it will come. This quiet concentration, the soul aflame as the mystic's soul is with love, but waiting for the Divine to reveal itself, penetrates deeper into Reality than the restless intellect ever could.

An interesting statement of the case for the contemplation of the loving heart as over against the activity of the reason is found in the anonymous mystical work known as "The Cloud of Unknowing" (Miss Underhill's edition, p.76): "But yet all reasonable creatures, angel and man, have in them each one by himself, one principal working power, the which is called a knowledgeable power, and another principal working power, the which is called a loving power. Of the which two powers, to the first, the which is a knowledgeable power, God that is the maker of them is evermore incomprehensible; and to the second, the which is the loving power, in each one diversely He is all comprehensible to the full." Compare also the later statement in the same work, "By love He may be gotten and holden, but by thought of understanding never".

There are many ways of putting the soul into this condition of receptivity - contemplative disciplines, they would be called - some of them worked out into much detail, but none of them are essential to mysticism. What is essential

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1. "Theologia Germanica", Chapter VII.

is belief in and practice of some form of contemplation, the nature which not only looks and reasons, but waits and listens as well.

Various questions arise in connection with the mystic's belief in contemplation, questions concerning the validity of his assumption that there is a more effective way of apprehending reality than the way of reason, which can only be dealt with in a later chapter. But two matters must be referred to here.

(1). One is the use which was made above of the word "passive". By this it is not meant that contemplation is a vague and empty dreaminess. The "lulling to sleep" of senses and reason does not mean the putting of the whole being into a comatose state. Within the quiet temple, the soul itself waits and watches. "Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat". The expression used above, "passive concentration" expresses as well as I know how, the combination of activity and passivity, of alertness and waiting that characterizes the contemplative state. Mysticism leads in the direction of quietism, to be sure, but mysticism and quietism are not synonymous.

Nor must it be supposed that the mystic who thus makes use of the contemplative discipline does not also pray as other people pray. The mystic does make use of ordinary

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non-contemplative prayer. But even so, mystic prayer is distinguished from ordinary prayer by its less tendency to the petitionary form. "Whose are the prayers God always hears?" asks Meister Eckhart. And he answers, "Who worship God as God, God hears. But he who worships God for worldly goods, worships not God: he worships what he worships God for and employs God as his servant for the getting of it. As St. Augustine puts it, 'What thou dost love thou dost worship: true prayer, real prayer is nothing but loving: what one loves, that one prays to'. Hence no one prays to God aright but he that prays to God for God without a thought of aught but God."<sup>1</sup> There is little of the begging element in mystic prayer. But neither is it supine waiting. Rather it is the active preparation of the soul that God may enter in.

(2). The other matter is the matter of the mystic psychology. Most mystics have believed - their certainty that the divine and human can come into contact leads them to do so - that there is a point of divinity within man through which, as it were, the Divine without finds entrance. It is the eye of the soul, sometimes called its apex or its ground, sometimes the Fünklein or divine spark. Mystics have differed as to whether this divine spark was inborn

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1. Meister Eckhart, pp.426-427

or implanted, but in some form or other belief in it is a very common characteristic of mysticism.

c. Union. The mystic way reaches its climax in the experience of union. The soul is lost in God, say the mystics, "like a drop of water in a cask of strong wine". This language has led some people to question whether the teaching of mysticism does not do violence to human personality. But a closer study of the mystics shows that words like these are not to be taken as statements of fact. The mystic does not believe that a man's individuality is lost when he has become one with God. He is only expressing in picture language the intimacy of his relation with the Divine. In the moment of his great experience of God he feels as though he were being lost in the ocean of the Divine love and it is the ineffability of his experience that he exhausts the resources of language to describe.

But the experience of union itself, can we make any generalizations concerning it? The experience of union must not be confused with the unitive life which follows it. The unitive life, which may be of long duration is the new level to which the steep incline of the mystic way has led. But the experience of union with the Divine is transient and ineffable. It comes but seldom and lasts not long.

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There are those who would contend that only the psychically abnormal have it. And there can be no question that it is frequently, perhaps usually, accompanied by such experiences as vision, audition, and trance. But to lay such emphasis as the Roman Catholic church ordinarily does upon these extraordinary psychic manifestations would seem to be unjustified. In the lives of the great philosopher-mystics, for example, there is very little that could be called in any way abnormal.

Better is it to say with Fleming<sup>1</sup> that what must characterize the mystic is "the capacity for ecstasy", the power, that is, to be lifted out of oneself in the presence of a great experience. Only people who are thus emotionally sensitive are of the mystic type, but the psychic accompaniments, while common, are not essential to mysticism.

5. As a result of the mystic's contemplative life and particularly of his climactic experience of union, he lays claim to a knowledge which other men do not possess, a deeper knowledge, a more exact insight into truth. *μύστικός* probably means an initiate, one who has a knowledge of things that are otherwise dark,<sup>2</sup> and the word, "enlightenment" and the use of the light symbolism are common in mystic literature. It will be necessary, later, for us to study this claim and to ask whether it is new knowledge which the mystic attains

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1. "Mysticism in Christianity", p.24

2. Compare Inge "Christian Mysticism", p.4

through this power beyond reason, or only new syntheses of old knowledge, and greater certainty. But for the present it is sufficient to notice, with James and others, that this claim to knowledge is a prominent mystic characteristic.

6. A sixth characteristic of mysticism is noted by Récéjac in his "Essay on the bases of the mystic knowledge". "Mysticism", he says, "is the tendency to draw near to the Absolute in moral union by symbolic means".<sup>1</sup> To many this mystic predilection for symbols has been a source of irritation. It has seemed as though the mystic were an esotericist, talking in riddles to confuse the non-mystical, hiding his meaning in a tangle of obscure images.

But so to judge is entirely to misunderstand the spirit of mysticism. The mystic does not desire to be obscure. On the contrary, he is anxious to be understood. But, as we have already observed, he has his own difficulties with language. The mystic is struggling to tell of an effable experience, trying to put into words thoughts and feelings that are essentially inexpressible. And he turns to the language of symbol and picture as the only language that even begins to meet his needs. The symbol expresses what words cannot. Its connotations convey meanings that could be conveyed in no other way.

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1. Récéjac (translated by Upton) p.64

In practically every mystic, then, sometimes restrained, sometimes running riot this tendency to symbolism may be observed. Not every symbolist is a mystic; but every mystic is, in greater or less degree, a symbolist.

The love of symbolism explains in large measure the frequent mystic delight in the sacraments. It would seem logical that mysticism should take the road it took with George Fox and repudiate the sacraments as external substitutes for that reality of inward union with which alone men ought to be satisfied. Most mystics, however, have tended in precisely the opposite direction. They have exceeded other men in their devotion to the sacraments. And the reason seems to be that for them the sacrament is never in danger of becoming a substitute for the inner experience, while its unique ability to symbolize the inexpressible answers to the mystic's sense of need.

Whether this love for the symbolic explains the mystic's equally unexpected devotion to the Church, I do not know. The mystic makes a poor ecclesiastic but a good institutionalist. We shall be saying later that this is partly due to his need for protection. But it may also be due in part to his feeling that the visible Church symbolizes a Reality greater than itself.

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7. Indeed, we are here led to a seventh mystic trait. This is the tendency to look not at, but through, everything external, to regard the outward as of little value in itself, only significant as it half reveals and half conceals the Reality behind.

This tendency is apparent, for example, in the mystic attitude to nature. "Mystics are utterly oblivious to nature", say some critics, thinking of the mystic advice to close the eyes of the body that the eyes of the soul may see, thinking of St. Bernard riding a whole day along the shores of Lake Lemān and never once lifting his eyes to its beauty. "To mystics all nature is the garment of God", say other critics, pointing for confirmation to St. Francis of Assisi and to mystical poets like Wordsworth. Which are right? Both are, for mystics differ quite as much as other men in their sensitiveness to nature's beauty. But this is the generalization that one can make: When mystics love nature, they love it not for its own sake but for the Divine Beauty of which it is both the expression and the garment. They do not look at nature alone, but through it.

This tendency is apparent, as well, in the mystic attitude to history. There are those who say that to the mystic, history is negligible. This is scarcely true.

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But what is true is that for the mystic, the succession of historical events is not important in itself. The mystic cannot view events as isolated. Always they are important for their relation to eternity, for the eternal Truths which they reveal. Baron von Hügel described this way of looking at history in unforgettable language when he said (speaking, as it happens, of John's Gospel), "There is everywhere a striving to contemplate history sub specie aeternitatis, and to englobe the successiveness of man in the simultaneity of God".<sup>1</sup>

8. And, finally, characteristic of mysticism is the special quality of life which it develops. It is hard to make a composite photograph and have it look like any individual, but these traits seem to me predominant in the character of the mystics.

a. Peace. The contemplative manner of life, the insight into Reality, the conviction of the rest behind motion and the Eternity beyond time - these make for tranquillity of spirit.

"And I smiled to think God's greatness  
Flows around our incompleteness,  
Round our restlessness, His rest."<sup>2</sup>

This is the authentic mystic note.

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1. Article "John, Gospel of St." - Encyclopedia Britannica volume XV, p.454

2. Mrs. Browning

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b. Joy. The mystic is not the man to whom we would naturally turn as an example of the joy of living. He is too introspective, we think, too much aloof from the activities of life, too great a friend to suffering. But it may be questioned whether the joy that rises from external circumstance is as deep-rooted as the joy that comes from being in tune with the Divine. At any rate, if the former is joy, the latter is joy also. "In the beginning truly of my conversion and singular purpose", says Richard Rolle, "I thought I would be like the little bird, that . . . is gladdened in in his longing when he that it loves comes . . . . It is said that the nightingale is given to song and melody all night that she may please him to whom she is joined. How mickle more should I sing with greatest sweetness to Christ my Jesu, that is Spouse of my soul through all this present life."<sup>1</sup>

c. The sense of Divine Leadership. "I would fain be to the Divine goodness what his hand is to a man",<sup>2</sup> says the author of the *Theologia Germanica*. And the mystic commonly feels that he is just that. Hence there is an assurance about his actions that marks him off from other men. God is directing him - he cannot go wrong.

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1. "The Fire of Love", Bk.II, Cap.XII, p.190

2. Cap.X

d. **Fruitive activity.** There are two kinds of distributors of water, St. Bernard once pointed out, canals which give out water as they receive it, and reservoirs which wait till they are filled before they overflow. The mystics are the reservoirs. They are frequently accused of laziness in so often giving over the life of activity for the contemplative life. But they are not lazy. Mystics are less constantly active than other men. But when they do act, what they do seems to go farther. It is as though the current of their lives has gained power by being dammed up in those hours of quietness. And in an extraordinary manner, the lives of the mystics have been among the great creative lives of the world.

**Summary.** It has been our purpose, in this first chapter, to set down what seem to us the chief characteristics of mysticism, with the thought that they will be our guide in our study of John's Gospel. A survey of some recent definitions and a statement of two facts that make definition difficult - (a) that mysticism is an element of religion as well as a type, and (b) that it is a spirit rather than a system - were followed by eight chief characteristics.

These are:

1. Union with the Divine is the mystic's goal.
  2. Love is his characteristic emotion.
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3. A tendency toward immanence is likely to betray itself in his doctrine of God.

4. All mystics follow some sort of a mystic way, on the general plan:

a. Purgation

b. Contemplation

c. Union (The experience of union is dependent on the capacity for ecstasy, which all mystics have to some degree.)

5. Mystics claim a special insight into and knowledge of Reality.

6. They all tend to the use of symbolism.

7. They view nature and history sub specie aeternitatis.

8. Their lives are marked by

a. Peace

b. Joy

c. The sense of divine leadership

d. Fruitive activity

This outline, in general, will be the outline of the thesis. The second chapter will contain a rapid survey of the gospel to determine whether its general teaching moves within the circle of mystical ideas, and this will be followed by chapters dealing with the characteristics of

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mysticism here set down in their relation to the work of the Fourth Evangelist.

## CHAPTER II.

### JOHN AND OUR DEFINITION.

"The starting point for any profitable study of the Fourth Gospel is the recognition of its author as a mystic - perhaps the greatest of all mystics" - Canon Streeter.

Is the fourth gospel, judged by the standard sketched out in the first chapter, a mystical work? We can come a little closer to this problem by surveying rapidly the main line of its teaching. Mysticism, we said, has to do with the establishment of intimate and immediate relations between God and man. With what essentially does this gospel deal?

Before that question is answered, however, it will be necessary to insert a brief note. It is not the purpose of this thesis to deal with matters of introduction, but a word must be said as to the critical position here assumed. No progress can be made in exegesis until the questions dealt with by introduction have at least been recognized. These questions are chiefly four, having to do with the place of writing, date, authorship and structure of the work.

1. Place of writing. It is here assumed, with the great mass of present-day scholarship that the fourth gospel is a product of Ephesian Christianity. The suggestion of Dr. Burney that it was written at Antioch<sup>1</sup> has thus far not met with favor.

2. Date. The earliest certain mentions of the Gospel are by Irenaeus, Tatian and Theophilus of Antioch (170-185). Justin Martyr (wrote 150-160) may have made use of it, Ignatius (110-117), Polycarp (110-117), and Papias (120-130?) perhaps did also. We assume, with most scholars that it was written about the turn of the century, but for long was less widely used than the synoptics.

3. Author. On the question of authorship, criticism seems to have reached an impasse. New works on the subject are constantly appearing, but they only repeat the evidence, external and internal, which has long been recognized and

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1. Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel, pp.129-133.

from the same evidence reach diametrically opposed conclusions. To me the external evidence appears inconclusive. The evidence for the early death of John, the son of Zebedee<sup>1</sup> is far from convincing, but the evidence for the residence of that John in Asia<sup>2</sup> is far from convincing also. The "elder", John<sup>3</sup>, is a nebulous figure, though perhaps on the whole the best we have to tie to, and none of the other suggestions which have been made<sup>4</sup> seem more than ingenious. So far as the external evidence is concerned, I think we must conclude that we have not enough that is trustworthy to give us any certainty.

As to the internal evidence, the case is only slightly better. On the one hand we have the attribution of authorship to the "beloved disciple" in the appendix (21:24)<sup>5</sup>, and the seeming claim of 19:35 to eye-witness authorship. If these are taken at their face value then the way is open for identifying the "beloved disciple" with the son of Zebedee, (the traditional view), or with an otherwise unknown Jerusalem disciple<sup>6</sup>. On the other hand, the character of the Gospel, the grave difficulty of accepting its chronology or even the historic accuracy of its picture of Jesus and his times, argues strongly against authorship by a disciple of the earthly Jesus. The claims of eye-witness authorship will be referred to again, but for the present it is sufficient to say dogmatically that I have found it quite impossible to retain belief in such authorship. That the author was a Jew seems certain, that he was familiar with the Lucan and probably with the Markan account of our Lord's ministry is altogether likely, that he had personal relations with the human Jesus, or even with an immediate disciple has not been proved.

4. Structure. Finally, there is the question of the gospel's structure. It has become the fashion for the present generation of critics to assign the gospel in its present form to more than one author. Obviously chapter 21 is an addition, almost certainly by another hand (or hands, since more than one stratum can be discerned). Obviously the pericope adulterae (7:53-8:11) is an insertion. So is the explanation of 5:3b-4. Apparently there is dislocation in the placing of chapters 15

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1. The prophecy of Mk.10:39 (Mt.20:23), the Syriac and other martyrologies, and the Papias quotations in Georgius Hamartolus and Philip of Side.
  2. Chiefly Irenaeus' letter to Florinus.
  3. Papias in Eusebius (H.E. iii, 39)
  4. E.g. that the author was Andrew, Lazarus, Aristion, Mark, Apollos, Cerinthus, etc. Cf. Carpenter, "Johannine Writings", p.192.
  5. Should this evidence, too, be called "external"?
  6. Burney, "Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel" and Garvie "The Beloved Disciple" - following Delff.

and 16 after 14:31b. If alterations like these could take place, why not others? And others have been noted, some with the best of reasons.<sup>1</sup> It is certain that no serious critic can any longer argue that the fourth gospel is "a coat without seam". But such "revision theories"<sup>2</sup> differ from "partition theories" like those of Wendt<sup>3</sup>, Delff, and Garvie<sup>4</sup>. For these the case has not been made out. The question of the structure of the gospel is not settled, but it still seems likely that the great body of the work is from a single hand. One partition theory, at least, we may decisively reject - Harnack's suggestion that the prologue is not an integral part of the work. We shall see that most of the great ideas of the gospel are prefigured in the first eighteen verses. On some other suggestions, such as Strachan's of a topically arranged gospel on which is superimposed an artificial chronological plan<sup>5</sup>, I shall have more to say later. For the present, it is enough to have stated the critical position from which the exegesis of the gospel is approached.

We turn now to a general survey of the character of the gospel before looking in detail for specifically mystical traits

1. The fourth gospel is, par excellence, the gospel of the incarnation - of God coming to man.

a. This may be seen first in the prologue. "In the beginning was the divine self-utterance. The divine self-utterance was a part of God himself. It belonged to his very essence. From the beginning it was inseparable from him. It gave life to all that is, and with life, light. . . . This very Word became flesh and pitched his tent with us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of one who bore unique relation to the Father, full of the goodness of Reality". (1:1-4,14)

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1. Cf. Moffatt, "Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament (1911) pp.552-558.

2. Moffatt

3. "St. John's Gospel".

4. "The Beloved Disciple".

5. "The Fourth Gospel" and "The Fourth Evangelist".



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There are at least three lines of development which meet in this use of the word, Logos.

First, there is the distinctly Hebrew conception of the Divine word, dynamic and revelatory, by whose agency the world was made, and through which the message of God was made known to the prophets. This Divine word in certain late Psalms, like 33, 107, and 147 is already half-personified, and in the Targums, which began to be developed at least by the first century A.D., the personification is complete.

Second, as Dr. Rendel Harris has shown in his admirable "Origin of the Prologue to St. John's Gospel", there is the idea of the Divine Sophia, or Wisdom, an importation from Greek sources, which in Proverbs 8, Ben Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon, is set beside God as his agent in creation, and which in the Wisdom of Solomon (chapter 9) is actually coordinated with the Divine Word.<sup>1</sup>

Third, there is the Greek idea of the Logos, or immanent Reason, found in the writings of Heracleitus and the Stoics and taken up and brought into conjunction with Jewish thought by Philo of Alexandria.

At the confluence of these three streams stands the incarnation doctrine of the Prologue, and it can only be understood as the relation of all three to it is recognized.

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1. See "Origin of Prologue to St. John's Gospel", p. 11

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(1) First, the author of it is a Jew to whom Old Testament modes of thought are natural. Primarily, then, when he says that in Jesus, God's "Logos" was incarnate, he means God's creative spirit and God's self-revealing word. This seems to me proven by the fact that the prologue reaches its climax in the words, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed (ἐξήγησάτο) him". It is for this reason that "divine self-utterance" has been chosen to represent Logos in the paraphrase above.

(2) The author, however, was also a Jew who was profoundly under the influence of the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament. Rendel Harris' proof of the dependence of the Prologue on the Wisdom literature is only one degree short of the mathematical in its nicety. From this literature he drew his conception of the cosmic relations and activities of this Divine self-utterance, now incarnate, its personification of Wisdom made easier his personification of the Word, and the attributes of the Divine Wisdom must have carried over into the author's thought of Christ.

(3) Finally, the author was speaking to the Hellenistic world. He is likely to have read Philo, if he lived in Ephesus he was probably familiar with the Logos-concept of Heraclitus and the Stoics, and the use of the word,

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Logos, made it possible for him to say to them, "This Christ whom I preach to you was the incarnation of what you call the immanent Reason as well".

In the Logos-doctrine of the Johannine prologue, the doctrine of the Incarnation reaches its height. Jesus is seen in a cosmic setting. To both Hebrew and Greek he is presented as the appearance on the world's stage of that which they had learned to call Divine.

b. When one turns from the Prologue to the body of the Gospel it is with a feeling that this level cannot be kept. This presentation of Jesus as the incarnation of a philosophical and cosmological entity cannot be sustained. **And**, as a matter of fact, it is not. But to say that there is a distinct break in the thought between the prologue and the rest of the gospel is to exaggerate the facts. The Logos phraseology is dropped as really foreign to the genius of the author, but the fundamental Incarnation -idea, the idea that in Jesus the self-utterance of God had come to earth in human form, is not dropped. On the contrary, it is essential to the Johannine thought of Christ. Throughout the gospel, he is "the only-begotten, who is in the bosom of the Father", in whose flesh God has come near to men.

(1) In the first place, the body of the gospel contains a distinct doctrine of pre-existence. "No one hath ascended into heaven", Jesus is represented as saying

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anachronously to Nicodemus, "but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven". (3:13) "He that cometh from above is above all", says the Evangelist of Jesus, and again, "He that cometh from heaven is above all". (3:31) "I am come down from heaven", says Jesus again, "not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me . . . . Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he that is from God, he hath seen the Father . . . . I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." (6:38, 46, 51). "Ye are from beneath, I am from above; ye are of this world, I am not of this world" (8:23). "Before Abraham was born, I am" (8:58). And finally in the upper room with his disciples, he says, "The Father himself loveth you because ye . . . . have believed that I came forth from the Father. I came forth from the Father and am come into the world; again I leave the world and go unto the Father. His disciples say, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no dark saying . . . . By this we believe that thou camest forth from God" (16:27-30). And then he prays, "And now, Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (17:5)

(2) In the second place, there are frequent references to a close and intimate relationship existing constantly between Christ and the Father. "He that sent me is with me" (8:29). "The Father is in me, and I in the Father" (10:38). "I am in my Father" (14:20).

(3). And as though this were not enough, Jesus is continually equating himself with the Father. "I and the Father are one" (10:30). "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that beholdeth me beholdeth him that sent me". (12:44,45). "He that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me" (13:20). "He that hateth me, hateth my Father also . . . . They have both seen and hated both me and my Father" (15:23-24).

It would be easy to read into these passages more than they actually say. (1) Some of the statements which seem to imply pre-existence, (like 3:31, 6:46, 8:23) may mean no more than life on another level than the commonplace. (2) None of the references in the second section above need imply more than mystical union. (3) And inasmuch as such a verse

as 13:20 plainly means no more than that Jesus represents the Father, as his disciples represent him, it would be possible to interpret all the seeming equations between Jesus and the Father on this basis.

But while individual verses may be interpreted on other than the incarnation hypothesis, all of them taken together hardly admit of a different interpretation. While it is certain that the Fourth Gospel nowhere makes the statement of later creeds, that "Jesus is God", it is quite as evident that the incarnation doctrine of the gospel involves more than that Jesus represents or "has the value of" God. The Fourth Evangelist means to say, as well in the body of the gospel as in the prologue that in the life of Jesus, the Divine, not representatively but actually, came into contact with man.

In at least one place in the gospel, this is clearly stated. In 14:7, Jesus makes just such a statement as is found in (3) above, "If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also: from henceforth ye know him and have seen him". Philip answers, interpreting the saying, probably, in some such fashion as 13:20 must be interpreted, and dissatisfied with thus always meeting God at second hand, "Lord, if you only would show us the Father" (not representatively, but actually ) "that would satisfy us".

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Philip was doubtless thinking of a theophany, and in his question the Evangelist has represented as plainly as may be, the yearning of the human heart for direct contact with the Divine. Jesus answers only, "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father, how sayest thou, Show us the Father?" (14:8-9). The implication could hardly be clearer, that according to the Evangelist's thought, in Jesus the Divine was actually, not representatively alone, in contact with men. The reader is not meant to picture Philip as sinking back in disappointment, as though Jesus had said, "That is impossible, Philip. The best you can do is to look at me. I am God's representative". The implication is that Jesus was offering something greater, not something less than Philip had in mind when he asked his question. "Philip, you are thinking of a vision of God, an open heaven and a blinding light. But a greater thing than that is here. The Divine is actually living with you and you do not know it". The Person bulks larger than the philosophic entity, but under the surface the doctrine is the same, in Jesus the Divine has appeared among men. In the prologue and in the body of the work alike, this is the gospel of an incarnation.

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2. The fourth gospel is a gospel of personal experience, that is to say, in this gospel the importance of direct, first-hand experience of the Divine is specially emphasized.

a. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father) full of grace and truth". (1:14)

Note how the first person emphasizes the direct, experiential note.

b. "Come and ye shall see" (1:39). "Come and see" (1:46). Twice, once by Jesus to Andrew and the unnamed disciple, and once by Philip to Nathanael, the invitation is given to immediate testing of the claims of Jesus. No taking of faith at second-hand! Come and see for yourselves.

c. The story of the Samaritan ministry, 4:1-42.

This is one of the most important passages for the study of the experiential element in the Fourth Gospel. Everyone is familiar with the first part of the story, the account of Jesus' conversation with the woman. But not everyone remembers what comes after.

"So the woman left her waterpots, and went away into the city, and saith to the people, Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did: can this be the Christ? They went out of the city and were coming to him . . . . And from that city many of the Samaritans believed on him because of the word of the woman who testified, He told me all things that ever I did. So when the Samaritans came unto him, they besought him to abide with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his word; and they said to the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy speaking; for we have heard for ourselves and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world." (4:28-30, 39-42)

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Here a contrast between the two kinds of faith is plainly intended, the faith which believes on the word of another, and the faith which has heard for itself and knows, the faith that comes at second-hand and the faith that rises from first-hand experience. There is really no reason for verses 39-42 except to draw this contrast. And it is quite evident that the latter faith is held by the evangelist to be much the higher type.

d. The man at the pool of Bethesda, 5:2-9.

"When Jesus saw him lying, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wouldest thou be made whole? The sick man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled to put me into the pool . . . . Jesus saith unto him, Arise, take up thy bed and walk". (5:6-8)

In his allusive fashion, the evangelist is here pointing out the futility for healing of any faith in which you must depend upon the efforts of another. As long as the paralytic waited for someone to put him into the pool he remained impotent. When in direct contact with Jesus his personal faith laid hold on Him, he was renewed.

e. The story of the blind man, 9:1-41. This is perhaps the best illustration in the Gospel of the superiority of the religion of personal experience. A blind man has been healed. There can be no doubt about the event, and yet all lovers of the Gospel will remember the ironic way in which the author makes the argument of the neighbors and the

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parents and the Pharisees go fruitlessly about and about the strange happening. It is thus that those who have no first-hand experience always argue over the things which to the experiencer seem so simple.

"The neighbors, therefore, and they that saw him aforetime . . . . said, Is this not he that sat and begged? Others said, It is he; others said, No, but he is like him . . . . They bring to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. Now it was the Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes . . . . Some therefore of the Pharisees said, This man is not from God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath. But others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such signs? And there was a division among them . . . . The Jews, therefore, did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and had received his sight, until they had called the parents of him that had received his sight . . . . His parents answered and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now seeth we know not, or who opened his eyes, we know not; ask him, he is of age, he shall speak for himself." (9:8-21)

And so, everyone who knew nothing about it having had a hand in trying to explain the event, this question comes back to the erstwhile blind man himself, who if he had any sense of humor, must have been as amused as we are by the futile discussion. We can imagine him standing more and more bewildered while the tide of the discussion rages around him. What were they arguing about? They knew nothing. It was he who knew, for the thing had happened to him.

"So they called a second time the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner. He therefore answered, Whether he is a sinner, I know not. One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." (verses 24-25)

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In these verses the episode reaches its climax in a contrast similar to that noted in the story of the Samaritan ministry. But this time it is a more biting contrast - between those who think they know, because they have worked out a fine-spun theory and he who knows because he has experienced. There could hardly be a better picture of the futility of a religion of observance when seen in contrast to a religion of experience, nor one more full of a bitter irony, than the scene with which the episode closes, the picture of the impotent Pharisees, casting out of the synagogue by main force him whom their arguments could not compel to deny his experience, the former blind-man who shamed their disbelief by his very life.

f. "He that hath seen, hath borne witness, and his witness is true." (19:35) Again the emphasis is on the importance of first-hand experience.

g. Mary in the garden, 20:11-18. Another of these allusive stories that mean more than they say. When Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene in the garden, it is his speaking of her name, a direct experience for her alone, that becomes the means of conviction that the Master is alive.

The second point that we wish to make, concerning the character of this gospel, is that it is a gospel in which on every hand the religion of direct personal experience is

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preferred both to hearsay, second-hand faith, and to a religion of intellectual construction and ritual observance.

3. This gospel shows a marked tendency to emphasize the spiritual as over against the material in religious experience and worship.

a. References to the temple.

(1) 4:20-24. "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father. Ye worship that which ye know not: we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship in Spirit and truth."

Here, clearly, there is an exaltation of spiritual worship as against worship which is bound to times and places. To the woman's question concerning the age-long Jewish-Samaritan dispute over the proper place of worship, Jesus answers that it does not matter. The hour would come (when John wrote it had already come) when they would worship in neither place. Judaism had the advantage of

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heathenism in worshipping a known God, but in their emphasis on the external, both were at fault. The hour would come - nay, with Jesus' advent it had come - when the real<sup>1</sup> worshippers would worship God without the intervention of the material<sup>2</sup>, because they would have come to understand his real nature. Such understanding worshippers God seeks. He is spirit (not body); understanding worship of him must, therefore, be spiritual.

(2) 2:19. "Jesus answered, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

In view of the plain contrasting of spiritual and material worship in chapter 4, I venture to propose a new interpretation for this difficult verse in chapter 2. The scene is the cleansing of the temple, placed at the beginning of Jesus' ministry by the Evangelist as symbolic of his mission of purification to the old religion. When Jesus had driven the traffickers out, the Jews, who were always his opponents, asked him by what sign he vindicated his authority to do this thing, and Jesus answered, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up".

Obviously, this is one of those passages which are so numerous in the Fourth Gospel, where the true meaning is not the surface one. Jesus, of course, does not mean

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1. Westcott - "ideal" - Commentary, I, p.159

2. "Immediately" - Ibid.

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that if this temple of stone should be destroyed, he would raise it up again in three days, Seeing this, an editor<sup>1</sup> offers us the suggestion that he was referring to "the temple of his body" (2:21). But while the use of language by Jesus in a different sense from that in which it is applied by his hearers is a common occurrence in this Gospel, I know of no other such use of language that follows this pattern. When Jesus talks to Nicodemus about the birth from above, to the woman of Samaria about the living water, or to the multitude about eating his flesh and drinking his blood, he uses in a spiritual sense language which his hearers are accustomed to use in a material sense, and of course he is misunderstood. But in this case, if we are to accept the explanation that "he spake of the temple of his body", he is represented as substituting one material significance for another, referring to his body as a temple, and being understood, of course, as meaning the building, in whose courts they stood. This seems out of accord with usage elsewhere in the gospel.

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1. I am not alone in thinking 2:21-22 to be a probable insertion. Garvie ("The Beloved Disciple", p.xxvii and 16) assigns this passage as well as others of similar nature (e.g. 7:39, 11:51-52, 12:33, and 18:32) to "the evangelist" who according to his theory is little more than an editor of the "Witness's" reminiscences, and Scholten long ago questioned its authenticity. See Bacon "The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate", pp. 488, 489.

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I suggest an interpretation more nearly in accordance with common Johannine usage. When the Jews ask Jesus what sign he offers to prove his authority to meddle in their conduct of worship, Jesus answers, "This is the sign I give. When you, by your perversity, have caused this temple to be destroyed<sup>1</sup>, overnight<sup>2</sup> I will raise up a<sup>3</sup> spiritual temple (i.e., a spiritual mode of worship) that will be far, far better". If this interpretation is correct, then in the very story where John seems to represent Jesus as seeking to cleanse the old, formal worship, we have reference to the new, spiritual faith which was rising on the ruins of the old.

b. References to Jesus himself.

(1) Teaching of the upper-room discourse concerning the spiritual presence of Christ.

One of the chief motifs of the upper-room discourse<sup>e</sup> (chapters 14-16) is the contention that, though incarnation was essential to the mission of the Son, there was a sense in which the body of Jesus was a hindrance and he was nearer to, not farther from his disciples when his presence was

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1. There is a similar reference to the destruction of the temple in 4:21.

2. "Three days" frequently means "a brief time", Cf. Hosea 6:2.

3. Cf. Ephesians 2:21 where the Christian Church is referred to as a temple.

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spiritual only. This teaching takes two forms, the ideas of a spiritual Parousia and of a coming of the Holy Spirit, or Comforter, which are used interchangeably; but whatever the form, the fact of emphasis on the spiritual presence is indisputable. The Evangelist was writing for an age when thought hovered between a backward and a forward look in regard to Christ, a backward look to the tradition of his earthly life, a forward look to his physical coming again. He, therefore, seems to have conceived his task as the spiritualization of both those tendencies. Jesus was not gone - he was here, and here in such complete and perfect sense that no physical Parousia in the future could bring him nearer. Through Jesus' reassurances addressed to the friends who felt that they were losing him when his bodily presence passed from their view, the Evangelist seeks to accomplish that spiritualization of the thought of Christ.

"Let not your heart be troubled. It is expedient for you that I go away. For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you, but if I go, I will send him unto you. I will not leave you desolate, I come to you. Yet a little while and the world beholdeth me no more. But ye behold me. I go away and I come to you. A little while and ye behold me no more and again a little while and ye shall see me. Ye shall be sorrowful but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. Ye therefore now have sorrow but I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice. I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you forever." (John 14:1; 16:7; 14:18, 19, 28; 16:16, 20, 22; 14:16)

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That these references are not alone to Jesus' resurrection appearances is proved by the fact that the return of Jesus is coordinated with the coming of the Holy Spirit. For John, indeed, resurrection, ascension, return, and giving of the Spirit become practically one moment (20:1-23). After his physical death, Jesus returned almost at once in spiritual presence, and that return was to stay.

(2) Symbolism of the experience of Mary Magdalene in the garden (20:11-16).

The teaching of the Evangelist that it is necessary to turn from the earthly to the spiritual Christ, is symbolized in the story of the appearance to Mary Magdalene. Mary, standing at the tomb weeping, and then stooping and looking into the tomb, represents the Christianity which is inclined to cling to the earthly presence of the Master. Mary, turning from the tomb and beholding Jesus standing, represents the Christianity which turns from the bodily to the spiritual presence. And if she is still inclined to cling to that which seems earthly about him, there are his gentle words, "Do not cling to me. I am not yet ascended." The purely spiritual is the best.

(3) 20:29. "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

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The story of Thomas raises a difficulty in the interpretation of the Gospel, because it seems to be a concession to the materialistic view of the Resurrection, a view which finds expression in Luke 24:38-43, but which seems out of place here. I can only conclude that it is a concession, though I hesitate to bring in, as Dr. Strachan does <sup>1</sup>, "the Editor", who is quite too convenient a deus ex machina to be allowed to play his part when there is any other way out of the dilemma. All of us are inconsistent at times and the Fourth Evangelist could have made this concession, as he does make others <sup>2</sup>, without realizing how foreign it was to his thought.

But the evangelist's characteristic teaching is contained in the saying with which he concludes the story, "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." The contrast is between belief mediated by the senses and belief based on purely spiritual experience, and the latter is plainly preferred.

(4) It is from this point of view that I am inclined to interpret the claim to personal experience in 1:14. I have already indicated <sup>3</sup> that I find it impossible

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1. "The Fourth Evangelist", p.313 f.

2. Cf. 5:28-29; 6:40, et al.

3. Ante, p.34.

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on other grounds, to attribute this gospel to an eye-witness of Jesus' earthly life. And yet we have here a definite claim to personal experience, and (since, according to my observation, the prologue is an integral part of the gospel) it must come from the evangelist. The explanation would seem to be that in this author's view, spiritual experience is more real than physical experience. Just as Paul - a man of the same type of mind - placed himself, with no distinction, beside the apostles<sup>1</sup>, though they had accompanied with Jesus in the flesh, and he spiritually, so the Fourth Evangelist, having seen with his spiritual eyes the glory of the Lord who was incarnate, can write thus in lyric strain of his experience, as though he had seen the Lord in flesh.

There is undeniably another thread in the gospel, which ill comports with this spiritual one, an emphasis on the humanity, even the materiality of Christ and on the sacraments, and an occasional dropping back into the more crass eschatological beliefs of the early Christians. These seem to be partly due to polemic necessity, the presence of an incipient docetism in the church, and partly to the intrusion of alien elements from the evangelist's environment. The evangelist is most himself, however, in such passages as we have been quoting, and in others, like the one which closes the great sacramental discourse of chapter 6, "It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing". (verse 63)

4. This is the gospel of Eternal Life, communicated by contact with the Divine.

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1. I Corinthians 9:1; 15:9; II Corinthians 11:5 et al.

a. The gospel of eternal life.

(1) 20:31. "These are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye may have life in his name." In this passage the author states his purpose, and it is that his readers may come into the condition where they may have what he calls "life".

(2) And from first to last, that word (ζωή, life) is used thirty-five times in this gospel (as compared to six times in Matthew, three in Mark, and five in Luke). God is said to have given the Son and the Son to have died just in order that men might have life (3:15,16). The multitude is urged to work for the food which abideth unto eternal life. (6:27) Jesus says, "I came that they may have life (10:10), and twice he calls himself "the life" (11:25; 14:6) While again and again, "life" is spoken of as though it were without question that which men desire, and the failure to attain it the worst possible fate (3:36; 4:14,36; 5:24,29,39; 6:33,35,40,47,48,51,53,54,68; 8:12; 10:28; 12:25, et al.)

b. But what is "life"?

In the Synoptics it seems to be largely "a reward<sup>1</sup> laid up for the righteous in the world to come".

1. Scott, "The Fourth Gospel", p.238

"Narrow is the way which leadeth unto life",  
Matt.7:14

"It is better for thee to enter into life maimed,"  
Matt.18:8,9; Mark 9:43,45

"What shall I do that I may have eternal life?"  
Matt.19:16; Mark 10:17; Luke 18:18.

"If thou wilt enter into life, keep the command-  
ments." Matt.19:17.

"Everyone that hath left houses, etc. shall in-  
herit eternal life. Matt.19:29; Mark 10:30;  
Luke 18:30.

"These shall go away into eternal punishment, but  
the righteous into eternal life." Matt.25:46

"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"  
Luke 10:25

Only one passage, where the word is used, seems  
to suggest a meaning akin to the Johannine - Luke 12:15.  
"A man's life (real life, true life, John would say) con-  
sisteth not in the abundance of the things which he pos-  
sesseth".

But to John, eternal life is something that can be  
possessed here and now <sup>1</sup>. "He that believeth . . . . hath  
eternal life". (3:36) "He that heareth my word . . . .  
hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath  
passed out of death into life".(5:24) "He that believeth  
hath eternal life".(6:47) "He that eateth my flesh and  
drinketh my blood hath eternal life".(6:54) "He that liv-  
eth and believeth on me shall never die". (11:26)<sup>2</sup>

And so far as it is defined, it is defined in  
qualitative rather than in dynamic terms.

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1. Cf. Scott, "The Fourth Gospel", p.247.

2. It is true that alongside these passages run passages  
dependent on the older view of eternal life as a future  
reward (5:29; 6:39,40,44,54) but they are survivals rather  
than significant examples of Johannine thought.

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I do not mean that we are not told what the possessor of eternal life does. He serves his brethren in humble fashion.(13:14) He loves his brethren.(13:34-35) He bears much fruit.(15:8) He does his Lord's commandments.(15:14)

But throughout the Gospel, we are led to think of eternal life, not as consisting in these and other activities, but as resulting in them.

Eternal life consists in something else, less easily defined perhaps, but best summed up as - the quality of life which from the beginning belongs to the Divine.

"In him was life, and the life was the light of men".

(1:9) That life which belongs to the Divine Logos, that life which Jesus, not "had" only (5:26), but was (11:25; 14:6), that life is "life eternal". To attempt to define it further would be to do that which the gospel never does. The possessor of eternal life is represented as one who "knows" God.(17:3) He has been enlightened, like the blind man (chapter 9) and invigorated like one who has drunk sparkling water (chapter 4), eaten heavenly bread (chapter 6), or been raised from a grave(chapter 11). He is free, indeed, having been freed by the Son.(8:36) But to get the portrait of the possessor of eternal life, one must read the entire Gospel. From one point of view,

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it is all about him.

c. The communication of life.

(1) 20:31. "That, believing, ye may have life". Life is evidently communicated through the medium of belief.

(2) But what is belief? The passage that we are citing sheds some further light, for it says, "these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye may have life in his name." To believe, then, "is to grant the hypothesis that Jesus was indeed the Christ, the Son of God".<sup>1</sup> And yet, to say that is not to say that "belief", in the fourth gospel, is a purely intellectual matter, and therefore that "life" is gained by the acceptance of a dogma. The communication of life does rest back, the Fourth Evangelist believes, on a conviction as to what Christ is, but such belief is only the beginning. "Now, when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, during the feast, many believed on his name, beholding his signs which he did, but Jesus did not trust himself to them, for that he knew all men." (John 2:23-24) He expected something more.

And when we begin to inquire what further is involved in life-giving belief, our minds turn to the

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1. Scott, "The Fourth Gospel", p.267

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prologue, where the picture is drawn of the divine Light rejected by his own, "But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name".(1:12) Here is a deeper-going definition of that belief which is the means of the communication of life. To believe on Jesus Christ is to receive him, to come, that is, into intimate relation with him. This life, eternal life, which characterizes the Christian, is given through contact with Jesus. It is not a thing that one creates for himself, saying, "Go to now, I will live a new life. I will live the Jesus way".<sup>1</sup> Rather, Jesus gives it to those who will come to him. He gives it as one would give water to a thirsty man, and it, becomes in one a well of water springing up into eternal life (4:14). He gives it to those who behold him (6:40; 14:19), who hear him (5:25; 6:68; 12:50) and who keep his word (8:51). You cannot tell how it comes, for as "the wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh and whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit". (3:8) But though you cannot tell just how it comes, it is plain that these men and women who, through the reception of Jesus Christ, have been given

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1. Cf. 5:40 and 10:28

the power to become children of God, have been lifted onto a new level of life. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit" (3:6).

And, finally, this "reception" of Jesus is not complete, nor is life able to flow freely from him to us, until it has become a real union. The well of water must spring up within (chapter 4); the bread of life must be eaten (chapter 6); the disciples must abide in him as the branches in the vine (chapter 15). A contact ever deepening into closer and closer union, this is the means of the communication of life.

Conclusion. Our brief survey of the main line of the Gospel's teaching has led us to these conclusions:

1. The Fourth Gospel is the gospel of the incarnation.
2. It lays great emphasis on personal experience.
3. It shows a marked tendency to emphasize the spiritual as over against the material in religious experience and worship.
4. It is the gospel of eternal life, communicated by contact with the Divine.

All these things have to do with that side of

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religion, at least, on which the mystics dwell.

1. The doctrine of Incarnation teaches that once, at least, within the limits of time and space the Divine has drawn near to man. This, by itself, is far from mysticism, but it suggests that if the Divine could do so once, the way may be open for other contacts. This suggestion, implicit in any doctrine of Incarnation becomes explicit in the Fourth Gospel. "Whither I go", said Jesus, "ye know the way". Thomas saith unto him, "Lord we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?" Jesus saith unto him, "I am the way". (John 14:4-6).

2. Personal experience is the essence of mysticism. Professor Rufus Jones would say, for example, that that is all mysticism is.<sup>1</sup>

3. And if there be some demur at this point, on the ground that religious experience, even "personal experience", is not necessarily of mystical quality and particularly that personal experience of a flesh and blood Christ is quite distinct from experience of the mystical type, the objection is partially vitiated so far as John's gospel is concerned by the insistence that spiritual experience is far superior to that which is mediated by the senses.

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1. See "Studies in Mystical Religion", p.xv.

4. Further, if it be still insisted that even purely spiritual experience of the Divine is not always of a narrowly mystical type, inasmuch as it may not involve union, we have observed finally that the "eternal life" of which this gospel makes so much, is of a kind that can only be communicated by the most intimate contact between the divine and the human.

A surface study of this gospel, therefore seems to make it apparent that the practice of classing the gospel among works of mystical character is justified. Only a more thorough examination of specific points will show in how far the Johannine mysticism accords with the main historic stream.

## CHAPTER III.

### LOVE IN THE MYSTICS AND IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

"You would hear from me, then, why and how God is to be loved? I answer: the cause of loving God is God; the manner is to love without measure." - St. Bernard

#### A. The Mystics.

I. Mysticism is born and nourished in a particular emotional atmosphere. "Le Mysticisme", says Joly, "c'est l'amour de Dieu". Our next task, therefore, must be to examine this emotion of love, which thus pervades the mystic life.

a. We begin by citing for illustrative purposes, a number of representative passages from mystic literature. Further illustrative material may be found in Evelyn Underhill's "Mysticism", pp.101-107.

1. St. Augustine (354-430). "What do I love when I love Thee? It is a certain light that I love, and melody and fragrance and embrace that I love when I love my God - a light, melody, fragrance, food, embrace of the inner man; where for my soul that shines which space does not contain, that sounds which time does not sweep away, that is fragrant which the breeze does not dispel, and that tastes sweet which fed upon is not diminished, and that clings close which no satiety disparts. This it is I love when I love my God." (Confessions X. 8)

2. Blessed Henry Suso (German, c.1300-1365) "At this season, there came down into his soul a flame of intense fire, which made his heart all burning with divine love. Now one day that this feeling was strong within him and he was suffering exceedingly from the torments of divine love, he went into his cell to his place of retirement and rapt in loving contemplation, spoke thus: - 'Ah, sweet Lord! Would that I could devise some love-token, which might be an everlasting sign of love between me and Thee, as a memorial that I am Thy beloved, and Thou art my heart's only beloved; a sign which no oblivion might be ever able to efface.' In this fervour of devotion, he threw back his scapular, and, baring his breast, took in his hand a style; then, looking at his heart, he said, - 'Ah, mighty God! give me today strength and power to accomplish my desire;

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for Thou must be burnt today into my very inmost heart.' Thereupon he set to work, and thrust the style into the flesh above his heart, drawing it backwards and forwards, up and down, until he had inscribed the Name of Jesus upon his heart. The blood flowed plenteously out of his flesh from the sharp stabs, and ran down over his body into his bosom: but this was so ravishing a sight to him, through the ardor of his love, that he cared little for the pain. When he had finished, he went thus torn and bleeding from his cell to the pulpit under the crucifix and kneeling down said: - 'Ah, Lord! my heart and soul's only love! look now upon my heart's intense desire. Lord, I cannot imprint Thee any deeper in myself; but do Thou, O Lord, I beseech thee, complete the work, and imprint Thyself deep down into my very inmost heart, and so inscribe Thy Holy Name in me, that Thou mayest nevermore depart from my heart.'" (Life, pp.17-18)

3. Richard Rolle (English, c.1290-1349)

"Nothing truly is better than love, nothing sweeter than holy charity. For to be loved and to love is a sweet change; the delight of all man's life, and of angel's, and of God's; and also the meed of all blessedness. If therefore thou desirest to be loved, love; for love gains itself. No man has ever lost by good love. . . . Soothly he that knows not to burn in love knows not how to be glad. Therefore never is a man more blessed than he that is borne without himself by the might of love, and by the greatness of God's love receives within himself a songful sweetness of everlasting praising." (Fire of Love, pp.106-7)

"Therefore I sigh and cry; who shall shew to the beloved Jesus that I languish for love? My flesh has failed, and my heart has melted into love, in yearning after Jesus. The whole heart fixed in yearning after Jesus is turned into Fire of Love, and with the sweetness of the Godhead is it fully filled. Therefore, O good Jesus, have mercy on this wretch, shew thyself to this languishing one, be leech to this wounded one. If Thou comest, I am whole! I do not feel sick, only languishing for Thy love. Seeking Jesus Whom it loves, with Whose love it is seized, Whom alone it covets, let my soul seize on Thee." (Minor Works, pp.48-49. Cf.pp.76-77).

4. Julian of Norwich (English, 1343- after 1413)

"And from that time that it was shewed, I desired oftentimes to learn what was our Lord's meaning. And fifteen years after, and more, I was answered in ghostly understanding, saying thus: Wouldst thou learn thy Lord's

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meaning in this thing? Learn it well! Love was His meaning. Who shewed it thee? Love. What shewed He thee? Love. Wherefore shewed it He? For Love. Hold thee therein and thou shalt learn and know more in the same. But thou shalt never know nor learn therein other thing without end. Thus was I learned that Love was our Lord's meaning." (Revelations of Divine Love, p.202)

5. St.Catherine of Genoa (Italian, 1447-1510)

"One day a Friar and Preacher, perhaps to test her or because of some mistaken notion, told her that he himself was better fitted for loving than she, because he having entered Religion and renounced all things both within and without, and she being married to the world as he was to Religion, he found himself more free to love God and more acted upon by Him. And the Friar went on and alleged many other reasons. But when he had spoken much and long, an ardent flame of pure love seized upon Catherine, and she sprang to her feet with such fervour as to appear beside herself, and she said: 'If I thought that your habit had the power of gaining me one single additional spark of love, I should without fail take it from you by force, if I were not allowed to have it otherwise. That you should merit more than myself is a matter that I concede and do not seek. I leave it in your hands; but that I cannot love Him as much as you, is a thing that you will never by any means be able to make me understand! And she said this with such force and fervour, that all her hair came undone, and falling down, was scattered upon her shoulders. And yet all the while this her vehement bearing was full of grace and dignity. And when back at home, and alone with her Lord, she exclaimed: 'O Love, who shall impede me from loving Thee? Though I were, not only in the world as I am, but in a camp of soldiers, I could not be impeded from loving Thee.'" (Vita, quoted by Baron von Hügel, "Mystical Element of Religion, I, pp.140-141)

6. St.John of the Cross (Spanish, 1542-1591)

"God communicates Himself to the soul in this interior union with a love so intense that the love of a mother, who so tenderly caresses her child, the love of a brother, or the affection of a friend bear no likeness to it, for so great is the tenderness, and so deep is the love with which the Infinite Father comforts and exalts the humble and loving soul. O wonders worthy of all awe and reverence! He humbles Himself in reality before that soul that He may exalt it, as if He were its servant, and the soul His Lord. He is as anxious to comfort it as if He

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were a slave and the soul God. So great is the humility and tenderness of God. In this communion of love He renders in a certain way those services to the soul which He says in the Gospel He will perform for the elect in heaven. 'Amen, I say to you, that He will gird Himself and make them sit down to meat, and passing will minister unto them.'" (Spiritual Canticle, pp.211-212)

7. Madame Guyon (French, 1648-1717)

"Everything was absorbed in a delicious faith, where all distinctions were lost to give love room for loving with more expansion, without motives or reasons for loving." (Autobiography, p.68)

"I was unable to do anything else but love you with a love as profound as it was tranquil, which absorbed everything else." (Ibid, p.73)

b. And, lest it appear that these passages have all been chosen from the less philosophical mystics, because only they are truly lovers, three examples are here added from the more metaphysical type.

1. Plotinus (205-c.270).

"Our greatest difficulty is that consciousness of The One comes not by knowledge, not even by such an intuitive Intellection as possesses us of the lower members of the Intellectual Order, but by an actual Presence, superior to any knowing . . . . The Soul, therefore, must rise above knowledge, above all its wandering from its Unity; it must hold aloof from all knowing and from all the knowable and from the very contemplation of Beauty and Good, for all Beauty and Good are later than this, springing from This as the daily light springs from the sun.

Hence it is that we read of the 'Greatness, not to be spoken of, not to be written'. If we here speak and write, it is but as guides to those that long to see; we send them to the Place Itself, bidding them from words to the Vision; the teaching is of the path and the plan, seeing is the work of each Soul for itself. Some there are that for all their effort have not attained the Vision; the Soul in them has come to no sense of the Splendour There; it has not taken warmth; it has not felt burning within itself the flame of love for What is There to know, the passion of the lover resting on the bosom of his love." (Ennead VI. 9.4.)

Then follows in VI. 9.11, the eloquent passage already quoted.<sup>1</sup>

2. Dionysius the Areopagite (wrote between 475 and 525). "Not that the Good is wholly incommunicable

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1. Ante, p.10

to anything; nay, rather, while dwelling alone by Itself, and having there firmly fixed its super-essential Ray, It lovingly reveals Itself by illuminations corresponding to each separate creature's powers, and thus draws upwards holy minds into such contemplation, participation and resemblance of Itself as they can attain - even them that holily and duly strive thereafter and do not seek with impotent presumption the Mystery beyond that heavenly revelation which is so granted as to fit their powers, nor yet through their lower propensity slip down the steep descent, but with unwavering constancy press onwards towards the ray that casts its light upon them and, through the love responsive to these gracious illuminations, speed their temperate and holy flight on the wings of a godly reverence." (The Divine Names, I,2)

"The Divine Yearning brings ecstasy, not allowing them that are touched thereby to belong unto themselves but only to the objects of their affection. . . . And hence the great Paul, constrained by the Divine Yearning, and having received a share in its ecstatic power, says with inspired utterance. 'I live, and yet not I, but Christ liveth in me', true Sweetheart that he was and (as he says himself) being beside himself unto God, and not possessing his own life, but loving the life of Him for Whom he yearned." (Divine Names, IV, 13).

Cf. also the passage previously quoted<sup>1</sup>, (Mystical Theology, I, 1)

### 3. Meister Eckhart (1260-1329)

"Deus charitas est et qui manet in charitate in deo manet et deus in eo (1 John 4:16). 'God is love, and he who dwells in love dwells in God and God in him'. This is the epistle we read at Mass, and it is St. John speaking.

Take the opening words: 'God is love'. That is so, inasmuch as all that can love, all that does love, he compels by his love to love him. God is love, secondly, inasmuch as every God-created and loving thing compels him by his love to love it, willy-nilly. God is love, thirdly, inasmuch as his love drives all his lovers out of multiplicity. The love of God in multiplicity pursues the love which is himself right out of multiplicity into his very unity. God is love, fourthly, who by his love provides all creatures with their life and being, preserving them in his love. The color of the cloth is preserved in the cloth; even so creatures are preserved in existence by love, that is, God. Take the color from cloth, its subsistence is gone; so do creatures all lose their subsistence if taken from love, to wit, God. God is love, and

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1. Ante, pp.11-12.

so lovely is he that lovers all love him, willy-nilly. . .

If anyone should ask me what God is, I should answer: God is love, and so altogether lovely that creatures all with one accord essay to love his loveliness, whether they do so knowingly or unbeknownst, in joy or sorrow. Instance the lowest angel in his pure nature; the smallest spark or love-light that ever fell from him would light up the whole world with love and joy." (Sermon, "Deus Caritas Est", Works, pp.25-26)

Nothing could prove more clearly than these passages the priority of feeling over thought in mysticism. What Miss Underhill says about Plotinus might be said about most of the mystics of this type, "Thus it is that whilst the brain of the philosopher, struggling to measure infinite Fact by finite image, is driven at last to conceive of God in terms as negative, as abstract, and as arid as those employed by the most orthodox Hindu, yet the intuitive heart of Plotinus discovers something behind this Pure Being, this impersonal and unconditional Absolute, which evokes in him the same love which the Christian or Sufi mystic offers to his personal Deity."<sup>1</sup>

II. What, we may now ask, is the genesis of this love in the mystic's soul?<sup>2</sup>

1. It begins in certain of those innate tendencies and needs, which have been well summarized by Professor Leuba in his work on "The Psychology of Religious Mysticism"

These are: "(1) The tendencies to self-affirmation and the need for self-esteem.

(2) The tendencies to cherish, to devote oneself to something or somebody.

(3) The needs for affection and moral support.

(4) The need for peace, for single-mindedness or unity. . . .

(5) 'Organic' needs or needs for sensuous satisfaction (especially in connexion with the sex-life)". . .<sup>3</sup>

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1. Evelyn Underhill, "The Mystic Way", p.290. Cf. von Hügel, "Eternal Life", p.83, and for the priority of feeling to thought in religion, James, "Varieties of Religious Experience", p.504

2. This subject is discussed by Evelyn Underhill, under the title "The Awakening of the Self" - "Mysticism", pp.213-238.

3. "Psychology of Religious Mysticism", pp.116-117.



Professor Leuba has amply illustrated these in the chapter at the head of which the summary stands, the chapter entitled "The Motivation of Christian Mysticism".<sup>1</sup>

We may simply add that perhaps nowhere are all these tendencies exhibited as plainly within the limits of a single life as in the case of the Blessed Henry Suso. His "Life" by himself is one of the most valuable documents we have for the study of the mystic psychology.

"The first beginning of the Servitor's perfect conversion to God took place when he was in his eighteenth year. And though he had worn the religious habit for the five previous years, his soul was still dissipated within him; and it seemed to him that if God only preserved him from weightier sins, which might tarnish his good name, there was no need to be over-careful about ordinary faults. Nevertheless he was so kept by God the while that he had always an unsatisfied feeling within him, whenever he turned himself to the objects of his desires, and it seemed to him that it must be something quite different which could bring peace to his wild heart (4)<sup>2</sup> and he was ill at ease amid his restless ways. He felt at all times a gnawing reproach within (1)<sup>2</sup> and yet he could not help himself, until the kind God set him free from it, by turning him." (p.6)

"One thing was a sore suffering to him. He had no one to whom he could pour out his grief, and who pursued the same end in the same way that he had been called to pursue it. Therefore he went on his way in wretchedness, pining for love;(3)<sup>2</sup> and with mighty efforts he withdrew himself from creatures, - a practice which afterwards became very sweet to him." (p.9)

"It happened once in the time of his beginnings, that he came into the choir on St. Agnes' Day, after the midday meal of the convent was ended. He was there alone, and he stood at the lower stalls, on the right-hand side of the choir. It was, moreover, a time at which he was

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1. "Psychology of Religious Mysticism", Chapter V.

2. These numbers refer to the number of the point in Professor Leuba's classification above.

more than usually crushed down by a heavy weight of sorrow. Now it came to pass that as he stood there all desolate and and with no one to help or shield him (3)<sup>1</sup>, his soul was caught up in ecstasy." . . . . (p.9)

"He had from youth up a loving heart (2)<sup>1</sup>. Now the Eternal Wisdom is represented in Holy Scripture under a lovely guise, as a gracious and loving mistress, who displays her charms with the intent to please everyone; discursing the while tenderly in female form of the desire she has to win all hearts to herself (5)<sup>1</sup> and saying how deceitful all other mistresses are, and how truly loving and constant she is. This drew his young soul to her." (pp.11-12)

Here in the brief space of six pages are found all the tendencies and needs noted by Professor Leuba. Other examples of (1) may be found in "The Little Book of Eternal Wisdom", p.54 ("How rightly blessed is he that bears the name of Thy Spouse and is so", or above, "Alas, Thou only Lord of my heart and soul, my heart desires that Thou shouldst have a particular love for me, and that I should be particularly pleasing to Thy divine eyes;) of (3) in "Life", p.13 ("Ah, me! what a love is this! Could she but become mine I were indeed well off") and of (5) on pp.16, 46, and 51. Other mystics would not show such a variety of these tendencies - the philosophical, for example might show none at all of (5) and most of (4) - but it is likely that in no mystic would all of them be absent.

2. Most mystics are, however, not so naive as Suso. They do not distinguish these innate needs which move them.

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1. These numbers refer to the number of the point in Professor Leuba's classification above.

They only know that life for them is not complete. They yearn for something which they do not have, feel drawn toward an Unseen which they do not know, are out upon a quest whose object they cannot define. Their need represents itself to them only as a vague dissatisfaction or yearning.

"Thou madest us for Thyself", writes Augustine, thinking back upon that time of longing, "and our heart is restless until it repose in thee".<sup>1</sup>

"The heart cannot rest in peace without the possession of something", says St. John of the Cross, . . . "In this state its weariness is in proportion to its loss until it shall enter into possession and be satisfied; for until then the soul is as an empty vessel waiting to be filled, as a hungry man eager for food, as a sick man sighing for health, and as a man suspended in the air without support to his feet."<sup>2</sup>

And Suso said of himself that he "was filled with disgust and dejection of heart on his first setting forth on the uneven ways".<sup>3</sup> After his conversion he wrote thus: "Sweet and tender Lord! from the days of my childhood, my mind has sought for something with burning thirst, but what it is I have not as yet fully understood. Lord, I have pursued it ardently many a year, but I never could grasp it, for I know not what it is, and yet it is something that attracts my heart and soul, without which I can never attain true rest. Lord, I sought it in the first days of my childhood, as I saw done around me, in creatures, but the more I sought it in them the less I found it, and the nearer I approached them the further I receded from it, for every image that presented itself to my sight, before I wholly tried it, or gave myself up quietly to it, warned me away thus, 'I am not what thou seekest!' And this repulsion I have experienced more and more in all things."<sup>4</sup>

3. This sense of dissatisfaction, of vague and undefined yearning may continue for many years, until, at

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1. "Confessions", I,1.

2. "Spiritual Canticle of the Soul", IX, 4

3. "Little Book of Eternal Wisdom, Chapter I.

4. Ibid

last, some circumstance, in itself perhaps trivial, brings it to an end. It may be the voice of a child, as in the case of St. Augustine, a vision as with St. Francis of Assisi, or Suso, a purely inward experience as with St. Catherine of Genoa. Whatever be the form which the experience takes, the mystics ordinarily agree in this, that the true cause of their dissatisfaction all along has been that God was drawing them to himself, and that their present realization of it is the result of a working of the Divine Goodness.

"Thou hast made us for Thyself", remember St. Augustine's explanation, and the Eternal Wisdom says to Suso, "It is I, the Eternal Wisdom, who, with the embrace of My eternal providence, have chosen thee in eternity for Myself alone. I have barred the way to thee as often as thou wouldst have parted company with Me, had I permitted thee. In all things thou didst ever meet with some obstacle and it is the sweet sign of My elect that I will needs have them for Myself."<sup>1</sup>

The modern mystic, Francis Thompson, has put the conviction of the Divine initiative in salvation, which he pictures as a pursuit, in unforgettable language:

"Now of that long pursuit  
Comes on at hand the bruit;  
That Voice is round me like a bursting sea:  
'And is thy earth so marred,  
Shattered in shard on shard?  
Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest Me!

. . . . .

All which I took from thee I did but take,  
Not for thy harms,  
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.  
All which thy child's mistake  
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home.  
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!"

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1. "Little Book of Eternal Wisdom, Chapter I.

Halts by me that footfall;  
 Is my gloom, after all,  
 Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?  
 'Ah, fondest blindest, weakest,  
 I am He Whom thou seekest!  
 Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me.'<sup>1</sup>

4. With that conviction that the yearning is a result of the Divine drawing, and that God loves the soul and wants it for His own, the mystic love is born. It is a love of utter humility and gratitude, of infinite wonder that God so loves, of infinite devotion now that the fact is known.

"Tender loving Wisdom!" responds Suso, when the truth of God's love bursts upon him, "And is it Thou I have so long been seeking for? Is it Thou my spirit has so constantly struggled for? Alas, my God, why didst Thou not show Thyself to me long ago? Why hast thou delayed so long? How many a weary way have I not wandered!"

Eternal Wisdom - "Had I done so thou wouldst not have known My goodness so sensibly as now thou knowest it."

The Servant - "O unfathomable goodness! how very sweetly hast Thou not manifested Thyself to me! When I was not, Thou gavest me being, When I had separated from Thee, Thou didst not separate from me; when I wished to escape from Thee, Thou didst hold me sweetly captive. Yes, Thou Eternal Wisdom, if my heart might embrace Thee, and consume all my days with Thee in love and praise, such would be its desire; for truly that man is blest whom Thou dost anticipate so lovingly that Thou lettest him have nowhere true rest, till he seeks his rest in Thee alone."<sup>2</sup>

The story of Catherine of Genoa's experience is also in point here: "And suddenly as she knelt before him (the confessor) she received in her heart the wound of the unmeasured Love of God, with so clear a vision of her own misery and her faults, and of the goodness of God that she almost fell upon the ground. And by these sensations of infinite love, and of the offences that had been done against this most sweet God, she was so greatly drawn by purifying affection away from the poor things of the world

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1. "The Hound of Heaven".

2. "Little Book of Eternal Wisdom", Chapter I

that she was almost beside herself, and for this she cried inwardly with ardent love, 'No more world! no more sin!' And at this point, if she had possessed a thousand worlds, she would have thrown all of them away. . . . And she returned home, kindled and deeply wounded with so great a love of God, the which had been shown her inwardly, with the sight of her own wretchedness, that she seemed beside herself. And she shut herself in a chamber, the most secluded she could find, with burning sighs. And in this moment she was inwardly taught the whole practice of orison: but her tongue could say naught but this - 'O Love, can it be that thou hast called me with so great a love, and made me to know in one instant that which worlds cannot express?'"<sup>1</sup>

5. One thing further must be noted concerning the genesis of the mystic love. The mystic believes not only that God loves the soul and has made known his love. He believes, also, that the power to respond is given also by God. In essence love itself is God's gift.

For this let St. John of the Cross be our illustration. "We must remember", he says, "that the Word, the Son of God, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, is hidden in essence and in presence in the inmost being of the soul". . . . The soul's awakening "is a movement of the Word in the depth of the soul, of such grandeur, authority, and glory, and of such profound sweetness, that all the balsams, all the aromatic herbs and flowers of the world, seem to be mingled and shaken together for the production of that sweetness". . . . Then "occurs that most delicate touch of the Beloved, which the soul feels at times, even when least expecting it, and which sets the heart on fire with love, as if a spark had fallen upon it, and made it burn. Then the will in an instant, like one roused from sleep, burns with the fire of love, longs for God, praises Him and gives Him thanks, worships and honors Him, and prays to Him in the sweetness of love."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Vita - quoted in Underhill "Mysticism", pp. 219-220
2. These quotations from the "Living Flame" and the "Canticle" of St. John of the Cross are here quoted from Dom. Cuthbert Butler, "Western Mysticism", pp. 318-319.

Compare also St. Bernard ("On the Love of God")  
 "The cause of loving God is God. . . . He gives the occasion,  
 He creates the affection, he consummates the desire. . . .  
 Herein is a wondrous thing; no one can seek thee save whoso  
 has first found. Therefore Thou dost will to be found that  
 thou mayest be sought, to be sought that thou mayst be  
 found." (VII, 22)

"Therefore in a spiritual and immortal body, a body  
 perfect, calm and acceptable, and in all things subject to  
 the spirit, let the soul hope to apprehend the fourth degree  
 of love, or rather to be apprehended in it; for verily it  
 lies in the power of God to give to whom He wills, not to  
 human industry to acquire." (X, 29)

### III. The quality of the mystic love.

Love is of many kinds, and mystic love, as we have  
 pointed out<sup>1</sup> is of many kinds also. But at least it is  
 fair to say that in its most typical manifestations the  
 mystic love for God is marked by the following three  
 qualities.

1. It is "disinterested".<sup>2</sup> The term, disinterested  
 or "pure" love is a term used by the mystics themselves to  
 describe the kind of love they feel, and a great controversy  
 raged over it in the last decade of the seventeenth century  
 (1694-1699) of which the Quietist, Madame Guyon was the oc-  
 casion and Fenelon and Bossuet the chief protagonists.

The questions involved are chiefly two, (1) is a  
 "pure" or disinterested love really possible, and (2) sup-  
 posing that it is, is a life on that level a possibility?

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1. Ante, p.13

2. See on the problems involved here, especially von Hügel,  
 "Mystical Element" II, pp.152-181.

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The answer to the first question is, of course, that in strict logic a truly disinterested love is not possible. Bradley has pointed out the essential contradiction here in "Appearance and Reality".

"The good may be identified with self-sacrifice, and self-assertion may, therefore, be totally excluded. But the good, as self-sacrifice, is clearly in collision with itself. For an act of self-denial is, no less, in some sense a self-realization, and it inevitably includes an aspect of self-assertion. And hence the good, as the mere attainment of self-sacrifice is really unmeaning. For it is in finite selves, after all, that the good must be realized. And, further, to say that perfection must be always the perfection of something else, appears quite inconsistent. For it will mean either that on the whole the good is nothing whatever, or else that it consists in that which each does or may enjoy, yet not as good, but as something extraneously added unto him. The good, in other words, in this case will be not good; and in the former case it will be nothing positive and therefore nothing. That each should pursue the general perfection, should act for the advantage of a whole in which his self is included, or should add to a collection in which he may share - is certainly not pure self-sacrifice. And a maxim that each should aim purely at his neighbor's welfare in separation from his own, we have seen is self-inconsistent. It can hardly be ultimate or reasonable, when its meaning seems to end in nonsense."<sup>1</sup>

Bradley is here envisaging the problem in terms of the relation of love of neighbors to love of self, but in essence it is not different when love of God is involved instead of love of neighbor. We are in the presence of one of those paradoxes that so often are found at the heart of the great things of life. The emotion which is the most self-giving is at the same time the most possessive, the emotion which asks to suffer, at the same time

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1. "Appearance and Reality", pp.423-424.



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finds joy in suffering, the soul in losing itself saves itself. Professor Leuba has pointed out, how in the very act of loving the soul is satisfying crying needs of its own, and Ruysbroek long ago brought together the desire to give and the desire to possess in one statement: "The two spirits, our own spirit and the spirit of God yearn each for the other in love. Each demands of the other all that it is, and each offers to the other all that it is, and invites to all that it is. These two, God's grasp and His gift, our craving and our giving back, these fulfil love."<sup>1</sup>

In this sense, then love is not and can never be disinterested. It is only the logician who would argue that it could be. Spinoza could say, "Whoso loves God must not desire God to love him in return," and Meister Eckhart could write, "As long as ye possess the will to do the will of God and have the least desire for eternity and God, ye are not really poor; the poor man wills nothing, knows nothing, wants nothing,"<sup>2</sup> but when they so wrote they were writing as logicians, not as lovers. Such an extreme of selflessness would be the suicide of love. It would mean apathy, and apathy is love's negation.<sup>3</sup>

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1. "Traité de l'Amour de Dieu", Chapter IV,

2. "Works", p.218

3. Compare also Récéjac - "Bases of the Mystic Knowledge", P.217f

But most mystics, when they speak of "pure" love do not mean any such thing as this. Leibniz defined it when he said, "Our love of others cannot be separated from our true good, nor our love of God from our felicity. But it is equally certain that the consideration of our own particular good, as distinguished from the pleasure which we taste in seeing the felicity of another, does not enter into Pure Love."<sup>1</sup> The mystic means when he says that he loves God with a "pure" or disinterested love, that he loves Him for himself alone. The love of God is not a means to an end; it is the end itself. "One kind of Love is perfect", says St. Thomas Aquinas, "the other kind is imperfect. Perfect Love is that wherewith a man is loved for his own sake: as, for instance, when someone wishes well to another person, for that other person's sake, in the manner in which a man loves his friend. Imperfect love is the love wherewith a man loves something, not for its own sake but in order that this good thing may accrue to himself, - in the manner in which a man loves a thing that he covets."<sup>2</sup> The mystic loves God not for what

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1. Quoted by von Hügel, II, p.176 in "Mystical Element".

2. Quoted *ibid*, p.162. Compare Paterson, "Nature of Religion", p.293, "If the evangelical saint sought to be at one with God that he might be pardoned and sanctified, the mystic rather valued forgiveness and sanctification as the conditions of being united with God." Paterson's whole treatment of mystic love is well worth-while. pp.282-303.

He can do for him. He loves Him for what he is. A few examples may serve to make this clear:

Theologia Germanica, chapter XXXVII. - "This is our answer to the question, 'if a man by putting on Christ's life, can get nothing more than he hath already, and serve no end, what good will it do him?' This life is not chosen in order to serve any end, or to get anything by it, but for love of its nobleness, and because God loveth and esteemeth it so greatly. . . . And he who hath put on the life of Christ with the intent to win or deserve aught thereby, hath taken it up as a hireling and not for love, and is altogether without it. . . . Christ did not lead such a life as his for the sake of reward, but out of love. . . . God rejoiceth more over one man who truly loveth than over a thousand hirelings."

Catherine of Genoa - "I desire not that which comes forth from Thee, but only I desire Thee, O sweetest Love." (Vita e Dottrina, chapter VI)<sup>1</sup>.

William Law ("Christian Regeneration") - "All that I would here say of these inward delights and enjoyments (the blessings of the spiritual life is only this, They are not holiness, they are not piety, they are not perfection, but they are God's gracious allurements and calls to seek after holiness and spiritual perfection. They are not to be sought for, for their own sakes\*, they are not to be prayed for. . . . they are not to be rested in as the perfection of our souls. . . ."

This and this alone is the true Kingdom of God opened in the soul when, stripped of all selfishness, it has only one love and one will in it, when it has no motion or desire but what branches from the Love of God, and resigns itself wholly to the Will of God."<sup>2</sup>

Thomas Aquinas ("Summa") - "Charity attains to God Himself, that it may abide in Him, not that any advantage may accrue to us from Him."<sup>3</sup>

St. Bernard ("De Diligendo Deo") - "True love is content with itself. Its reward is the possession of the object loved. For whatever thou mayst seem to love for the sake of something else, thou clearly lovest the ultimate end of thy love, not the means. Paul doth not preach

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1. Quoted in Underhill, "Mysticism", p.298

2. "Liberal and Mystical Writings", pp.158-159

3. Quoted by E.G.Gardner, "Book of St. Bernard on the Love of God", p.9, Cf.10-11.

the Gospel that he may eat but eats that he may preach the Gospel; he loves, not meat, but the Gospel. True love seeketh no reward, but merits it. . . . How then should the soul that loves God seek any other reward of her love save God? If she seeketh another, she assuredly loves that, not God." (Chapter VII, p.17)

There are four degrees of love: (1) Whereby a man loves himself for his own sake (Chapter VIII). (2) Whereby he loves God, "but still for a while for his own sake, not for Himself." (3) Whereby God is loved for His very self. (Chapter IX). (4) When man loves not even himself except for the sake of God. (Chapter X)

"There is he who gives praise to the Lord, for He is powerful, and there is he who gives praise for He is good to him, and again he who gives praise simply for He is good. The first is a servant and fears for himself; the second a hireling and desires for himself; the third a son, and gives to his Father." (Chapter XII, p.34)

In this sense, there can be no doubt that disinterested love is possible and that mystic love is disinterested. As to the question whether it is possible for human beings always to love thus disinterestedly and never think of reward, the controversy reminds one of the similar controversy over sanctification, or "holiness". Such states of perfection are good things to work for, perhaps they will not by the humble be rashly claimed.

This emphasis on the love of God as the whole duty of man leads sometimes to two strange consequences.

(1) To a conflict between the love of God and the love of fellow-men. "Those persons who are favored of God", says St. Theresa, "do not attach themselves to others by the love which captivates and enchains, because it seems to them that this would be to love a thing of nothing and to

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embrace a shadow, and they could not therefore without blushing, tell God that they love him."<sup>1</sup> "Therefore he went on his way in wretchedness, pining for love", writes Suso of himself, "and with mighty efforts he withdrew himself from creatures - a practice which afterwards became very sweet to him."<sup>2</sup> And the most amazing example of all is the Blessed Angela of Foligno, "In that time and by God's will there died my mother, who was a great hindrance to me in following the way of God; my husband died likewise, and in a short time there also died all my children. And because I had commenced to follow the aforesaid way, and had prayed God that He would rid me of them, I had great consolation of their deaths, albeit I did also feel some grief."<sup>3</sup>

(2) To a tendency to rest in the delights of love rather than to be driven by love out to more fruitful activity.<sup>4</sup>

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1. "Le Chemin de la Perfection", Chapter VI. Quoted by Paterson, "Nature of Religion", p.299

2. "Life", p.9

3. Quoted in Herman, "Meaning and Value of Mysticism", p.145f.

4. It is noticeable, even today for example that the German Lutheranism which is descended from Pietism is notably lacking in the "social" emphasis which so characterizes the religion of Britain and America.

And yet in the grand mystics, these tendencies, while they may appear, certainly do not dominate. St. Theresa was a notably useful personage. So were the two Sts. Catherine, St. Francis of Assisi and many another. The tendency and the reaction against it are both brought out in the following story which Suso tells:

"It happened once, when the Servitor had gone into the chapter house and his heart was full of heavenly jubilee, that the porter came and summoned him to the door to a woman who wanted to confess to him. The Servitor tore himself unwillingly from his interior joys, and receiving the porter harshly replied that the woman must send for someone else, as he would not confess her then. Now she had a burdened and sinful heart, and her message was that she had a particular drawing to seek consolation from him, and that she would confess to no one else. But when she heard that he would not come to her, she began to weep from grief of heart, and going aside into a corner, sat down there in wretchedness and wept long and bitterly. Meanwhile God withdrew very quickly from the Servitor the delights of sensible grace, and his heart became as hard as a flint; and when he sought to know the meaning of this, God answered him: - As thou hast driven from thee uncomforted the poor woman with her burdened heart, even so I have withdrawn from thee My divine consolations. The Servitor sighed deeply and beat his breast, and ran with speed to the door, and, as he did not find the woman there, was in great distress. The porter ran about in every direction looking for her, and when at last he found her where she was sitting weeping, he brought her back with him to the door, and the Servitor, receiving her with great kindness, graciously consoled her repentant heart. Then he went back from her to the Chapter-house, and immediately in an instant the kind Lord was there again with His divine consolations, just as before."<sup>1</sup>

What appears to be really true is, that while certainly God is the center of the mystics' love and not fellow-man, the greater Christian mystics have commonly recognized

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1. "Life", pp.228-229

that love of God involves love of neighbor. "Thou dost command me to love my neighbor", exclaims Catherine of Genoa, "and yet I cannot love anything but Thee, nor can I admit anything else to be mingled with Thee. How then can I act?" And God answered, "He who loves me, loves all that I love."<sup>1</sup> The pure love of God becomes for the mystic, not only the end at which he aims, but the center from which on a new plane his life of love to fellowmen radiates. "Hence it followeth", says the *Theologia Germanica*, "that in a truly godlike man, his love is pure and unmixed, and full of kindness, insomuch that he cannot but love in sincerity all men and things, and wish well, and do good to them, and rejoice in their welfare",<sup>2</sup> and Richard Rolle has it: "Therefore if our love be pure and perfect, whatever our heart loves it is God. Truly if we love ourself and all other creatures that are to be loved, only in God and for God, what other in us and in them love we but Him? For when our God truly is loved by us with a whole heart and all virtue, then without doubt, our neighbor and all that is to be loved is most rightly loved. . . . Truly in the love of God is the love of my neighbor."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Quoted in Underhill, "Mystics of the Church", pp.164-165

2. Chapter XXXIII.

3. "Fire of Love", p.87

2. The mystic love is passionate. The truth of this statement, so far as it affects the mystics with whom we have been dealing - the mystics who seem to us most typical - will be apparent from the examples which have already been given. We shall, therefore, not labor the point, but proceed to notice certain tendencies which frequently rise out of that fact.

a. The passionateness of the mystic's love of God tends to lead him into all sorts of painful sacrifices and austerities. The matter of austerities only interests us here insofar as the mystic love of suffering grows out of his love of God, insofar as it represents the desire to suffer with and for the Divine.<sup>1</sup> Of the first of these Suso's cross is an example.

"Above all his other exercises he had a longing desire to bear upon his body something which might betoken a sensible sympathy with the painful sufferings of his crucified Lord. To this end he made for himself a wooden cross, in length about a man's span, and of corresponding breadth, and he drove into it thirty iron nails, intending to represent by them all his Lord's wounds and love-tokens. He placed this cross upon his bare back between his shoulders on the flesh, and he bare it continually day and night in honor of his crucified Lord."<sup>2</sup>

The second may be illustrated by Madame Guyon:

"I said to you, O my love, 'I wish to suffer for you; do not shorten my pains; it would be to shorten my pleasures

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1. Leuba has classified the causes of asceticism in the "Psychology of Religious Mysticism", pp.158-162. The causes that are in point here are (3) "Self-sacrifice as a proof of devotion" and (5) "imitation".

2. "Life", p.49



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I only find them in suffering for you. Indulgences are good for those who do not know the value of suffering, who do not wish that your divine justice should be satisfied, and who having a mercenary soul are less afraid of displeasing you, than apprehensive of the penalty which is attached to sin.<sup>1</sup>

There is a constant doubt in the mind of the modern as to how much God is really pleased by such self-inflicted suffering as this. Our ideas both of God and of the value of such suffering differ widely from those of the mystic flowering-time. But it is only fair to say that that doubt was shared by many of the mystics themselves.<sup>2</sup> And what this easy age frequently does not appreciate in its criticism of the mystics is the depth of devotion that led to these excesses. While not all mystics practiced such austerities as those we have mentioned, I think it is fair to say that all of them loved God enough to do so. Before we criticize too harshly we ought perhaps to ask ourselves whether our love approaches theirs in its readiness even for useful and necessary sacrifice.

b. In the second place, this quality of the mystic love led him frequently to the use of sentimental and passionate language and symbolism. Madame Guyon habitually called God "My Love" and carried on what might be spoken of not unjustly as a "heavenly flirtation" and Suso had a

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1. "Autobiography", p.77

2. Compare for example, Tauler, "Book of Spiritual Poverty", p.92

vision of what he called "God playing His play of love with his loving soul".

"He looked immediately and saw that his body over his heart was as clear as crystal, and that in the center of his heart was sitting tranquilly in lovely form, the Eternal Wisdom; beside whom there sat, full of heavenly longing, the Servitor's soul, which leaning lovingly towards God's side, and encircled by God's arms, and pressed close to His divine heart, lay thus entranced and drowned in love in the arms of the beloved God."<sup>1</sup>

The blessed Angela of Foligno heard the Holy Ghost say to her, "I love thee better than any other who is in the valley of Spoleto",<sup>2</sup> and St. Catherine of Siena was betrothed to the infant Christ with a ring which she could always see on her finger, though no one else could see it.<sup>3</sup>

Two questions arise here. First, how much of this use of sentimental and passionate language and symbolism is due to the diversion of the sex-impulse from its normal channels? The fact that so many of the medieval mystics were either celibates or unhappily married makes the question almost inevitable. Professor Leuba has studied the subject exhaustively and has concluded<sup>4</sup> that the sex impulse plays a very great part. With this we are inclined to agree. But to say, as Leuba inclines to do, that there

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1. "Life", p.22

2. Herman, "Meaning and Value of Mysticism", p.148

3. "Life of St. Catherine of Siena" - E.G.Gardner, p.26

4. "Psychology of Religious Mysticism", pp.137-153.

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is very little in love for God except a sublimated sex instinct is scarcely tenable. Perhaps a better-balanced statement of the case is that of Hocking:

"Beyond doubt, the mystic's exaltation sweeps up into its own current whatever in the thousand-fold alternate swingings of human nature moves in its own direction - not as their product but as their master. It would indeed be surprising if the sexual nature of man, with its movement away from the sphere of deeds to the sphere of substance, with its strong tide away from the particular to the over-individual and racial, with its suggestion of total infinite and yet immediate worth, did not more quickly and completely than any other impulse discover in worship its ultimate meaning and law. This must be the case: not because the love of God is at bottom sexual love, but because sexual love is potentially love of the divine."<sup>1</sup>

The second question is, how appropriate is this sort of language to man's relation to the divine? It was Ritschl who first raised the question in this form, though John Calvin before him had refused to admit tender love into his attitude to God, because it seemed to him inappropriate to God's sovereignty.<sup>2</sup> Ritschl wrote, after describing the mystic's familiarity with God:

"Such freedom implies for its exercise a footing of equality with God as thus contemplated. Christ, the Bridegroom, is divested of all the qualities of loftiness and sublimity, and all considerations of reverence are laid aside, in order that the believer may exchange with God in this form, all the delights of sensuously-colored tenderness."<sup>3</sup>

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1. "Meaning of God in Human Experience", p.577
  2. See Paterson - "Nature of Religion", p.291
  3. "Justification and Reconciliation", English translation p.180.

He felt that "faith" was a better word to describe man's proper attitude to God, than love, because it recognizes God's Deity and Sovereignty and therefore excludes the possibility of equality. In this he has been followed by Herrmann,<sup>1</sup> and by many other disciples. To these men, reverence, fear, awe, are the appropriate attitudes to God - not love.

The point of view against which Ritschl protested may be represented by St. Bernard:

"Nor is it to be feared that the inequality of the two who are parties to it (this love) should render imperfect or halting in any respect the concurrence of wills; for love knows not reverence. Love receives its name from loving, not from honoring. Let one who is struck with dread, with astonishment, with fear, with admiration, rest satisfied with honoring; but all these feelings are absent in him who loves. Love is filled with itself, and where love has come, it overcomes and transforms all other feelings."<sup>2</sup>

There is a real difference of opinion here and yet it would be easy to exaggerate it. Certainly Ritschl did love God and certainly St. Bernard did honor Him. Perhaps St. John of the Cross was wiser than either of them when he wrote:

"When the soul has the spirit of fear in perfection, it has in perfection also the spirit of love, inasmuch as this fear, the last of the seven gifts, is filial fear,

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1. "Communion with God", pp.272-281

2. "Sermons on the Canticles", lxxxiii, quoted in Butler, "Western Mysticism", p.162f.

and the perfect fear of a son proceeds from his perfect love of his father."<sup>1</sup>

Probably we must steer a middle course. If the mystics of the erotic type offend against good taste in their use of sentimental and passionate language, (and it seems clear that they do) it is not certain on the other hand, that the prosaic language of a purely Ritschlian piety does full justice to the sincere feeling of many religious folk. Who shall deny to humankind, when the heart overflows with love and gratitude to the Divine, the right to express it in even passionate terms? Who shall seek to put far away the God whom men have learned to love in intimacy? Let love and faith go hand in hand, as Dean Inge so finely suggests,<sup>2</sup> and they will correct each other. The mystics may in some of their moments have brought God too close.<sup>3</sup> How certain are we that for us he is not too far away?

c. And finally, the passionate character of the mystic love sometimes leads to the use of the language of self-annihilation. "Flesh and blood, vessel of clay",

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1. "Spiritual Canticle", XXVI, 2.
2. "Christian Mysticism", p.8, note.
3. That these are only some moments is well brought out by Otto. Compare ante.p.12

says St. Bernard, "when shall the earthen dwelling-place attain this? When shall the mind experience affection like this, so that, inebriated with divine love, forgetful of self, and become to its own self like a broken vessel, it may utterly pass over into God, and adhering to God become one Spirit with Him? . . . Blessed and holy should I call one to whom it has been granted to experience such a thing in this mortal life at rare intervals, or even once, and this suddenly, and for the space of hardly a moment. For in a certain manner to lose thyself, as though thou wert not, and to be utterly unconscious of thyself, and to be emptied of thyself, and, as it were, brought to nothing, pertains to celestial conversation, not to human affection."<sup>1</sup>

Where such language as this is meant to be taken literally, as in Hindu mysticism, for example, most westerners will consider that it underemphasizes man's personality. But I am convinced that in the Christian mystics the language of self-annihilation is not to be taken literally. We are again in the presence of one of the paradoxes of love. "In short", says Bradley, "a self other than the object, must and must not survive, a vital discrepancy to be found again in intense sexual love."

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1. "De Diligendo Deo", Chapter X, p.27

Every form of the good is impelled from within to pass beyond its own essence. It is an appearance, the stability of which is maintained by oscillation, and the acceptance of which depends largely on compromise."<sup>1</sup> Love is always a unifying principle, but the unity of love does not involve the lapse of the distinction between self and not-self. "On the contrary the very notion of love involves the distinction between the lover and the object loved. Even in the case of self-love, the self must be thrown out and conceived objectively before the emotion is possible, whereas in the case of the love of a not-self, no one can say that there is the slightest tendency on the part of the lover to confound the loved with his own personality. The truth seems to be in the opposite direction and in the clearer definition and distinction of the beloved."<sup>2</sup>

3. Finally, the mystic love is personal, or private. The mystic carries on his devotions in solitude, and it is to his ear alone that the message of God's love comes.

At times this leads to a subtle egotism, the most humble mystic rejoicing in the fact that he has been admitted to God's favor and that to him are whispered words not meant for the ear of the world.<sup>3</sup>

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1. "Appearance and Reality", p.442.

2. Ormond, "Foundations of Knowledge", p.42

3. Compare references to Suso and the Blessed Angela, ante pp.69, 85.

For the most part the mystics struggle manfully against this temptation to spiritual pride even in its subtlest form.<sup>1</sup> But what they do not avoid is the tendency to draw a deep line between themselves and the world. When a person has thus deeply tasted the love of God, and knows that he has done nothing to deserve it, and when he sees around him other men who seem to have no inkling of the fact which so stirs his soul, the conclusion is almost inevitable that there is some fundamental difference in quality of life between him and them. He has been chosen and they left out, he has been given a power of seeing which has been denied them; in some inexplicable way, in the providence of God, the mystic and the people of the world belong to different orders. He may agonize over the world's condition, as St. Catherine of Siena did; he may preach passionately, though as it were in an unknown tongue, like Jacob Böhme.

But whether he seeks to step across the line, or acquiesces in its presence and remains satisfied to enjoy his blessings without troubling too much over his less fortunate neighbors, always this sense of gulf, this inescapable dualism is there. His picture of the world

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1. Madame Guyon is an example of one who did not defeat it. St. Francis of Assisi of one who did. Compare "Little Flowers", IX.



is etched in blacks and whites. He has not learned, as we, alas, have all too well, the use of gray.

### B. The Fourth Gospel.

I. We now turn to the Fourth Gospel to inquire what place "love" occupies there.

The statistics of the word's use may first occupy us.

The noun ( *ἀγάπη* ) used 82 times in the New Testament, is used 6 times in John as against once each in Matthew and Luke.

The verb ( *ἀγαπάω* ) used 115 times in the New Testament, is used 36 times in John as against 7 in Matthew, 5 in Mark and 10 in Luke.

The verb ( *φιλέω* ) used 20 times in the New Testament, is used 12 times in John as against 4 in Matthew and 1 in Luke.

The single use of the word *ἀγάπη* in both Matthew and Luke refers to the love of God by men. Of the six uses in John's gospel, one (13:35) refers to love of the disciples for each other, one (5:42) to love by man for God, one (17:26) to love of God for Christ, and three (15:9,10, and 13) to love of Christ for his disciples.

*Ἀγαπάω* in Matthew refers - three times to love to neighbor (5:43, 19:19, 22:39)  
 - once to love to enemies (5:44)  
 - once to love of friends (5:46)  
 - once to love to a master (6:24)  
 (all these to love of men for men) - and only once to love for God (22:37)

*Ἀγαπάω* in Mark refers - once to the love of Jesus for the young man (10:21)  
 - twice to love for a neighbor (12:31,33)  
 - twice to love for God (12:30,33)

*Ἀγαπάω* in Luke refers - twice to love for enemies (6:27,35)  
 - twice to love for friends (6:32)  
 - once to love for the nation (7:5)  
 - once to love for a creditor (7:42)  
 - once to love for a position (11:43)  
 - once to love for a master (16:13)  
 - twice to love for Christ (7:47)  
 - once to love for God (10:27)

- Ἀγαπᾶω in John, however, refers - once to the love of men for darkness (3:19)  
 - once to the love of men for praise (12:43)  
 - four times to the love of the disciples for each other (13:34, 15:12,17)  
 and all the rest to love between God, Christ and men  
 (God to the world- 3:16  
 God to Christ - 3:35; 10:17; 15:9; 17:23,24,26;  
 Man to Christ - 8:42  
 Disciples to Christ - 14:15,21,23,24,28  
 A particular disciple to Christ - 21:15,16  
 Christ to disciples - 13:1,34; 14:21; 15:9,12  
 Christ to particular disciples - 13:23; 19:26;  
 21:7,20  
 Christ to Martha, Mary and Lazarus - 11:5  
 God to the disciples - 14:21,23; 17:23  
 Christ to God - 14:31)
- Φιλέω in Matthew refers twice to love within the family - 10:37  
 once to love of position - 23:6  
 once it is used in the phrase "love to pray" 6:5
- Φιλέω in Luke refers to love of recognition, 20:46
- Φιλέω in John refers once to the love of man for life - 12:25  
 once to love of the world for its own - 15:19  
 and all the rest to love between God, Christ, and men.  
 (God to Christ - 5:20  
 God to disciples - 16:27  
 disciples for Christ - 16:27  
 Simon for Christ - 21:15,16,17  
 Jesus for Lazarus - 11:3,36  
 Jesus for a particular disciple - 20:2)

It is apparent from these statistics that the idea of love in the circle, God, Christ, man occupies a place in this Gospel that it does not occupy in the synoptics.

In particular, however, the place of love in this gospel is made apparent by the prominence which is given to the figure of the beloved disciple. "The disciple whom Jesus loved" is reclining on Jesus' bosom at the last

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supper (13:23), receives the charge of Jesus' mother at the cross (19:26) and is at the tomb on Easter morning (20:2). Then in the appendix we are told that this disciple (21:20) is himself the author of the Gospel (21:24).

The problem of the identity of the beloved disciple is one of the unsolved mysteries of criticism. Traditionally, he has been identified with the unnamed disciple of 1:35-42, but that is only an inference, as is also his identification with John, the son of Zebedee. If account is taken of the fact that the formula appears only in the final portion of the gospel, from chapter 13 on, the suggestion of Delff becomes attractive, that he was a Jerusalem disciple, perhaps (by an identification with the unnamed disciple of 18:15-16), connected with the priests. But the difficulty of eye-witness authorship makes it difficult to think of the author as actually in these situations and if he is not the author, then we are faced with the question, Why the mystery concerning his name? Bacon cuts the Gordian knot by suggesting, not for the first time, that the figure is purely symbolic.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever the truth may be, whether the beloved disciple is actual historic figure, historic figure idealized, or pure symbol, this seems clear, that when

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1. Bacon, "The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate", Chapter XII.

the author painted this picture, he had in mind more than whatever person may have sat as the model. This figure was meant to represent the ideal disciple. In contradistinction to the Jews, who never understood Christ, and the other disciples who were perplexed in his presence, here was one who leaned on his breast and heard his whispered messages, to whom the most important commissions were intrusted, and - this is the important thing - his favored position was due to the fact that he loved and was loved by His Lord. Such a one the author must have felt himself to be. Such a one, he must have felt, must be the ideal for all disciples.

Finally, we are practically told in 14:21,23 that love is the "hierophant of the mysteries of God". "He that hath my commendments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him". That is to say, it is only the one who loves who is capable of enjoying the love or receiving the manifestation of the Divine. To Judas, as perhaps to us, this seems like an undue narrowing of the circle of the Master's affection and influence, and he asks about it: "Lord, what is come to pass, that thou wilt manifest thyself to us and not to the world?" And the answer makes it more clear than ever

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that this is not an arbitrary limitation but simply in the nature of the case. "If a man love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my words; and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me." It is not, Jesus implies, that love is rewarded by the coming in of the Father and the Son. Love is the only thing that opens the door. It is an indispensable pre-requisite for the highest type of experience.

II. If it is now clear that love occupies a position of preeminence in this gospel akin to that which it holds in mystic literature as a whole, we have next to ask whether in the experience of the author this love may be said to have arisen in the same way as in the mystics whom we have called typical.

Before, however, we proceed to that, we have to interpose one caution. The Fourth Gospel was written in the glow of a great experience. It begins on a high, philosophical plane, but the philosophical interest, one feels, is not primary. The author is simply seeking in his cosmological speculation a frame large enough for the story he has to tell. What is primary is the experience. And so, even in the prologue, the interest

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steadily rises, from its first solemn notes, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was divine," up through the nearer approach of the light. "The light shineth in darkness and the darkness apprehended it not. . . . He came unto his own and his own received him not," until it breaks out into the triumphant peal, with its reiterated first personal pronoun, "And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of an only begotten from a father, full of grace and truth." In the light of this testimony, the gospel must be read. It is not a dispassionately objective story of the life of Christ. It is a "gospel" in the strict sense, a telling of the good news of contact between God and men, from the viewpoint of a man who has intimately experienced that contact.

But while it is true that this gospel is the outcome of a great experience, and therefore we have a right to look for the marks of that experience in it, it is equally true that it is not a subjective record of that experience. It is not autobiographical - it is in no sense a work of introspection; as it begins philosophically, so it continues historically. It is, ostensibly at least, a life of Christ. And for that reason, all that we learn of that spiritual experience of the

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author, the wonder of which we can feel on every page, we have to read between the lines. The great cry of the prologue, "We beheld his glory" is one of the rare occasions on which the author lets himself speak in his own person. For the most part, the things we know about him, we have to infer. Inasmuch as inference has proved a snare to many a hardy exegete, we must move cautiously in our attempt to understand the experience behind the gospel.

Reading between the lines, however, and trying to preserve proper caution, it seems fair to say the following things about the genesis of that love for the divine to which the entire gospel bears witness.

1. The experience, like the mystic experience generally, takes its rise in a sense of vague dissatisfaction or need. This is proved by the figures which the author uses to describe the work of Christ in the human soul. Leaving aside for the moment the question of the historicity of the events described in this gospel, and also any detailed discussion of the author's symbolism, it is necessary at once to recognize that in the Fourth Gospel things generally mean more than they say. Whatever else the events narrated in the fourth gospel are, they are symbols of the work of Christ for the human spirit. And in scene after scene in the work before us

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Jesus is represented as satisfying someone's need.

There is that sign with which the gospel opens, the turning of the water into wine. He does not know the gospel, who sees in this only or primarily a kindly deed at a wedding feast. The author is painting a picture here, a picture of himself and other men who had felt the wine of their ancestral faith running thin and then had been conscious when they met with Jesus that the Master of the house had kept the good wine till the last, that the faith which Jesus gave them had a glow and sparkle to it unknown to them before.<sup>1</sup> There is the woman of Samaria, laboriously trying to draw up out of the wells of her heathenism a little water to satisfy her longing soul, until Jesus says, "I will give you living water springing up within your life."<sup>2</sup> There is the impotent man, impotent for thirty-eight years until Jesus says, "Arise and walk". There is the hungry multitude, taxing the resources of any provider of food, but Jesus feeds them easily and the bread with which he feeds them is heavenly bread. There is the man blind from birth, yet when Jesus has done with him, he says, "I see". There is Lazarus, dead four days but at the

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1. Compare St. John of the Cross - "Canticle" XXV, p.8

2. Compare St. Theresa, "Interior Castle", I, ii, 3, and many other places. Also "Vida", chapter ii, paragraph 10 and 11.



voice of Jesus he finds life.

Of course these figures of water, bread, life, light are common to religious literature everywhere. They are found in the Old Testament, in the mystery religions, in the mystics. There is nothing extraordinary in the evangelist's use of them. Only, they seem to prove quite clearly that the experience with which this gospel deals is represented as beginning in a sense of need. "If any man thirst", says Jesus, "let him come unto me and drink". (John 7:37)

2. This sense of need is interpreted as a divine drawing.

6:44 - "No man can come unto me, except the Father which sent me draw him." This is far from the easiest verse in the gospel for most interpreters. It seems, like its kindred passage in Romans (8:29-30) to posit a divine compulsion that leaves nothing to the human will, to lead to a fatalistic doctrine of election and a salvation that is not offered to all. It seems to imply, on the one hand, that if we are drawn by God we must obey, and if we are not chosen of him we have no option but outer darkness. But the key to such statements as these, which are common in the writings of the mystics, and indeed, of all who have had a profound, individual religious experience lies in the

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fact that they are statements of experience. They are not statements of reflection, which would have revealed at once their fatal bearing both on ethics and theology, but of how the experience felt. It seems to us, looking back upon our religious **experience** - as it seems to us looking back upon other of the great experiences of life - that we did not come there of ourselves. We could not have risen of ourselves to those heights of blessedness which we have attained. We were apprehended, we were called, we were drawn, a higher power than ourselves had charge over us and brought us through. Such a statement as this was never meant to be the statement of a dogma. It is simply the way all men whose religious experience is intense, who are to that extent mystical, feel at times. In this verse, we are simply seeing the fourth evangelist, in true mystic fashion, interpreting his experience of need and satisfaction as a divine drawing.

But what was the experience in the Evangelist's life which led him to make this interpretation? The answer is implicit in the verse under consideration. It was his discovery of Jesus Christ. It is the Father, "that sent me", who draws men. And if we may trust further the evidence of the gospel itself, it was particularly the sight of the cross. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth", he represents

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Jesus as saying, "will draw (the verb ἐλκύω, is the same) all men unto myself". (12:32) In this he is in line with Suso, who in the "Little Book of Eternal Wisdom" finds in the passion that which arouses his deepest love, and with many another mystic.

3. This is the origin, then, of the Johannine experience: A sense of need, interpreted as a divine drawing, the drawing of divine love. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life."(3:16) It has been said that practically everything essential to the Christian gospel is contained in this verse. Certainly nowhere but in Paul does one find the love of God for men so plainly set forth as here. The divine love revealed in the divine sacrifice initiates the Johannine just as it initiates the characteristically mystic experience.

And the sense of the divine love thus engendered is of the same intense quality that we have already noticed in the mystics. Here again we must resort to inference, to feeling that which is not expressed. But there are at least three places in the gospel where one can feel, hot on the page, this intense, grateful love.

The first is in the adoring wonder of that cry in the prologue to which we have so frequently referred, "We

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beheld his glory, glory as of an only-begotten from a father, full of grace and truth". (1:14)

The second, which reminds a student of the mystics of Suso's incredulous cry when the Eternal Wisdom revealed herself,<sup>1</sup> is the cry of the blind man when Jesus asked him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" "He answered, And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him? Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that speaketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him." (9:35-38)

The third, in which not only the intense, incredulously grateful love of the mystic for his Divine friend may be felt, but the source of it in the life, and particularly in the passion of Jesus, may be clearly seen, is 15:13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." This is not the statement of an abstract ethical truth. Clearly, there is in the author's mind as he writes the picture of Jesus who died, and in his heart a burning love for the Divine who thus loved him.

4. Finally, also, there is the mystic tendency to interpret this answering love, as a given love.

"All that which the Father giveth me", says Jesus, "shall come unto me; and him that cometh to me, I will in

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1. "Little Book of Eternal Wisdom", Chapter I. Compare ante p.72.

no wise cast out." (6:37)

"For this cause have I said unto you, that no man can come unto me except it be given unto him of the Father." (6:65)

"He that is of God, heareth the words of God: for this cause ye hear them not, because ye are not of God." (8:47)

"Ye did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide." (15:16)

It all reminds one of the word of St. Bernard, that only he can find God who has already been found of Him.<sup>1</sup> And the explanation of it is the same in all the mystics, the same which has already been given, a curious combination of humility and pride, the humility which says, "I am not deserving of all these great blessings. I could not have attained them by myself. I have been chosen, called, drawn, - the power with which I have come hither, the very love wherewith I have been able to love my God has been given me", and the unconscious pride which says, "Yet here I am, and I can respond to God's love and my fellows cannot. The thing is inexplicable except on the basis that I am somehow 'of God', he has chosen me." It is not a dogma. It could not be held as a dogma, except by one whose logic belied his heart. But it is the way the experience feels.

That this sense of the divine prevenience is not a dogma in John's gospel, but an indication of the mystic quality of his experience, is apparent from the fact that alongside it there runs another stream of tendency, logically incompatible with it, yet unmistakable. It is the tendency to hold responsible those who rejected Christ.

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1. St. Bernard, "On the Love of God", Chapter VII, p.22  
Compare ante p.74.

There is reproach in the tone of verses like 1:11 and 3:19, as though to say, "They that were his own (the people of Israel)<sup>1</sup> ought to have received him", "Men ought to have loved light rather than darkness." It is not logical to hold responsible those who could not come because they were not given the power, but in one case personal experience is speaking, "It seemed as though I could not refuse", in the other, the conscience (which always votes for free-will), "Everyone ought to accept him." We err in our interpretation of Scripture when we try to make the Biblical writers more systematic than they were.

III. Thus far the Fourth Evangelist has been found to conform quite closely to what has seemed to us the general mystic type. There is more divergence to be noted when we study the quality of the Johannine love.

Perhaps both the likenesses and the differences can best be brought out if we follow so far as may be the outline which our study of the mystic love has made for us.

1. Is the Johannine love disinterested?

There are references to reward in John's Gospel. To those who receive Jesus is given the right to become children of God. (1:12) Those who believe receive "eternal life" (3:36, 10:10, et al.) They are to be with the Master and honored of the Father (12:26; 14:3,21,23; 16:27). They are loved by Jesus (15:10) and may behold his glory (17:24). But in every case, it is to be noted that these are spiritual rewards, and rewards inherent in the very fact of believing, receiving and loving. They are in no sense arbitrary.

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1. Compare Westcott, "Commentary", Volume I, p.15.

And we have already noticed<sup>1</sup> that the motive which leads to love in the Fourth Gospel is just the sense of gratitude for the coming of the Divine into the life, wonder that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (1:14) and the hushed reverence in the presence of the cross, "Greater love hath no man than this"- 15:13). The source of this Johannine love is well brought out in the verses which introduce the story of the washing of the disciples' feet at the last supper.

"Now before the feast of the passover, Jesus, knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them to the uttermost. And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came forth from God and goeth unto God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments; and he took a towel and girded himself." (John 13:1-4)

These verses are designed to produce the impression of infinite condescension, and of infinite condescension because of infinite love. The only appropriate response to love like that is "pure" love, that seeks for no reward but the privilege of loving. Indeed such distinctions as are drawn by St. Bernard or St. Catherine of Siena between the love of a hireling and the love of a friend or son find their source in this gospel, (10:12-13, and 15:14-15).

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1. Ante pp.102-103

It is fair to say, then, that the Johannine love is like the love of the typical mystics in its quality of disinterestedness, its source in gratitude rather than in the hope of reward.<sup>1</sup> In its frank recognition of the presence of inherent, spiritual rewards for loving, however, it departs from the exaggerations of those mystics who sought to stretch the disinterestedness of love to a point which is love's suicide.

And in another way this disinterested love of John's Gospel departs from the aberrations of some of the mystics and follows the tradition of the greatest. There is no tendency in this gospel to let love become mere enjoyment which does not issue in appropriate action. "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (14:15) Jesus says again and again. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (14:21). "If a man love me, he will keep my word" (14:23). "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love" (15:10).

It is true, indeed, to say of the Johannine Christian what we said of the greatest mystics, that his love to the Divine becomes for him, the center of an outgoing life on a new plane. It is the source of a new moral life ("If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments.")

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1. See in I John 4:19, an explicit statement of that which we only infer in the gospel.



and a new social attitude

("A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." -13:34-35)

quite as much as it is the source of a new knowledge of the Divine,

("He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him." - 14:21)

and a new sense of his presence,

("If a man love me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." -14:23)

The love of God transforms the life both in its dynamic and in its static aspects.

2. Is the Johannine love passionate?

We have already shown that the Johannine love is intense.<sup>1</sup> We may now go on to say:

a. That it is a love that leads to sacrifice.

This hardly needs proof. We have just seen<sup>2</sup> that it involves the doing of the Master's commandments. But it involves more than that. It leads to acts of the deepest humiliation and abasement in service (Compare 13:1-17). And it led in Jesus' life and so conceivably may lead in the lives of his followers to the laying down of life

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1. Ante, pp.102-103.

2. Supra. p.107.

itself:

"I am the good shepherd", Jesus tells his disciples, "the good shepherd layeth down his life for his sheep." (10:11 Compare verse 15) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am, there shall also my servant be." (12:24-26) "This is my commandment, that ye love one another even as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (15:12,13)

b. Indeed, there is reason to think that in his passion of love the Fourth Evangelist contemplated a veritable self-annihilation, a complete merging of our wills with the will of the Father.

At least Jesus prays "that they may all be one; even as thou, Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us." (17:21) This would seem to indicate that the author taught a union with the Divine akin to the union of Christ with the Father, and that was plainly a union of wills.

"I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me".(6:38) Compare also 5:19. ("The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing; for what things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner"), 10:30 ("I and the Father are one"), 12:49,50 ("I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. . . The things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak.")

If this is the proper interpretation of the

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Johannine thought and we are to think that he considered such a complete sinking of the human will in the Divine as is involved here to be the ideal for all Christians, then the most extreme statements of the mystics scarcely go farther than this.<sup>1</sup>

c. But while the Johannine love is thus seen to be of the highest degree of intensity, there is nothing of that orgy of self-inflicted suffering that disfigures the pages of so many of the mystics<sup>2</sup>, and there is no underemphasis on human personality, no passive absorption.

Compare Jesus' statement, "I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment received I from my Father." (10:18) Here is a will, not passive, functioning independently, but functioning in complete harmony with the Divine will.

And, most of all, while there is no lack of use of the word, "love", there is in this gospel none of that sentimental and passionate symbolism which has been attacked in the writings of the mystics.

(1) The instinctive reverence of the Jewish mind in its thought of God is shown in the fact that never once

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1. Compare the statement of the Theologia Germanica, "I would fain be to the Eternal Goodness what his own hand is to a man." Chapter X.

2. Nothing better illustrates the excesses of "Roman Catholic piety" than a comparison of the meditations on the passion of Roman Catholic books of devotion with the noble restraint of the gospel narratives.

in this gospel of love are men said to love God. Men are said to become sons of God (1:12), to be born of God (1:13) to be under the wrath of God (3:36), to be loved by God (3:16; 14:21,23; 16:27; 17:23), to worship God (4:21,23,24) to be raised up by God (5:21), to honor God (5:23), to receive bread from God (6:32), to be given by God to the Son (6:37), to be drawn by God (6:44), to be taught of God (6:45), to be held in the Father's hand (10:29), to believe in God (12:44), to see God in Christ (12:45; 14:7,9), to talk to the Father (16:23), to be sanctified by Him (17:17). But never are they said to love him.

This is not to say that the author would have scrupled to use this language. He uses it of Christ, who is the Divine made manifest. But the fact that the phrase "to love God" is not used sets this off from mystical literature in which it is used constantly.

(2) And even in the references to Christ, there is an utter lack of that passionateness which we noted in mystic expression. The love is clearly present. It speaks directly at times, and indirectly constantly in the gospel. But there is a noble restraint, a veil drawn over the face of love which only lifts a little in such scenes as the anointing at Bethany (12:1-8), the last supper, with the disciple who lay on Jesus' breast (13:23-25) and the

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meeting between Christ and Mary in the garden (20:11-18). One feels the passion throbbing behind the words, but some instinct of reverence keeps the evangelist from such expression of it as fills the pages of the mystics.

Nothing has been said here concerning the use of the words ἀγαπάω and φιλέω respectively. Thayer says that ἀγαπάω "denotes a love founded in admiration, veneration, esteem" while φιλέω "denotes an inclination prompted by sense and emotion".<sup>1</sup> This is probably true. Christ is said ἀγαπᾶν Mary and Martha (11:5) but φιλεῖν Lazarus (11:3,36). Men never are said φιλεῖν God. God ἠγάπησεν the world (3:16) but φιλεῖ the disciples (16:27). But inasmuch as both words are used of love directed toward Jesus by men (Compare 14:23 with 16:27) the distinction does not help us here.

3. Is the Johannine love private and exclusive?

It is markedly so. Just as in the mystics, we have here a love which each individual has discovered for himself. "We beheld his glory", says John. "They have taken away my Lord", says Mary Magdalene. (20:13)

And the result is that inevitably a line is drawn between the world and the circle of believers and nearly all the references to love are within the circle - God, Christ, disciples. The hard line begins to be noticeable at once in the prologue. "He came unto his own and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become children of God." (1:11,12) It continues throughout the gospel. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit

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1. Lexicon, p.653.

is spirit." (3:6) "He that believeth on him is not judged; he that believeth not is condemned already." (3:18) "They that have done good (shall rise) to the resurrection of life; they that have done evil to the resurrection of judgment (5:29). "He that is of God heareth the words of God; ye hear them not because ye are not of God" (8:47). The lovers of Christ make a flock by themselves (10:3). They know his voice and he knows them (10:3-5,14,27). He lays down his life for them (10:11,15). That group is held in the Father's hand (10:28,29). From the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel through the seventeenth, we have a revelation given by Jesus to his own (13:1). One feels the warmth of friendship and love in that upper room, where secrets are whispered (15:15)<sup>1</sup>, but when Judas leaves the circle he goes out into darkness (13:30). Christ has chosen the disciples (15:16) and he will manifest himself to them and not to the world (14:22). It is to prepare a place "for you" that Jesus goes to the Father's house (14:2f) and it is for them, not the world, that he prays (17:9). Strange as it may seem, Jesus is never spoken of in this gospel as loving anyone outside the circle of believers, though for them his love is reiterated. Jesus frequently shows his compassion for men but the words that imply love are reserved for the disciples' circle.

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1. Compare St.Catherine of Siena, "Dialogo", Chapter LX.

This particularism extends even to the ethics of the gospel. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself", says the synoptic Christ, and we are led to understand that "neighbor" is universal. But the Johannine counterpart of "Love thy neighbor" is "Love one another" (13:34-35) and concerning the wider circle there is an almost complete silence. Almost the only suggestion of what we would call "social service" in the gospel is made by the traitor (12:5) and sternly rebuked by Jesus (12:8), "The poor ye have always with you, but me ye have not always."

This is not to say that there is in this gospel any real selfishness. There is an entire lack of that self-complacency which sometimes crops up in the works of the mystics. And there is a strong universalist note. It is not without design that Jesus is represented in chapter 4 as talking to a Samaritan woman or in chapter 12 as being sought by the Greeks. "God so loved the world" says 3:16, "this is the Savior of the world", says 4:42, "I have other sheep which are not of this fold", says 10:16, "I send the disciples into the world", says 17:18.

But the point is that for the Fourth Evangelist the thing of all-absorbing interest is the love relation

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that exists between Christ and his disciples. Where that is absent, as in the case of Judas, he cannot believe in the sincerity of what purports to be altruism. (12:6)) Nothing could show his essentially mystic affinities more clearly than this. That he is not only mystic but also in the fullest sense Christian is shown by the accompanying universal note.

Conclusion. Johannine Christianity is mystical in the emphasis which it lays on love between the human and the Divine. For John, as for the mystics, the ideal disciple is the one who loves most, and it is only to him who loves that the Divine is truly revealed.

The mystic love of the Fourth Gospel seems to rise out of the same type of experience as that which always rouses mystic love. A nature made for loving and being loved interprets its vague sense of longing as a Divine drawing and sees in its experience the proof of divine love. To this love it responds with all its native intensity, feeling at the same time that even its power to love is given it of God.

But in the quality of his love the Johannine mystic stands out among men of his type. He loves with a "pure" love, a love which asks for no reward beyond the

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loving, but he does not allow himself to be led into a vain striving for a selflessness which would be the suicide of love, nor to fall into the error of supposing that there is any conflict between the love of men and the love of God. The love of God is something to enjoy, but it is also something to spur one on to do. The Johannine mystic loves with an intense love, ready to be abased, ready to lay down his life, eager to unite his will with the will of the Father. But there is no thought of passive absorption in the Fourth Gospel, no devotion to suffering simply as suffering, no use of sentimental and passionate symbolism. A noble reverence and restraint mark the intensity of the Johannine love. Finally, the Johannine mystic knows as all mystics do, that in a sense the love of God for the soul is a personal and private thing. It inevitably draws lines between those who feel it and those who appreciate it not, between those who accept and those who reject it. The recognition of this fact, leads him characteristically enough to a deep sense of the mystery of the divine providence and almost into a mystic particularism. But he stops short. There is no self-complacency, no real selfishness, only a recognition that men can and do put themselves outside the circle of God's effective love coupled with a distrust of altruism that

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is not founded on love for the Divine.

The mysticism of the Fourth Gospel is clearly seen in the Gospel's emphasis on love. It is, however, a mysticism of the loftiest type, free from the eroticism, the selfishness, and the quietistic and ascetic excesses that frequently disfigure the lower reaches of this type of piety.

## CHAPTER IV.

### GOD.

"Thou wert more inward to me than my most inward part, and higher than my highest."  
- St. Augustine.

#### A. The Mystics

Fundamental to mysticism, we have said,<sup>1</sup> is the idea of divine immanence.

Compare on this point such statements as the following:

"Mysticism may be defined . . . . as the attempt to realize, in thought and feeling, the immanence of the temporal in the eternal and of the eternal in the temporal."<sup>2</sup>

"At the heart of mystical literature there throbs, as its vital impulse, a sense of God immanent in the world and in the soul."<sup>3</sup>

"Mysticism in the widest sense is nothing but the insistence upon immediacy, interiority, presence of religious experience."<sup>4</sup>

This follows directly from the definition itself, for if mysticism is the type of piety which lays special emphasis upon the divine-human union, then it must be possible to think of each as in the other, the Divine immanent in the human, the human immanent in the Divine. As Troeltsch says, presence, interiority, immediacy, are inherent in the very thought of union.

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1. Ante, p.14

2. Inge, "Christian Mysticism", p.5

3. Herman, "Meaning and Value of Mysticism", p.299

4. Troeltsch, quoted by von Hügel, "Essays and Addresses", I, p.181.

For illustration, let the following serve:

"God is not external to anyone, but is present with all things, though they are ignorant that He is so." (Plotinus, "Ennead" vi, 9)

"Since God is the universal cause of all Being, in whatever region Being can be found, there must be the Divine Presence." (Aquinas, "Summa", book III, Chapter LXVIII)

"I understood how our Lord was in all things, and how He was in the soul; and the illustration of a sponge filled with water was suggested to me." (St. Theresa, "Relacion", IX, p.10)<sup>1</sup>

"In the beginning I did not know that God is present in all things. . . . Unlearned men used to tell me that He was present only by His grace. I could not believe that. . . . A most learned Dominican told me that He was present Himself. . . . that was a great comfort to me." (St. Theresa, "Life", translated by D. Lewis, ed. 1888, pp.124,421,146)<sup>2</sup>

"God is in all things as being, as activity, as power." (Meister Eckhart, Pred. II.)

"All things are in God; out of Him, without Him, is naught. . . . God is inseparate from things; he is more innate in them than they are in themselves." (Eckhart, Pred. XLIX)

"God, the only good of all intelligent creatures, is not an abstract or distant God, but is more present in and to our souls than our own bodies. . . . For the sun meets not the springing bud that stretches toward him with half that certainty, as God, the source of all good, communicates Himself to the soul that longs to partake of Him." (William Law, "Spirit of Prayer")<sup>3</sup>

"We must remember that the Word, the Son of God, together with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, is hidden in essence and in presence in the inmost being of the soul." (St. John of the Cross, "Canticle", stanza I.)<sup>4</sup>

"We must keep in mind that God dwells in a secret and hidden way in all souls, in their very substance, for if He did not, they could not exist at all." (St. John of the Cross, "Living Flame of Love", stanza IV)<sup>4</sup>

1. These three illustrations are taken from Underhill, "Mysticism", pp.119-120.

2. von Hügel, "Mystical Element", Volume II, p.324

3. "Liberal and Mystical Writings of William Law", p.11

4. Butler, "Western Mysticism", p.318

But when we have said this, we have not gotten very far. The idea of divine immanence can be held in **an** infinite variety of combinations, and the mystic has shown a singular facility in making his peculiar witness fit the most diverse creeds. "Thus St. Theresa interprets her ecstatic apprehension of the Godhead in strictly Catholic terms. Thus Boehme believed to the last that his explorations of eternity were consistent with the teaching of the Lutheran church. Thus the Sufis were good Mohammedans, Philo and the Kabbalists were orthodox Jews. Thus Plotinus even adapted - though with what difficulty! - the relics of paganism to his doctrine of the Real."<sup>1</sup>

What we really want to study in this chapter is the way this idea of immanence shows itself in the theology of typical mystics.

1. Mysticism and pantheism.<sup>2</sup>

If left to itself, a doctrine which lays particular emphasis on the divine immanence is likely to move in the direction of pantheism.

"A purely immanental view of the divine", says Dr. Pringle-Pattison, "is equivalent to a sheer Pantheism"

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1. Underhill, "Mysticism", p.115

2. This subject is treated in masterly fashion by von Hügel, "Mystical Element of Religion", Volume II, Chapter XIV, especially pp.325-335.

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in which no distinction is drawn between God and nature,"<sup>1</sup> and Miss Underhill writes, "Unless safeguarded by limiting dogmas, the theory of Immanence, taken alone is notoriously apt to degenerate into pantheism. . . . It is the philosophical basis of that practice of introversion, the turning inwards of the soul's faculties in contemplation, which has been the 'method' of the great practical mystics of all creeds."<sup>2</sup> Baron von Hügel, as usual, analyzes the relationship more profoundly and notes three "attraits" which bring the mystics "into at least apparent proximity to pantheism." These are:

(1) "Mysticism, like pantheism, has a great, indeed (if left unchecked by the outgoing movement) an excessive thirst for Unity."

(2) "Like Pantheists, mystics dwell much upon the strict call to abandon all self-centredness."

(3) The mystic's tendency "of absorbing himself away from the Successive and Temporal, in the Simultaneity and Eternity of God" and "of clinging to such vivid picturings of this reality as are within his, this mystic's reach", leads him to the use of spatial imagery, which suggests "a Determinism of a Mathematico-Physical, Extensional type, i.e. one, and the dominant, side of Spinozistic Pantheism".<sup>3</sup>

The steps are easy to trace from "God is in my soul" or "I am in God", the essential mystic position, to "God is in all things" or "all is in God". From there it is only another short step to "God is in all things equally", and then it is but the turn of a phrase to "God is all and all is God".

It is, then, not surprising that speculative mysticism has often taken those steps. Rather is it surprising that, in its Christian form, it has so seldom

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1. "The Spirit", ed. Streeter, p.4

2. "Mysticism", p.119

3. von Hügel, "Mystical Element", II, pp.328-329.

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done so. The mysticism of India is pantheistic by nature. "The learned behold God alike in the reverend Brahmin, in the ox and the elephant, in the dog and in him who eateth the flesh of dogs", is a frequently quoted saying. But Christian mysticism has rarely gone to this length.

Scotus Erigena does so, "In strict parlance, the Divine Nature Itself exists alone in all things, and nothing exists which is not that Nature. The Lord and the Creature are one and the same thing."<sup>1</sup>

In his more unbridled statements, Meister Eckhart does so, "I am as certain as I live that nothing is so close to me as God. God is nearer to me than I am to my own self; my life depends upon God's being near me, present in me. So is he also in a stone, a log of wood, only they do not know it. If the wood knew of God and realized his nearness like the highest angel does, then the log would be as blessed as the chief of all the angels. Man is more happy than a log of wood in that he knows and is aware of God, how near at hand God is."<sup>2</sup>

And even a non-speculative mystic like the Blessed Angela writes, "I understand that He is present . . . in everything that hath being, in the demon, in the good angel, in hell, in Paradise, in adultery, in murder, in every good work."<sup>3</sup>

For the most part, Christian mystics, checked by the Christian doctrine of divine Personality, stop short with what Dean Inge has well called "panentheism",<sup>4</sup> the doctrine that God is in all things, but not identical with them.

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1. Quoted von Hügel, "Mystical Element", p.314

2. "Works", p.171

3. Quoted by Watkin, "Philosophy of Mysticism", p.37

4. "Christian Mysticism", p.121.

St. Thomas Aquinas says, for example, "God is in all things, as the agent is present in that wherein it acts. Created Being is as true an effect of God's Being, as to burn is the true effect of fire."<sup>1</sup>

And this doctrine of "panentheism" is not, like pantheism, purely speculative, but has its roots in experience. The mystic has found God within himself, and looking out upon the world, he sees everything with new eyes. God is in everything and everything in God. Such a doctrine is more characteristic of the Christian mystics than pantheism.

Since we illustrated the tendency to pantheism from Meister Eckhart, we illustrate this from him also: "Thy face is turned so full towards this birth," he says, concerning one in whom Christ has been born, "no matter what thou dost see and hear, thou receivest nothing save this birth in anything. All things are simply God to thee who seest only God in all things. Like one who looks long at the sun, he encounters the sun in whatever he afterwards looks at."<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Mysticism and the divine transcendence.

To say that the mystic doctrine of God is based on the idea of immanence, is not to say that in its typical form it is a pure immanentism. So far, indeed, is that from being the case that Professor John Oman found it possible to say, "To Pantheism God is wholly immanent - all is God; to mysticism God is wholly transcendent -

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1. Quoted by von Hügel, "Mystical Element", p.337

2. "Works", p.24



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God is all".<sup>1</sup> In this section, we must seek to reconcile the first statement with the truth which lies behind the serious misstatement of Professor Oman.

The mystic's experience is an experience of intimacy; it is that which is at the root of his characteristic immanental bias. But it is also an experience of ineffability; and that fact shows itself likewise in his doctrine of God. Pure immanentism tends to drag God down to the level of the creature. The mystic feels himself in his ineffable experience lifted up to the level of God. And so lifted, though only momentarily, he is conscious of the immense height above the earthly at which God dwells.

Says Professor Otto, "One of the chiefest and most general features of Mysticism is self-depreciation. . . . the estimation of the self, of the personal 'I', as something not perfectly or essentially real, or even as mere nullity, a self-depreciation which comes to demand its own fulfilment in practice in rejecting the delusion of selfhood, and so makes for the annihilation of the self. And on the other hand Mysticism leads to a valuation of the transcendent object of its reference as that which through plenitude of being stands supreme and absolute, so that the finite self contrasted with it becomes conscious even in its nullity that, 'I am nought, Thou art all.'"<sup>2</sup>

"Identification, alone, is not enough for Mysticism; it must be Identification with the Something that is . . . absolutely supreme in power and reality."<sup>3</sup>

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1. "The Church and the Divine Order", p.170; Herman, "Meaning and Value of Mysticism", p.287

2. Otto, "Idea of the Holy", p.21f

3. Ibid, p.22

This aspect of the mystic's experience finds its philosophic expression in the Emanation - theory of Plotinus and the Via Negativa of Dionysius, the Areopagite.

"The system of Plotinus", says Mackenna, "is a system of necessary emanation, procession or radiation accompanied by necessary aspiration or reversion-to-source; all the forms and phases of existence flow from the Divinity and all strive to return thither and to remain there. . . . The first hypostasis (The Supreme). . . is unknowable: its nature - or its super-nature, its supra-existence - is conveyed theoretically by the simple statement that it transcends all the knowable, practically most often by negation of all Quality. . . . We may utter no more of it . . . . than that in an ineffable, Supra-Existence, it exists, that in an ineffable Super-Act it acts, that it is everywhere in the sense that without its Supra-Existence nothing could be, that it is nowhere in that it is loftily alien from all else."<sup>1</sup>

Dionysius followed Plotinus in the outline of his system, and made even more stringent the negative way of approaching the Divine.

"For even as things which are intellectually discerned cannot be comprehended or perceived by means of those things, which belong to the senses, nor simple and imageless things by means of types and images, nor

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1. "Plotinus", Volume I, pp.118-119. Compare "Ennead" V, 313

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the formless and intangible essence of unembodied things by means of those which have bodily form, by the same law of truth the boundless Super-Essence surpasses Essences, the Super-Intellectual Unity surpasses Intelligences, the One which is beyond thought surpasses the apprehension of thought, and the Good which is beyond utterance surpasses the reach of words."<sup>1</sup> - Dionysius, the Areopagite, "The Divine Names", I,1.

But it would not be worth-while for our purpose to spend time on this philosophy were it not that it entered deeply into the texture of medieval mysticism. Over and over again in the writings of the Christian mystics is found this tendency to sheer transcendence, to what Professor John Watson called the "deification of the word, 'not'."<sup>2</sup> Can this "sense of the Divine Transcendence run riot" be harmonized with the characteristic mystic sense of immanence?

I have already pointed out that it can.<sup>3</sup> Transcendence may mean two things in theology. It may mean "aboveness" and it may mean "withoutness". Both meanings it holds in what Dr. Pringle-Pattison calls "pure" transcendence,<sup>4</sup> the transcendence of English Deism, of Mohammedanism, of classical Judaism. Deism and Mohammedanism teach that God is far above and utterly without,

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1. Rolt's translation, p.53. Compare "Mystical Theology", Chapter V. Ibid pp.200-201.

2. Compare Herman, "Meaning and Value of Mysticism", p.298

3. Ante, pp.15-17

4. In "The Spirit", Streeter, ed. pp.5-7

Judaism that he is utterly without, though not so far away. For the Deist God cannot be reached at all, for the Mohammedan only by prayer, for the Jew he is accessible but wholly separate. In this sense God could not, for the mystics, be transcendent.

But in the qualitative sense, and this is what the *via negativa* implies, God may be above and within at the same time, above in the sense that He is far, far greater than we, within in the sense that there can yet be immediate contact.

So Plotinus frequently combines the ideas of transcendence and immanence in one sentence.

"That which we seek is the One, the Principle of the Universe, the Good and the First; therefore the way is to keep ourselves in the close neighborhood of Unity, never allowing ourselves to fall away towards the lower sphere of Multiplicity; we must keep calling ourselves back from the sense-known world. . . . to the Primals, from all that is evil to the Absolute Good; we must ascend to this Principle within ourselves."<sup>1</sup>

"The Supreme is not absent from anyone and yet is absent from all; present everywhere It is absent except only to those who are prepared to receive it, those who have wrought themselves to harmony with It, that have seized It and hold It by virtue of their own Likeness to It, and by the power in themselves akin to the power which rays from it."<sup>2</sup>

"The Soul restored to Likeness goes to its Like and holds of the Supreme all that soul can hold."<sup>3</sup>

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1. "Ennead", VI. 9. 3. Mackenna, Volume I, p.156

2. "Ennead", VI. 9. 4. Ibid, p.157

3. "Ennead", VI. 9. 11. Ibid

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So St. Augustine writes the sentence that stands at the head of this chapter, and again, "Where did I find Thee, except within myself, or rather, in Thyself, above me?"<sup>1</sup> So Aquinas says, "God is above all things, by the excellence of His nature, and yet He is intimately present, within all things, as the cause of the Being of all."<sup>2</sup> And so Delacroix concludes, "Christian Mysticism is orientated at one and the same time towards the inaccessible God where all determination vanishes, and towards the God-Logos. . . . In spite of the sometimes contradictory appearance of absorption in the Father, it is, at bottom, the Mysticism of the Son."<sup>3</sup>

The mystic doctrine of the Divine Transcendence, properly understood, is a qualitative doctrine. It means that God is above all that we can say or think; it means that He can never be fully understood; it does not mean that he cannot be found or that when he is found he must remain forever outside. Intimacy and ineffability meet in the mystics, immanence and transcendence are made one.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Quoted in Herman, "Meaning and Value of Mysticism," p.321
  2. Quoted in von Hügel, "Mystical Element," Volume II, p.337
  3. Quoted in Herman, "Meaning and Value of Mysticism," p.301
  4. To understand that even the via negativa is not purely negative, see Dionysius, "Mystical Theology", Chapter III, particularly the last sentence. God is "Not" only in the sense that He is "More".

There is an aspect of the mystical doctrine of transcendence which does seem spatial rather than qualitative. When Plotinus or Dionysius or St. John of the Cross speak of the journey to God as an ascent, it appears that they are placing Him far away in opposition to mystics like Jacob Boehme or St. Theresa who picture it as a turning within. But such language, in both cases, is figurative. "To mount to God", says a tract attributed to Alfred the Great, "is to enter into one's self. For he who inwardly entereth and intimately penetrateth into himself gets<sup>1</sup> above and beyond himself and truly mounts up to God." The mystics who speak of the journey to God as a mounting above oneself and those who speak of it as a turning within oneself are really speaking of the same thing.

So confusing is language in these regions that pantheism, "pure immanentism" and the *via negativa*, extreme transcendentalism, prove to be extremes that meet. Dionysius has expressions which are nearly pantheistic,<sup>2</sup> and Dr. Paterson actually speaks of the Dionysian system as "agnostic pantheism".<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Mysticism and the divine personality.

The tendencies which we have been noting in the mystic conception of God are predominantly the result of speculation. It is when the mystic speculates about the nearness of God which he has felt that he tends toward pantheism, and when he speculates regarding the ineffability of his experience that he is attracted to the *via negativa*. In both these cases personality in God appears to be endangered.

But in observing this fact, we are not observing anything peculiar to mysticism. It is generally true

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1. Quoted in Underhill, "Mysticism", p.364. Compare pp.121-123.

2. Compare Inge, "Christian Mysticism", p.108

3. "The Nature of Religion", p.289.

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that while religion gives us Something warm and responsive at the heart of the universe, Something which we call personal, speculation inclines to give us Something cold and bare. The Absolute, which is reached by philosophy, fails to satisfy the religious heart. The personal God, toward whom religion always tends, is sometimes hard to fit into a consistent philosophy.

On this contrast, compare Baron von Hügel's comment on the work of Ernest Troeltsch: "It is indeed the very vividness and massiveness of his religious sense, which brings the sympathizing reader to a quick and keen bewilderment, or to a painful arrest and benumbedness of feeling, when the same Troeltsch attempts the philosophical formulation of this his religious sense. . . . The religious Troeltsch continually propels and warms us religiously, but the philosophical Troeltsch often at the same time draws us back and chills us philosophically, indeed also religiously, since, after all, man's soul is not a man-of-war divided into so many water-tight compartments."<sup>1</sup>

This is not to say that the religious and philosophical views cannot be brought together. The question of a philosophically satisfactory Personalism (or supra-Personalism) cannot be discussed here.<sup>2</sup> But it is necessary to observe that if the divine personality seems to be lost in the utterances of mystics like Dionysius or Meister Eckhart, this is due less to their mysticism than to their speculative habit of mind. Non-mystical philoso-

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1. von Hügel, "Essays and Addresses", Series I, p.187

2. On this subject see Lotze, "Microcosimus", Book IX, Chapter IV and C.C.J.Webb's Gifford lectures, "God and Personality".

phers have reached very similar conclusions.

Mysticism, as experience, indeed, tends rather to affirm than to deny the divine personality.

Directly, the mystic experience, since it is ineffable, adds little to the content of Christian theology. But indirectly, the fact already noted, that the most speculative mystics fall into the language of love when they speak of That Which they have encountered,<sup>1</sup> is of the utmost importance. If Professor Webb is right when he suggests that by personality in the Divine, we mean simply, something that responds to us in personal fashion,<sup>2</sup> and if we are to give any credence at all to the mystic experience, it must help us to believe in personality in the Divine when we are told by the mystics that in their adventures into the unseen, they meet with that which calls forth love.

Further, the illustrations which have already been given from mystics in the full Christian stream, indicate that the doctrine of divine personality was not only wholly congenial to them, but provided the symbolism in which they best described their experience.

As Dr. Mackintosh remarks, however,<sup>3</sup> the mystic

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1. Ante, pp.65-67

2. "God and Personality" p.73

3. "Doctrine of the Person of Christ", p.338



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experience forces us somewhat to enlarge our conception of the meaning of personality. Strauss wrote, "Personality is that self-hood which shuts itself up against everything else, excluding it thereby from itself."<sup>1</sup> And the popular view of the personality of God partakes somewhat of that nature. The personality of God is thought of after the model of the personality of man. God is just another person, another individual, beside ourselves.

But the mystic cannot possibly hold such a view as this, of an "impenetrable" divine personality. He has felt God at times, perhaps, as another person beside himself, but in his deepest moments his experience has been more profound than that. He has known God as a Being fully personal-in the sense that he responds to us in personal fashion - but this personality of God has been not exclusive but inclusive of his life. In some sense God is not "just another Person", but is the only Person, to whose personality all our little lives belong.

This recognition at once of the fact that the Divine whom we love must be thought of as personal, and of the fact that He must be thought of as super-individual is well illustrated in the passage from Ruysbroek quoted by Miss Underhill.<sup>2</sup> "When we have become Voyant, we are able to contemplate in joy the eternal coming of the Bridegroom. . . . The coming of the Bridegroom is so swift, that He comes perpetually, and he dwells within us with His abysmal riches, and he returns to us as it were anew in His Person, with such a new radiance that He seems never to

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1. Quoted by Mackintosh, "Doctrine of the Person of Christ" p.338

2. "Mysticism", pp.411-412

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have come to us before. For his coming consists, outside all time, in an Eternal Now, always welcomed with new desires and new joys. Behold the delights and the joys which this Bridegroom brings in His coming are fathomless and limitless, for they are Himself; and that is why the eyes of the soul by which the lover contemplates the Bridegroom, are opened so widely that they can never close again." Here is the recognition that no language will do justice to the quality of the mystic experience, but the language associated with personality.

Nevertheless, a little later he is saying, "the infinite Undifferentiation of the Godhead is so dark and so naked of all image that it conceals within itself all the divine qualities and works, all the properties of the Persons, in the all enfolding richness of the Essential Unity, and forms a divine fruition in the Abyss of the Ineffable One."<sup>1</sup> Here is a plainly super-individual, supra-personal conception.

There is no contradiction here, any more than there is contradiction when St. Catherine of Siena, in the very act of talking to God as a daughter to a father, calls him a Sea Pacific in which she has filled the pitcher of her heart.<sup>2</sup> It is simply the recognition that while personal language leaps first to the lips, because our relations with God are of a personal nature, the language of "just another Person" is inadequate. He is more than that.

. It must be remarked that there are mystics of comparatively feeble intelligence, like Madame Guyon, who in their intimacy with God, fall into an anthropomorphism (or an "automorphism") quite as crass as that of simple non-mystical believers. But even so, the conception of the divine personality with them is not of the "marbles in the box"<sup>3</sup> variety.

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1. "De Ornatu Spiritualium Nuptiarum", Book III, chapters III and VI.
  2. "Dialogo", Chapter LXXXIX.
  3. Compare Mackintosh, Op.cit.

## B. The Fourth Gospel.

1. The God-concept of the Fourth Gospel does not differ fundamentally from that of the rest of the New Testament. It is the characteristic Hebrew conception of a transc<sup>end</sup> person, dwelling outside of and above his world.

a. He is spoken of as sending his son into the world or Jesus is spoken of as coming from him. "I am come down from heaven not to do mine own will but the will of Him that sent me." (6:38) Compare also 3:2,16, 17,34; 5:23,24,36,37,38; 6:29,39,44,46,57; 7:16,18,28, 29,33; 8:16,18,26,29,42; 12:44,49; 13:3,20; 14:24; 16:27,28,30; 17:8,25; 20:21

b. Jesus goes out of the world to return to Him. "Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father." (13:1) "I came out from the Father and am come into the world; again I leave the world and go unto the Father." (16:28)

"I am no more in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to thee." (17:11)

"I ascend unto my Father and your Father and to my God and your God." (20:17)

c. God sends the Holy Spirit (14:26; 15:26)

d. He speaks from heaven

"There came therefore a voice out of heaven, saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." (12:28)

Not only is he outside of and above his world, but he is far removed from human eyes.

"No man hath seen God at any time." (1:18)

"No one hath ascended into heaven" (3:13)

"Not that any man hath seen the Father." (6:46)

2. This doctrine of the Divine transcendence, however, is very profoundly modified by two facts.

a. It is modified, first, by the author's belief,

that, in Jesus, the Divine has actually appeared in the world. This is expressed in his doctrine of the Divine Sonship.

There are, perhaps, four ways in which human beings may be thought of as standing in the relation of son to the Divine.

(1) The first is physical.- God standing in the place of a physical parent or parents. So he stood to Adam, who had no human parents (Luke 3:38); so he stood to Christ according to the virgin birth stories (Luke 1:35); so perhaps the Roman centurion was thinking, in terms of his pagan myths when he said of Jesus "This must have been a son of God". (Matt.27:54; Mark 15:39)

(2) The second is "theocratic". The kings of Israel were thus called "sons of God" (2 Samuel 7:14; Psalms 2:7; 89:27) and it became a Jewish appellation of the Messiah. It is thus, as a Messianic title, God's ambassador or representative, that the term is commonly used in the synoptics: (Matt.4:6; 8:29; 14:33; 26:63; 27:40,43; Mark 3:11; 5:7; 14:61; Luke 4:3,9,41; 8:28; 22:70)

And "Son of God" as a Messianic title is not unknown in the Fourth Gospel. (Compare 1:49; 9:35; 11:27; 19:7; and perhaps 10:36)

(3) The third is "ethical", i.e. the sonship of intimacy and likeness. This, too, is found in the Synoptics (Compare the baptism and transfiguration stories - Matt.3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35; the confession of Peter - Matt.16:16 - and particularly the famous "Johannine" passage - Matt.11:27; Luke 10:22<sup>2</sup> And it is plainly the significance of verses like John 3:35 and 5:19.

(4) But where this evangelist speaks of Jesus as the Son of God, he ordinarily means more than that Jesus is very intimate with the Father or very like Him. "I and the Father are one", says Jesus (10:30). "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (14:9) This Jesus was not just a God-filled man. He came from heaven where he had had a pre-existent life, and returned thither.

1. See Thayer, "Lexicon", p.636

2. It seems to me that we must not try to find in the "Johannine" passage more than an "ethical" sonship. Even so it represents the most advanced Christology in the Synoptics. To read into it the Christology of John would be to make it a freak.

(6:38 and 16:28 already cited) And also

"No man hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of Man who is in heaven." (3:13)

"Before Abraham was born, I am". (8:58)

"Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was".(17:5)

He shares the Father's life (5:26) and the Father's prerogatives (5:21) and will share them to the last.(6:40)

If such a man as this reveals the Father, it is not by telling about Him or imitating Him, but because he is in some inexplicable way a part of the Divine. (1:18)

b. Even more, however, than by his belief that in Jesus, the Divine has actually appeared in the world, the conception of an externally transcendent God is modified by the author's conviction that in his own experience he has found the Divine within himself.

What that experience had been we have already partially seen and we shall see with greater clarity as this thesis progresses, but essentially it had been a filling with new life and new light.

"As many as received him, to them gave he the power to become children of God." (1:12)

"Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (3:3)

"The Son giveth life to whom he will". (5:21)

"If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever." (6:51)

"Whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." (11:26)

These passages and many more expressing the experience in terms of "life". And as for light:

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"I am come a light into the world that whosoever believeth on me shall not abide in the darkness." (12:46)

"While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light." (12:36)

And the cry of the blind man, "Whereas I was blind now I see." (9:25)

It would have been perfectly possible to have interpreted this experience as the touching of the soul into new life by some entirely external force, and this seems to be what is done in the passages which treat Jesus' words as life-giving in themselves. (6:63, 68).

But in general, under Hellenistic influence,<sup>1</sup> the evangelist has interpreted it as a dwelling of the Divine within. This teaching is contained in the supper discourse. There Jesus is made to point out that though he leaves the world in bodily form, he will not truly be gone. He will return to be with them and in them in real presence forever.

"I will not leave you desolate, I come unto you. Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth me no more. But ye behold me. Because I live, ye shall live also. In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me and I in you." (14:18-20)

"Abide in me and I in you." (15:4)

"A little while and ye behold me no more, and again a little while and ye shall see me." (16:16)

Sometimes, instead of Christ himself, it is the Holy Spirit who will be with them and in them.

"I will pray the Father and he will give you another Comforter that he may be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth. . . . he abideth with you and shall

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1. See Scott, "Hellenistic Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel", American Journal of Theology, Vol. XX, pp. 345-359.

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be in you." (14:16-17)

"The Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things." (14:26)

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father. . . . he shall bear witness of me." (15:26)

"It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the comforter will not come to you, but if I go away, I will send him unto you." (16:7)

"When he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." (16:13)

Sometimes it is even said that the Father will be with them and dwell in them.

"If a man love me he will keep my word and my Father will love him and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." (14:23)

"I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one." (17:23)

And once they are said to dwell in Him.

"Even as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be in us." (17:21)

3. With this kind of an experience and this kind of an interpretation of it, it was inevitable that the original conception of an externally transcendent Divine should be modified. The Father who sent Jesus had also somehow been present in him. The God whom no man had ever seen had been revealed. The Divine who dwelt outside the world was also in men's hearts.

And so out of the evangelist's mystic experience and his Hellenistic environment, a conception of Divine immanence emerges, alongside the hereditary view. If

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the author had been a philosopher it would have been worked out at greater length. As it is, we have only the grand conception of the Prologue and a few hints in the Gospel itself.

The question was, how to frame a conception of God that would find for Christ a place in the cosmic scheme, that would explain the experienced indwelling of the Divine in the believer's heart, and that would still not do violence to the idea of Divine transcendence which the evangelist had inherited from his ancestors.

The answer was found in the idea of the Logos. In the beginning was God, the personal, creator God of Genesis. That idea is never lost sight of in the Fourth Gospel, and for that reason there is never the slightest suggestion of a pure immanentism.

But "with" God (  $\pi\rho\acute{o}s\ \tau\acute{o}\nu\ \theta\epsilon\acute{o}\upsilon$  )<sup>1</sup> was the Word. I have already pointed out<sup>2</sup> the different strains of thought that went to the making of this idea. We have here a hypostalization of the Divine self-utterance that finds its roots in the "word" of the Old Testament and the "Sophia" of the wisdom

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1. Compare Harris, "Origin of the Prologue to St. John's Gospel", p.8

2. Ante, pp.37-38.



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literature. And yet this Word is more intimately a part of the Divine than even these. The Wisdom who was by God as a master workman (Prov.8:30) was not so much a part of Him as this Word. What we have is really a marriage of the true Greek conception of a Divine which is actually through the world, (though perhaps mediated through the mysteries so that it is more immanent life than immanent reason) with the Hebrew idea of an externally transcendent God. With God (raying out from Him, as it were) was this Logos, which was actually divine (  $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$  ). It was not only he who was the agent of creation (Compare Genesis 1 or Proverbs 8) but it was he who continued to be the life-principle in the world. ("That which hath been made was life in him" - verses 3c-4a)<sup>1</sup> The life of all things and the light of men was this Word (verse 4). But though present everywhere, its presence was not realized by the world (verse 5)<sup>2</sup> It is the light of every man (verse 9) Yet when it came incarnate into the world, the world neither knew it nor received it.

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1. Compare Westcott and Hort Greek Testament and Westcott, "Commentary", Volume I, pp.59-63.

2. Compare Plotinus, "Ennead" VI,9.4. "The Supreme is not absent from anyone and yet is absent from all; present everywhere, It is absent except only to those who are prepared to receive it."

The evangelist turned philosopher, then, develops a true immanentism which is still consistent with the transcendence of God in which his Hebrew training had led him to believe, though not with its externalism. Jesus, one might say, incarnated the Divine immanence.

But how is it with the rest of the gospel? Does the philosophical construction which the author has been compelled to make, if his speculation was to accord at all with his experience, influence his thinking in the body of the Gospel?

The idea of Jesus as light and life incarnate does carry over. (Compare 3:19; 9:5; 8:12; 5:26; 6:33-35) The effect of the softening of the Jewish external-transcendence idea is seen in the interpretation of the Evangelist's experience as a real divine indwelling.

But only once is a statement made directly about God that would seem to imply that the Divine immanence in the world (as distinguished from the Divine within Jesus or within believers) is in the front of the author's mind. This is in the statement of Jesus to the Samaritan woman, "God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (4:24). The Samaritan woman had spoken as though God were tied to certain times and

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places, and Jesus in answering does not merely say in the conventional way that "God is everywhere".<sup>1</sup> He says in effect, "You are totally wrong about God's nature. He is not an exalted Man to be bound to a certain place. He is Spirit, and therefore permeates the world. You may meet him anywhere if only your heart is right, if only you understand that this is so, and have yourself transcended the limitations of the body." One wonders whether again the idea of the Divine permeation of the world is in the author's mind when he makes Jesus say to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof but knowest not whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." (3:8) It is because the Spirit is everywhere immanent ("present yet absent") that it so noiselessly permeates the soul that receives it.

It is necessary for us to realize how new an idea this of the actual presence of the essentially Divine in the world really was. The Hebrews had had their idea of a Divine spirit taking possession of men, but even as late as the **great** prophets this Spirit was rather a divine **agent** than the Divine Itself. "Hebrew monotheism shrank", says Scott, "from the presumption of imagining God himself taking possession of a man. It thought of God as approaching His servants through a power that had indeed come forth from Him and expressed His holy will, but was still other than Himself."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Compare I Kings 8:27

2. Scott, "The Spirit in the New Testament", p.32

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Not till the very end of the Old Testament period do we get something like a real presence of the Divine in the world (Compare Job 27:3; 32:8; 33:4, where the Spirit of God is the life principle in man, Genesis 1:2 where the Spirit broods over the face of chaos, Psalm 139 where the omnipresence of the Spirit is strikingly brought out and 51:10-12 where the Spirit is a comforting, helping power which really seems to partake of the essence of the Divine)

But in the Synoptics, if anything there is a reversion to the older view. The Spirit is rather a power from God taking possession of a man than the divine presence itself.<sup>1</sup> (Compare Mark 1:8,10,12; Matt.3:11,16; 4:1; Luke 3:16,22; 4:1; 10:21) It is interesting, however, to observe a movement toward greater inwardness in the thought of the Spirit. In Mark it "driveth" Jesus to his temptation (1:12), in Matthew he is "led up of the Spirit" (4:1), in Luke "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led in the Spirit in the wilderness (4:1). There seems to be a movement somewhat akin to that observed in the Old Testament toward the idea of a more intimate presence of the Divine in the world and in men. And this idea reaches its culmination in the Fourth Gospel.

Conclusion. We have in the Fourth Gospel, a characteristically Hebrew idea of an externally transcendent God, modified in the direction of immanentism by the author's own peculiar mysticism. The externality of the concept has vanished, and the God has become an immanent-transcendent God, who dwells in believers in similar fashion as he dwelt in Christ. Still above and outside his world, he is also and ever has been within it, an all pervading spiritual presence, source of men's life and light. Quite clearly, this Gospel illustrates the effect which mysticism inevitably has upon the idea of an externally transcendent God.

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1. Compare Scott, op.cit. pp.64,67,71,76f.

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In contrast, also, with what we have called "the main stream of Christian mysticism" this gospel shows no tendency toward either pantheism or the *via negativa*. It proceeds, indeed, in the former direction as far as the "panentheism" of the prologue, but there it is held in check. It shows no tendency at all to move in the direction of the latter, though the demands of mystic otherness<sup>1</sup> are met by the author's own high agnosticism.<sup>2</sup>

The reasons for this difference would seem to be:

1. This gospel is unspeculative as compared with much of the writing of the mystics. Both of the tendencies noted belong to the philosophic temper of mind.<sup>3</sup>

2. The thought-background of the gospel is fundamentally Hebraic, therefore strongly ethical and personal, while the thought background of most of the "main-stream" mystics is Dionysian, or if not Dionysian, at least Augustinian and neo-Platonic. The influence of neo-Platonism on Christian mysticism has been largely negative so far as the God-concept is concerned.

3. The experience behind the gospel is filled with meaning by the historic life of Christ. It is

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1. Compare Otto, cited on p.124

2. 1:18; 3:13; 6:46

3. Compare ante p.129.

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when the mystics have been least influenced by the historic life of Jesus that they have showed the greatest tendency toward the via negativa. When one believes firmly that the only-begotten Son has revealed the Father it follows that it is far truer to speak of God in terms of Jesus than to say nothing.

The study of the God-concept, like the study of love, shows the fourth evangelist to be a mystic but a mystic singularly free from what might be called "mystic excess".

## CHAPTER V.

### SIN AND THE PURGATIVE WAY.

"No one can be enlightened unless he be first cleansed or purified and stripped." - Theologia Germanica

#### A. The Mystics.

In the study of the mystic attitude to sin it will be found convenient to adopt the distinction made in the previous chapter, between the mystic as philosopher and the mystic as religious man.

1. The mystic as philosopher and the problem of evil.<sup>1</sup> The mystic, with his passion for unity, has as philosopher one guiding principle. It is that the Good must be supreme, and everything else must be capable of being brought into relation to it.<sup>2</sup> It is that principle which moves him, as we have seen, in the direction of pantheism, and it is fully operative when he contemplates the problem of evil, of which the problem of moral evil or sin, of course, is an important part. The Good must be supreme and everything capable of being brought into relation to it, but evil is contrary to good and refuses to be brought into any relation except that of opposition. The dilemma is a familiar one, and the solution which the

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1. The whole subject is discussed by von Hügel, "Mystical Element", Volume II, pp.290-308.

2. Compare Plotinus, "Ennead" I,8,2 - "The Good is that on which all else depends, towards which all existences aspire as to their source and their need."

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mystic ordinarily chose is one of the best known of the possible ways out. He denied the Existence or the Reality of evil. By this he did not mean that it is an illusion, any more than darkness is an illusion. He meant that it is not an entity. Evil is the absence of Good. Absolute Good is the Real, the Existent. Absolute Evil would be the absolutely Unreal or non-Existent. So far as things which we call evil exist, they exist by virtue of the Good which they contain.

This position may become clearer if we refer to a few of the more philosophic mystics themselves:

"If such be the nature of Beings and of that which transcends all the realm of Being," says Plotinus, after making the statement quoted above,<sup>1</sup> "Evil cannot have place among Beings or in the Beyond-Being; these are good. There remains only, if Evil exist at all, that it be situate in the realm of Non-Being." - Ennead I, 8, 3. Compare also in this same tractate particularly paragraphs 5 and 10, but the whole tractate is the classic discussion of the subject from this point of view.

"What is the nature of evil?" asks Dionysius, "From what origin did it arise and in what thing doth it lie? . . . . What other cause can anything have excepting the Good?" and he answers, "Evil cometh not of the Good; and if it cometh therefrom it is not evil. . . . And if all things that have being come from the Good. . . then nothing in the world cometh of evil. Then evil cannot even in any wise exist, if it act as evil upon itself. And unless it do so act, evil is not wholly evil, but hath some portion of the Good whereby it can exist at all. . . . Evil hath no place either amongst things that have being or things that have not, yea it is farther removed than the Non-Existent from the Good and hath less being than it." - Divine Names, Chapter IV, 18, 19. Read sections 18-35, particularly 34.

Augustine - "All which is corrupted is deprived of good. But if they be deprived of all good, they shall

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1. Ante, p.146 note.



cease to be. . . . So long therefore as they are, they are good, therefore whatsoever is, is good. That evil, then, which I sought whence it is, is not any substance: for were it a substance, it should be good." - Confessions, VII, 18.

Julian of Norwich - "After this I saw God in a point. . . . by which sight I saw that He is in all things . . . . that he doeth all that is done. I marvelled in that sight, . . . and thought: What is sin? . . . I am sure that he doth no sin.

And here I saw verily that sin is no deed; for in all this, sin was not showed." - Revelations of Divine Love, revelation 3, chapter 11.

"But I saw not sin; for I believe it had no manner of substance, ne no part of being." - Ibid, revelation 13, chapter 27.

Theologia Germanica - "All that is, is good, insofar as it hath being. The Devil is good, insofar as he hath Being. In this sense nothing is evil, or not good." Chapter XLVII.

Meister Eckhart - "Evil is nothing but privation, or falling away from being; not an effect, but a defect."<sup>1</sup>

There is truth in this sort of philosophizing.

If the Good is to be thought supreme, evil cannot be of the same order of reality as it. But in practice it might easily lead to vicious moral consequences. We shall see that in the mystics it practically never did.<sup>2</sup>

2. The mystic and sin. The same mystics whose philosophic treatment of sin was thus negative, were, as religious men, doughty fighters against sin. The first

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1. Quoted by von Hügel - "Mystical Element", Volume II, p.294.

2. A possible exception to this statement is the pantheistic sect known as the "Brethren of the Free Spirit". They were accused by their enemies, probably not always justly, of libertinism. Compare Rufus Jones, "Studies in Mystical Religion". pp.192-195, 213-215.

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portion of the mystic way, known as the purgative, was almost entirely taken up with that struggle. It is probably true to say that the mystic is not, like the moralist, interested in goodness as an end in itself, but he is tremendously interested in conquering sin as a necessary first step in his quest for union with God.

The mystic conceives of sin, as might be expected, in terms of that quest. Sin is for him that which hinders union, that which stands between him and God, a weight that pulls him back when he would fly heavenward, an accretion that hinders his progress like barnacles on a ship, a mist that covers the soul-mirror so that it does not reflect the Divine, an insulation that keeps the soul from responding to the rays of the Sun.

Julian of Norwich: "I saw that. . . . as long as we be medled (mixed) with any part of sin, we shall never see clearly the blessed chear (face) of God. And the horribler, and the grievouser that our sins be, the deeper are we for the time fro this blessed sight." - Revelations of Divine Love - Chapter 71.

St. Augustine: "I. . . . was borne up to Thee by Thy beauty and soon borne down from Thee by mine own weight." - Confessions VII, 23.

St. John of the Cross: "Desires and attachments affect the soul as the remora is said to affect a ship; that is but a little fish, yet when it clings to the vessel it effectually hinders its progress." - Ascent of Mt. Carmel, Book I Chapter XI.

St. Theresa: "Being with the rest at Hours, my soul was suddenly suspended and every part of it seemed to me to be like a clear mirror. . . . and Christ our Lord. . . . in the center of it. . . . I understood that when a soul is in mortal sin, this mirror is covered with a dense mist, and becomes very black, so

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that the Lord can neither be represented in it nor seen, although he is ever present, giving us life and being. . . It. . . filled me with sorrow for the times when my sins darkened my soul so much that I could not see the Lord."<sup>1</sup>

St.Catherine of Genoa: "It is as with a covered object, the object cannot respond to the rays of the sun, not because the sun ceases to shine. . . but because the covering intervenes. Thus the souls are covered by a rust - that is, by sin - which is gradually consumed away by the fire of purgatory. The more it is consumed, the more they respond to God their true Sun." - Trattato di Purgatorio, ii.<sup>2</sup>

Though sin may take many forms the mystics are almost unanimous in ascribing it to one ultimate cause, self-love. If the self can only be subjugated, the mystic feels that sin will be conquered, and the way opened to union with God.<sup>3</sup>

Theologia Germanica: "The Scripture and the Faith and the Truth says, Sin is naught else but that the creature. . . turneth away from the Perfect to 'that which is in part' and imperfect, and most often to itself. . . . When the creature claimeth for its own anything good. . . as if it were that, or possessed that, or that were itself, or that proceeded from it. . . . the creature goeth astray. What did the devil do else. . . . but that he claimed for himself to be also somewhat, and would have it that somewhat was his, and somewhat was due to him. This setting up of a claim and his I, and Me and Mine, these were his going astray, and his fall, and thus it is to this day." So "his I, Mine, Me, and the like" was the cause of Adam's fall. "as soon as he called something his own, he fell, and would have done so if he had never touched an apple."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Quoted in Graham "Santa Theresa", 2 ed. p.410

2. Quoted in Underhill, "Mysticism", p.244.

3. On this matter see a very fine discussion by Nicholson in "The Mysticism of St.Francis of Assisi", with an important distinction between the higher and lower self.

4. "Theologia Germanica", Chapters II and III.

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St. Catherine of Siena: "Woe to that soul in which this holy hatred (of sin) is not; for needs must be that where it is not, self-love will reign, which is the sink of all sins and the root and cause of every evil greed."<sup>1</sup>

"Self-love, which takes away charity and love of our neighbor is the source and foundation of every evil. All scandals and hatred and cruelty and everything that is untoward proceed from this perverse root of self-love; it has poisoned the entire world, and brought disease into the mystical body of the Holy Church and the universal body of the Christian religion."<sup>2</sup>

### 3. The purgative way.<sup>3</sup>

The first portion of the mystic way, therefore, is taken up with the purgation of the life from sin. The desires, the passions, the pride of self must be completely annihilated, the soul made humble, pure and strong for its arduous quest. "The kingdom of God", says Meister Eckhart, "is for none but the thoroughly dead",<sup>4</sup> those, that is, who have completely died to self.

The intensive struggle begins at once upon conversion. "No more world, no more sins", was St. Catherine of Genoa's first cry when the love of God filled her heart.<sup>5</sup> And Suso's call to his soul, setting out upon

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1. Quoted in Gardner, "St. Catherine of Siena", p.17

2. Quoted *ibid.* p.381

3. For the best discussion, compare Underhill, "Mysticism", pp.239-278

4. "Works", p.419

5. von Hügel, "Mystical Element", Volume I, p.105.

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its journey is, "Come, my soul, depart from outward things. . . . that thou mayst set out with all thy courage and bury and lose thyself in the desert of a deep contrition."<sup>1</sup>

But though it is to be an arduous struggle, the mystic does not go to it under the whip of dire necessity. He flings himself into it gladly, impelled by love. "He that desires to love Christ truly, not only without heaviness but with a joy unmeasured he casts away all things that may let him."<sup>2</sup>

The mystic struggle, of course, is one, the struggle with the self in whatever way it manifests its perversity, but for convenience we may divide it into three: (1) the subjugation of self-will and pride; (2) the subjugation of selfishness, which involves detachment from the world in all its forms; (3) the subjugation of the flesh or the passions.

a. The subjugation of self-will and pride.

The purpose of this struggle is the cultivation of a humble resignation to the will of God. Only the person whose will has been utterly given up to God's will, who is entirely pliable in God's hands, the mystic

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1. "Little Book of Eternal Wisdom", Chapter V quoted by Underhill, "Mysticism", p.243

2. Rolle, "The Mending of Life", Chapter I.

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believes, can be united with Him.

"This is how Meister Eckhart puts it, "Seek nothing at all, not understanding nor gnosis, nor piety, nor inwardness, nor peace, but only God's will. . . . God-knowledge is vain apart from God-will. . . . Never pray for any mortal thing; if thou must pray for anything at all, pray for God's will and nothing else, for therein thou hast all."<sup>1</sup>

And again, "I was thinking just now: if God does not will what I do, then I must will what he does. Some folks always want their own way; that is bad, that way lies sin. Those others are a trifle better who would like to do God's will and have no mind to go against it, yet when they are sick they wish God would choose to make them well. These people would have God, then, conforming to their will, rather than they to his. We condone this although it is wrong. The just have no will at all; whatever God wills, it is all one to them, regardless of the hardship."<sup>2</sup>

With such an ideal as this, the mystic sets out to break his own will. There are two possible ways of doing this:

(1) One is to seek opportunities for yielding the will to the will of other persons. "When a man dies to a scornful word, bearing it in God's name. . . . or makes no excuse when wrongfully accused,"<sup>3</sup> this is a victory won in this struggle. It was said of St. Catherine of Genoa that "she lived greatly submitted to all persons. . . . in such a way that she was always inclined to do more promptly the will of others than her own."<sup>4</sup>

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1. "Works", p.140

2. Ibid, p.161

3. Tauler, quoted by Underhill, "Mysticism", p.262.

4. Ibid, p.271

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(2) But such opportunities do not seem to come frequently enough to accomplish the mystic's purpose, or perhaps the method is not arduous enough to satisfy the mystic intensity. At any rate, the mystic frequently adds the more direct and forthright practice of habitually refusing to do the things which he desires and doing those things against which his will protests. Tauler says in the passage quoted above that "When a man dies. . . to some inclination inward or outward, acting or not acting against his own will, be it in love or grief, in word or act, in going or staying; or if he denies his desires of taste or sight,"<sup>1</sup> this also helps in the conquering of self-will. And the passage just quoted about St. Catherine of Genoa says that she "always sought to do all things which were contrary to her own will."<sup>2</sup>

"And first", this is still St. Catherine, "so soon as she perceived that her nature desired anything, at once she deprived it thereof, and did so that it should receive all those things that it abhorred. She wore harsh hair, ate no meat nor any other thing that she liked, ate no fruit, neither fresh nor dried."<sup>2</sup>

Ignatius Loyola wore his hair long "as he was somewhat nice about the arrangement of his hair as was the fashion of those days and became him not ill" and allowed his nails to grow, "for on these points he had been fastidious to an extreme."<sup>2</sup>

Madame Guyon compelled herself to do all the things her senses liked least "until they were become so docile that they had no longer either desire or distaste for anything."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Tauler, quoted by Underhill, "Mysticism", p.262

2. Ibid, p.271

3. Ibid, p.272

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This may all seem very foolish but it is to be remembered that the mystics did not do these things because they liked to nor because they thought asceticism in itself pleasing to God. They were disciplining their wills so that they might be surrendered to God's will.

b. The subjugation of selfishness, through the practice of detachment.

"If the soul would see God", says Meister Eckhart, "she must not look at anything in time."<sup>1</sup> There is not room, the mystic believed, for more than one love in the life. Therefore all desire for anything but God must be swept away if union is to be accomplished.

"So long as the soul entertains (a selfish attachment to particular objects)", says St. John of the Cross, "it is useless to hope that we can ever attain to perfection, even though the object of our attachment be of the slightest importance possible. Does it make any difference whether a bird be held by a slender thread or by a rope, while the bird is bound and cannot fly till the cord that holds it is broken? It is true that a slender thread is more easily broken, still, notwithstanding, if it is not broken, the bird cannot fly. This is the state of a soul with particular attachments; it never can attain to the liberty of the divine union, whatever virtues it may possess."<sup>2</sup>

Obviously, if attachment to the world stands in the way of union with God, the thing to do is to break that attachment. The practice of poverty and withdrawal from the world are the ways commonly chosen by the mystics

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1. "Works", p.173.

2. "Ascent of Mt. Carmel", Book I, Chapter XI, 5-7



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to accomplish that end.

"Being one night in a most profound Penitence", says the biographer of Mrs. Antoinette Bourignon, "she said from the bottom of her heart, 'O my Lord, what must I do to please Thee? For I have nobody to teach me'. . . . At that instant she heard, as if another had spoken within her, 'Forsake all earthly things. Separate thyself from the love of the creatures. Deny thyself'. From this time the more she entered into herself the more she was inclined to abandon all. But she had not the courage necessary for the complete renunciation. . . . She asked always earnestly, 'When shall I be perfectly thine, O my God?' and she thought He still answered her, 'When thou shalt no longer possess anything and shalt die to thyself'. . . . At last. . . . she submitted, and having disguised herself in a hermit's dress. . . . she went out of her chamber about four in the morning, taking nothing but one penny to buy bread for that day, and it being said to her in the going out, 'Where is thy faith? In a penny?' she threw it away. . . . Thus she went away wholly delivered from the heavy burthen of the Cares and Good Things of this World."<sup>1</sup>

But even such heroism is not always sufficient, for what good is it to give up possessions if the love of them remains? "I am not speaking here of the absence of things", says St. John of the Cross, "for absence is not detachment if the desire remains - but of that detachment which consists in suppressing desire. . . . it is this that sets the soul free, even though possession may be retained still. It is not the things of this world that occupy or injure the soul, for they do not enter within, but rather the wish for and desire of them which abide within it."<sup>2</sup> And Meister Eckhart writes,

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1. Underhill, op.cit., pp.256-257

2. "Ascent of Mt.Carmel", Book I, Chapter III, 4

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"The man who has a thousand marks of gold and gives it all away for love of God is doing a fine thing; yet I saw it were far finer and far better for him to despise it, setting it at naught on God's account."<sup>1</sup>

And so to kill out desire, active discipline must again be resorted to.

It was really something like this that St. Francis, the patrician had in his mind when he forced himself to put on the beggar's habit and beg scraps from door to door. "The priest aforesaid. . . . was fain to purvey him (Francis). . . . some fare beyond the common. For he knew that he had lived delicately in the world. And truly, as the man of God did himself afterward confess, he did oftentimes provide him of rich syrups and confections and did shun distasteful meats. But when on a day the priest told him that which he had been doing for him, he said to himself. . . . 'This is not the life of a poor man which thou didst desire to choose'. . . . Therefore on a day he took a dish, and came into the city, going from door to door asking an alms. . . . But when he would have eaten that medley of various meats, at first he shrank back for that he had never been used willingly even to see, much less to eat, such scraps. At length, conquering himself he began to eat, and it seemed to him that in eating no rich syrup had he ever tasted ought so delightful."<sup>2</sup>

c. The subjugation of passion. The mystic has no harder fight than with the temptations of the flesh. There are two reasons for this. In the first place, the mystic is himself a person of peculiarly passionate nature. The intensity with which he does everything proves this beyond peradventure. Secondly, he very frequently leads

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1. "Works", p.122

2. "Legend of St. Francis by the Three Companions", Chapter VII, paragraph 22.

an abnormal physical life, that forces the strong physical impulses, like the sex impulse to seek unusual outlets. But the mystic knows no method of fighting these temptations except the method of direct attack. The severest austerities may frequently be traced back to this origin.

In the life of Suso, he says of himself, "He was in his youth of a temperament full of fire and life; and when this began to make itself felt, and he perceived what a heavy burden he had in himself, it was very bitter and grievous to him; and he sought by many devices and great penances how he might bring his body into subjection to his spirit." There follows an account of gruesome penances, and he concludes, "He continued this tormenting exercise for about sixteen years. At the end of this time, when his blood was now chilled and the fire of his temperament destroyed, . . . he discontinued it and threw all these things away into a running stream."<sup>1</sup>

Much of the mystic discipline, it will be observed, is ascetic. And yet asceticism and mysticism are not synonymous terms. For there have been ascetics who were not mystics and mystics who were not ascetics. To the mystic asceticism is not an end in itself. But he does find it useful as a means of mortifying the self, and he uses it just as long and as far as he thinks it valuable for that purpose.

The mystic's aim is always "detachment", and by detachment he means utter selflessness, freedom from all the ties that bind him to the world, freedom from bondage to his own will or desires, indifference to his

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1. "Life", Chapter XVII.

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state, so that it be only the will of God.

It is easy to criticize the mystics.

(1) Sin is not, in mystic fashion, to be absolutely equated with self-assertion. There are self-assertive virtues as well as self-assertive vices. The mystic virtues of humility, obedience, resignation, even purity are after all of a negative character.

(2) Subjugation is not so good a method as sublimation in dealing with the self. The damming of a strong current may be wrong many times when the digging of another channel would be wise and right.<sup>1</sup>

(3) And the direct method of dealing with sin has certain other subtle inadequacies. Fastening the attention upon that which you wish to destroy is frequently not so efficacious as centering the attention upon something better, and sometimes the introspection entailed in this method of direct attack, fosters a subtler egotism than that which is destroyed.

The mystics sometimes recognize this: "When thoughts of sin press on thee", says the Cloud of Unknowing, "look over their shoulders seeking another thing, the which thing is God."<sup>2</sup>

(4) Renunciation, while frequently taking great courage, may be a cowardly and even selfish movement, if

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1. Compare Leuba, "Psychology of Religious Mysticism", p.162.

2. Underhill, "Life of the Spirit and Life of Today", p.118

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it leads one to run away from battles that ought to be fought or duties that ought to be done in the world.

(5) Self-inflicted suffering is wasteful of energy<sup>1</sup> and has little to commend it.

(6) And where detachment comes to mean pure passivity, or indifference, it is a poor result of so much effort.

But while it is easy to point out errors, it is perhaps more important to learn lessons.

(1) Selfishness, pride, self-will and passion have been potent causes of sin throughout the world's history and no age needs more to learn it than our own.

(2) Intolerance of sin and heroism in the treatment of it are sorely lacking among us.

(3) Renunciation is still, as ever, a vital and much neglected element of religion.

(4) Even suffering needs to be courted by those who would save their souls and those of others in a world of comfort.

(5) And true "selflessness" is one of the hardest and most necessary lessons for a Christian to learn.

There is something strangely reminiscent of the ethics of Jesus in the mystic's choice of the narrow and

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1. Compare Leuba, op.cit., p.162.

thorny path. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon", "Leave father and mother", "If thine hand offend thee, cut it off". For recalling us to these emphases perhaps we should thank the mystics.

#### B. The Doctrine of Sin in the Fourth Gospel.

1. "And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin because they believe not on me."  
(John 16:8-9)

It is from this passage that the study of the doctrine of sin in the Fourth Gospel may best begin. For in the Fourth Gospel, it is true, in a sense, to say there is only one sin, the sin of unbelief. There is a sense in which the blind man in the ninth chapter speaks for the author when he says, "Whether he is a sinner, I know not. One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." (9:25) The author did know whether Jesus was a sinner (Cf.8:46) but to him the most important thing about Jesus is not his ethical attitudes but his giving of light and life, and the most important thing about any man or group of men is not their doing of good or evil, but their attitude to the Life giver.

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Let us prove this point in two directions, first by showing that the ethical note which is so strong in the Pauline epistles or the Synoptics is almost lacking in this gospel; second by showing that practically everywhere, where judgment or condemnation or penalty is spoken of, or where sharp lines of contrast between people are drawn, the determining factor is not ethical right or wrongdoing, but belief or unbelief in Jesus.

a. The comparative absence of the ethical note. If you read through the gospel, and omit the pericope adulterae (7:53-8:11), while you will find many things that imply ethical judgments, you will find practically no direct ethical teaching such as is found in the synoptics, except the teaching to the disciples in the upper room: "If I then, the Lord and the teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (13:14) and "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another" (13:34; 15:12,17). The disciples are told "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (14:15), but further than the two injunctions above, we are not told in this gospel what the commandments are, and when the multitude at one time asks Jesus, "What must we do that we may work the works of God?" He

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answers only, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." (6:28-29)

b. The determining factor in references to judgment, condemnation, penalty and in the sharp contrasts which this Gospel delights to draw is scarcely ever ethical wrongdoing, but always unbelief.

Let us take, first, the contrasts.

There is the contrast between light and darkness. In what does the darkness of the world consist? Primarily in the fact that it does not receive Christ. "The light shineth in the darkness and the darkness apprehended it not." (1:5) What does that mean? The crux of the interpretation of this verse is the verb *κατέλαβεν* and the key to its meaning is to be found in the cyclic character of the prologue's style. The prologue is not a continuously progressing argument, but it moves in spiral fashion, circling ever upward, but returning again and again on higher levels to the same point. An illustration of this is found in the parallelism between verses 4-5, 9-10, and 11.

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v.4. In him was  
life, and the  
life was the  
light of men.

v.5. And the  
light shineth  
in the dark-  
ness and the  
darkness laid  
hold on it not.

v.9. There was the  
true light, even  
the light which  
lighteth every man  
coming into the  
world.

v.10. He was in  
the world, and the  
world was made by  
him, and the world  
knew him not.

v.11. He came  
unto his own,  
and they that  
were his own,  
received him  
not.

The verb of verse 5 then means to know or to receive, in this connection (Compare Acts 25:25, Ephesians 3:18, I Corinthians 9:24), and the darkness of the world is seen to be in its failure to recognize and appropriate Christ.

This is borne out by the other places where the figure of darkness is used. In 3:18-21, darkness is the portion of evildoers, certainly,<sup>1</sup> but it is their portion not as an arbitrary punishment for evil-doing but because they do not come to the light. In 8:12, "he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness." In 12:35-36, darkness overtakes those who do not believe

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1. See below, p. 174.

on the light. In 12:46, the same is true.

The same thing is true in the contrast between "the world" and those who are not "of the world". "The world" is set off for condemnation, not because of its wickedness, but because of its attitude to Christ or his Spirit. "He came into the world and the world knew him not". (1:10) "The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth" (7:7). The world "cannot receive" the Spirit of truth, because it "seeth him not, neither knoweth him" (14:17).

Take the contrast between Jews and disciples.

"The Jews" in John's Gospel are ordinarily not simply members of the Jewish race or followers of the Jewish religion, but they are a people held up to obloquy, and not for any ethical wrongdoing, but because they rejected Jesus Christ. "His own received him not" (1:11). And compare 5:18; 6:41; 7:1,20; 8:24,40,59; 10:31,39, et.al.

So the "children of the devil" (8:44) and the "children of God" (8:47) stand over against each other on the basis of believing Christ (8:45-46) and the distinction between "that which is born of the flesh" and "that which is born of the Spirit" (3:6) is on the same basis (3:15).

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Or let us turn to the references to judgment, condemnation, and penalty.

There is only one verse in the gospel which places judgment, in the synoptic manner, on a purely ethical basis, 5:29: "And shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment". This is hardly more than the exception which proves the rule.

Compare 3:18-19. "He that believeth on him is not judged (κρίνεται), he that believeth not hath been judged already (κέκριται), because he hath not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment (κρίσις) that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light." That is to say, not only is judgment on the basis of belief, but the judgment is inherent in the offense, failure to come to the light necessarily condemning one to remain in the darkness.

Compare also 5:24 - "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment (κρίσιν) but hath passed out of death into life."

Or compare again 3:36 - "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life, but he that obeyeth not the Son" (where "obey" parallels "believe") "shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

It is apparent, then, that wherever Jesus is

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spoken of as judge, it is not meant that the judgment is of ethical right or wrong-doing as in Matthew 25:31-46, but rather that his presence inevitably judges men because they must take up an attitude toward him, and the wrong attitude is their condemnation. This explains the seeming contradiction between verses like 3:17 ("God sent not the Son into the world to judge - κρίνει - the world") or 12:47 ("I came not to judge the world" - κρίνω) and 5:27 ("He gave him authority to execute judgment" - κρίσειν) Jesus did not come with the purpose of being a judge of men's ethical shortcomings. He came to save them. But inevitably his presence does judge men for they must believe or disbelieve, and disbelief is condemnation. "He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him" (τὸν κρίνοντα αὐτόν). "The word that I spake, the same shall judge (κρίσει) him in the last day". (12:48)

The first point to observe, then, is that at least on the surface this gospel is ethically negative. It treats of practically only one sin (unbelief) and that sin is not primarily an ethical matter.

2. In the second place, this one sin is thought of as negative in character. Unbelief, itself, is

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negative, not something one does but something one leaves undone, and the figures under which it is described are largely negative.<sup>1</sup>

a. **Darkness.** Darkness is the absence of light, and when this figure is used, the thought is ordinarily not that of active opposition to the light, but rather, of ignorance and inertia. The dark world of 1:5 is simply too blind to recognize, too weak to reach out and appropriate the light which is in its midst - "Whom the world cannot receive for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him" (14:17). "O righteous Father, the world knew thee not", (17:25). Compare 12:35 and 3:19-20.

b. Being born of the flesh rather than of the spirit (3:6). The idea contained in the Johannine contrast of flesh and spirit is not at all the contrast intended by Paul when he says that "the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh." (Galatians 5:17). The contrast is not between wicked man and good man, but between natural man and spiritual man. And the natural man differs from the spiritual

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1. Stress might be laid on the fact that the word used for sin in the gospel is always ἁμαρτία, a missing of the mark, not παράπτωμα, a transgression. But inasmuch as the former is by far the commoner word throughout the New Testament, it is doubtful whether this fact has much significance.

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man simply in what he lacks. He has not been born again, he lacks therefore the inflowing divine life.<sup>1</sup> This it is which separates those who are from beneath and those who are from above (8:23).

c. Lack of knowledge of the truth. In 8:32 ff. and 17:3 there is the suggestion that the unregenerate condition is a condition of lack, not this time of power or life, but of knowledge.

d. Blindness. In chapter 9 the unregenerate condition is pictured under the figure of blindness, which again is a condition of lack, lack of the ability to see.

3. And, thirdly, even where the sin of unbelief is not thought of as negative in character, it is negative in result. Sin is to be shunned not because of what it makes one do, but because of what it keeps one from doing. It shuts one out from light, from life, from God. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life".(3:36) There are two particular illustrations of this:

a. Darkness. Darkness is not a purely negative conception. For if it were merely the absence of light, then the coming of the light would at once dispel it. It does not do so, however (1:5). "The light shineth in the darkness". The two exist together. The darkness

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1. Compare Scott, "The Fourth Gospel" - pp.220-221.

does not fight against the light but it is impervious to it. It covers the world and men's hearts like a pall which the light cannot penetrate. Like some dark covering, it simply denies it entrance.

b. Sin, the dungeon-keeper. One of the most nearly ethical of the passages of John's Gospel is 8:34-36. "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Everyone that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin. And the bondservant abideth not in the house forever - the son abideth forever. If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

And yet the image of the  $\delta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$  does not here have the positive ethical significance that it has, for example, in Paul. When Paul speaks of men as being "servants" of sin (Romans 6:17-20) he is thinking of what their master, sin, compelled them to do. "Ye presented your members as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity, unto iniquity", (verse 19). But when John speaks of it, the emphasis is on what sin keeps its servants from ("The bondservant abideth not in the house forever", 8:35)

Sin is that which shuts away from God.

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But to say that the practical attitude of the Evangelist to sin is negative would be to overstate the case which we have been putting thus far. It is true that there is a strong negative tendency in the thought of sin and it is true, as has been stated,<sup>1</sup> that there is a deterministic strain in the Gospel which would relieve man of any moral culpability for rejecting Jesus. No man can come to Christ according to this mode of thought except the Father which sent Him draw him (6:44). When a man has heard and learned of the Father (i.e. when his inertia has been broken by his ignorance being removed) he comes (6:45). Those that are of God, hear God's words; those that are not, of course cannot (8:47). Everyone that is "of the truth" heareth Christ's voice (18:37). The world is not by choice a place of darkness - it is so by nature; man is not by choice outside the kingdom, he is born so ("That which is born of the flesh is flesh", 3:6). It is passages like these which lead Scott to say, that "to the mind of John, therefore, sin in itself involves no moral culpability".<sup>2</sup> But this is only part of the story.

1. One cannot read the Fourth Gospel even super-

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1. Ante, p.100.

2. "The Fourth Gospel", p.220.



ficially without realizing that it pulses with indignation against those who have rejected Christ, such indignation as is only in place if the world which rejected Jesus was morally responsible for its sin. "If ye were blind", Jesus says to the Pharisees, "ye would have no sin; but now ye say, We see; your sin remaineth."<sup>1</sup> However much the state of unregenerate man might be thought of as "blindness", as indeed it was in comparison to the illumination that came after he had accepted Jesus, still the evangelist did not really believe that men who had been confronted by Jesus were actually prevented by any "natural incapacity"<sup>2</sup> from accepting him. If they did not accept Him, it was the result of perversity. They were in a very real sense sinners.

It may be true enough before Jesus is presented to men, that their condition is one of privation rather than active opposition, but when he has come, the inability is removed. If then they remain inert, their inertia is in a positive sense, sin. "If I had not come and spoken to them", said Jesus to his disciples, "they had not had sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other did,

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1. John 9:41

2. Scott, op.cit. p.221

they had not had sin, but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." (15:22-24)

2. This positive note moves alongside the negative even in the figures to which we called attention above.

a. In one case, at least, "darkness" turns from being a negative or even a negatively resistant thing and turns to be a positive force. "Walk while ye have the light", says Jesus in 12:35, "that darkness overtake you not". It is the figure of the black night stalking the believer, reaching out shadowy fingers to "lay hold"<sup>1</sup> on him unless he resolutely flees from it.

And the idea seems to appear again in 13:30 where Judas goes out into the night. This is not the night of ignorance and inertia; it is the night of moral retribution.

b. The "world" is not represented simply as not knowing and not receiving Jesus. These negative reactions turn into positive hate. (7:7; 15:18-19; 17:14)

c. And in 8:32 ff, ignorance of the truth quickly turns into opposition to the truth (vv.44,55).

3. Moreover, while on the surface there is only one sin in the Fourth Gospel, actually that sin is seen

1. Moffatt and Goodspeed both read this into *κατέλαβεν* in the prologue, but I can see no warrant for it there.

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by the Fourth Evangelist to have ethical roots.

a. If we look more closely, for example, at those contrasts which we said have no primary ethical significance, darkness and light, flesh and spirit, it becomes evident that the ethical is not wholly lacking.

Darkness, for example. There is only one passage in the gospel where the ethical significance is apparent, but there it cannot be doubted.<sup>1</sup> "Men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil." (3:19) Here the ethical question is brought squarely into the foreground.<sup>2</sup>

And the distinction between "that which is born of the flesh" and "that which is born of the Spirit", not only comes in this same chapter, so that the ethical reference of verse 19 may be thought to be reflected back, but the reference to water in verse 5 can scarcely be without ethical significance. The baptism of John was a baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins. (Mark 1:4). The baptisms of the Jews were purificatory in character. And the baptisms of the mysteries were "the sacramental cathartic which washed away sins and opened the way to approach the Deity."<sup>3</sup> There

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1. The change of word from σκοτία to σκοτός may be intended to bring that out but we cannot be sure.

2. Compare I John 2:9,11.

3. Angus, "Mystery Religions and Christianity", p.45.

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is no reason to suppose, therefore, that in this reference to baptism no moral purification is in view.<sup>1</sup>

b. More important than these side-references to the ethical, however, is the fact that on two or three occasions the evangelist explicitly traces unbelief back to its ethical roots, and what is more important for our study, he finds those roots in the love of self, particularly in pride and self-will.

3:19-20. "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reprov'd."

Here the evangelist traces the failure to accept Christ to an ethical root, evil deeds, but not satisfied with that, like a sleuth he tracks down the one evil among all the others upon which the blame is to be laid. He cometh not to the light, "lest his works should be reprov'd" (ἐλέγξω, to convict or expose, "with a suggestion of the shame of the person convicted.")<sup>2</sup> It is pride of self, the self wanting its own way and wanting not to be reprov'd for having its own way, that keeps the soul from accepting Christ. The same idea appears again in 7:7, "The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it that its works are evil."

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1. Compare also the references to cleansing in 13:1-11 and 15:3

2. Thayer, in loc.

5:44. The second of the places where unbelief is uncompromisingly traced to its ethical root is 5:44:

"How can ye believe, who receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not." Pride and ambition, in other words, are effectual barriers between the soul and God. "I seek not mine own glory" says Jesus (8:50) Compare v.54. "He that speaketh of himself, seeketh his own glory." (7:18)

The same idea is in the scornful picture of the proud Pharisees (9:34) and in the implied rebuke, like steel in a velvet glove, of 12:42-43: "Nevertheless even of the rulers many believed on him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue, for they loved the glory that is of men more than the glory that is of God."

We now turn to the question, if the Fourth Evangelist thus recognized clearly the ethical roots of his supreme sin of unbelief, recognized, that is, that it is self-will and pride that stands between men and God, what measures, if any, did he propose for eradicating these roots of sin?

1. First of all, we find certain direct ethical calls in this gospel directed toward this end.

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a. There is 13:1-17, the washing of the disciples' feet and the teaching that sprang from it. This is a clear call to humility and self-abnegating service, and the comparative absence of direct ethical teaching in this gospel makes the presence of this story all the more striking.

b. There is several times repeated the injunction to obedience - "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments". (14:15 Compare verses 21,23,24; 8:51 and 17:6)<sup>1</sup>

c. The grasping spirit is rebuked more than once. "Ye seek me. . . . because ye ate of the loaves and were filled." (6:26) Judas "was a thief, and having the bag, took away what was put therein." (12:6)

d. Jesus himself is the great example of non-resistance and submission to the will of God, (13:11), of absence of worldly ambition (6:15), and of utter self-sacrifice (10:11).

e. And finally, the ethical teaching of the gospel reaches its climax in the "call to death", "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life, loseth it; and he

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1. Not only this, but in 15:3, cleansing is said to be through the "word", that is, probably, through obedience to Jesus' teaching.

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that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me."  
(12:24-26)

2. But the urging of these ethical demands is only so much as to say, "You must root out those sins which stand between you and belief, and therefore between you and eternal life, by your own strength, by the cultivation of opposite virtues." Is there in this gospel any promise of help from powers outside the self?

a. There is in 3:5 the suggestion of baptismal regeneration, "Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." But it is only a suggestion, and no weight can be placed on it.

b. The same may be said of the suggestion of the forgiveness of sins by duly constituted persons in the church - "Whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them, whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."  
(20:23)

But surely the synoptic doctrine of forgiveness on the ground of the love of God and the Pauline expansion of **salvation** through the death of Christ, are to be found in this gospel also.

c. The synoptic message to sinners is the picture

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of a compassionate Christ, who came not to call the righteous, but sinners (Mark 2:17) and who forgave the sins of those who knew their need out of the goodness of his heart (Mark 2:5); and behind him a heavenly Father whose portrait was drawn in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11 ff) who waited for no fitness, but received the sinner in the very moment of his turning to Him.

When we turn to John's Gospel, however, the publicans have entirely disappeared, and Jesus is never called the friend of sinners. He heals the man at the pool of Bethesda, the blind man, and talks to the woman of Samaria. But in the first case, nothing is said of the forgiveness of sins, Jesus merely cautioning the man to sin no more, lest a worse thing befall him (5:14); in the second case Jesus expressly dissociates the idea of sin from the man's affliction or healing (9:3); and in the third case, no mention is made of forgiveness and the talk is of eternal life and of problems of worship rather than of sin. Finally, Luke's story of the woman who was a sinner (Luke 7:36-50) is replaced by the Johannine story of Mary of Bethany, who was certainly not a sinner. (12:1-8)

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Strange as it may seem, the synoptic picture of the love of God for sinners is represented, explicitly at least, in John by the one magnificent verse, (3:16), "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." This verse has deservedly become the charter of evangelicalism, but it is strange that it should stand so alone in this gospel.

d. Paul's message to sinners is that of salvation through the death of Christ, "who was delivered up for our trespasses and was raised for our justification" (Romans 4:25). Being justified by faith, sinners have peace with God (Romans 5:1), who "commendeth his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1)

And at first sight, that appears to be the Johannine doctrine. Jesus is several times spoken of as Savior (3:17; 4:42; 8:36; 12:47; and perhaps 10:11). But we have already pointed out that it is doubtful how far problems of ethics were in the forefront of the evangelist's mind when he wrote such words as these. It is rather ignorance and inertia, exclusion from life

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and light, out of which Jesus came to save men. In 12:47-50 that almost becomes explicit. "If any man hear my sayings and keep them not," that is, if any man is a sinner, "I judge him not, for I came not to judge the world but to save the world. He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life eternal." In other words, the work of Jesus is not primarily with sin. He has come to open the way to life, to "speak the word of life" in Johannine phrase. If one believes, then eternal life is his. If one rejects, there is no message of hope. The word that he has heard and cast aside will be his judge.

In 8:31-36, one can almost see the evangelist being forced over from the plane on which he was most at home to a doctrine of Jesus Christ as Saviour from sin. Verses 31-32 are typically Johannine, "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples, and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." That is, "If you live in accordance with the

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truth which you hear from me, you will be led over into the kingdom of truth, and gain a real and deep insight into Reality, such as will set you free from all the chains that bind you."

Jesus is thus speaking of being made free, by being given access to a larger world, the world of absolute Truth. The Jews, however, as usual misunderstand. "We are Abraham's seed, and have never yet been in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? (verse 33). And it seems as though Jesus comes down a little from the plane of his first statement in answer. Though they were unable to understand the thought of a bondage to unreality which is removed by a knowledge of the truth, they would be able to understand bondage to sin. So he answers, "Everyone that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin". But in verse 36, he is back to the general idea of freedom again. "If therefore the son shall make you free" (not from sin specifically but from your whole condition of weakness and bondage) "Ye shall be free indeed".<sup>1</sup>

If, then, there is doubt as to how far sin is in the evangelist's mind when he speaks of Jesus as Saviour, we are left in this case also with only one

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1. Compare Westcott, "Commentary", Volume II, pp.13-16.

verse in which salvation from sin through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is taught. That is 1:29, another verse which the evangelical church has taken as part of its charter, "Behold, the lamb of God, that beareth the sin of the world".

I am aware that it would be possible to lay more stress than is warranted on this comparative lack of a doctrine of salvation from sin in John's Gospel. The Pauline doctrine of salvation was an integral part of the theological structure of the society from which the Fourth Gospel came, and must certainly have been part of the furnishing of the author's mind. It forms the background of verses like 10:11; 11:50; and 15:13. But primarily the author is concerned with the thought of Jesus, not as Saviour from sin, but as opener of the door into new life.<sup>1</sup> And his indignation at the folly which rejects the proffered gift overshadows his compassion for the bondservant of sin. If the Pauline gospel is a gospel for sinners, who have but strength to cast themselves upon the cross of Christ and cling to it, the gospel of John is a gospel for strong men, who by an act of the will in belief, can thrust their own sin behind them and reach out steady hands to receive the gift of life.

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1. Compare Scott, "The Fourth Gospel", p.220.

Conclusion - There are striking likenesses and differences as well between the thought of sin in the Fourth Gospel, and in the Christian mystics.

1. There is, as we have by this time learned to expect, nothing in the Fourth Gospel to correspond to the speculative relegation of sin to the realm of non-Being in the more philosophical mystics.

But the Fourth Evangelist does constantly tend to speak of sin under negative figures, in Eckhart's phrase "not as an effect, but a defect". And even when more positive language is used, sin is still conceived in mystic fashion as something which hinders the soul or excludes it from the presence of God.

2. A difference is to be noted in the stress which the Fourth Evangelist lays on belief in the historic Jesus, failure to so believe being the one overshadowing sin. But behind disbelief John finds self-will and self-love, and that is mystical, while the ethical teaching of the gospel closely parallels the ethical teaching of mysticism in its insistence on such virtues as humility, obedience, submission to the will of God and self-sacrifice even to death.

3. Mystical also is the almost complete lack of a doctrine of atonement. "The Incarnation is itself

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the Atonement",<sup>1</sup> says Dean Inge, speaking of the theology of Bishop Westcott, the great interpreter of the Fourth Gospel,<sup>2</sup> and this is almost literally true of the Gospel itself. In so far as Jesus saves men, he does it by opening the door to Truth through his life and words, rather than by dying for their sin. That door once open, men must either enter by their own will to believe or they must stay without. The secondary place given to moral regeneration - a means to an end rather than an end in itself - and the fact that the struggle with sin is left largely in a man's own hands, these mark the Fourth Gospel as belonging to mystical literature.

4. But when we come to speak of the purgative way itself, the evangelist differs utterly from the majority of Christian mystics. The ethics of sacrifice may be found in these pages, but not those ascetic practices for the sake of discipline and purgation of which the writings of the mystics are so full. His anger against sin is as intense as theirs, but he does not adopt their methods.

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1. Inge, "Platonic Tradition in English Religious Thought", p.102

2. Compare Evelyn Underhill's naive neglect of the atonement in her statement, "No one needs, I suppose to be told that the two chief features of Christian schematic theology are the dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation". - "Mysticism", p.128

The reason would seem to be that the Fourth Gospel is premonastic. The Fourth Evangelist probably led a more normal life than the medieval mystics, hence his struggle with sin did not take the form of theirs. Furthermore, it is almost certain that in the life of this inheritor of the Synoptic and Pauline tradition, there was more experience of the grace of God and the power of the Cross than the gospel bears explicit witness to.

We may again conclude, then, from our study of the doctrine of sin, that the Fourth Evangelist here, too, shows himself a mystic. But his mysticism, pre-Dionysian and pre-monastic, is a calmer, truer mysticism than that of later times.

## CHAPTER VI.

### CONTEMPLATION.

"By love may he be gotten and  
holden, but by thought never."  
- Cloud of Unknowing.

#### A. The Mystics

1. The mystic psychology. Before proceeding to study the method by which the mystic prepares himself for the incoming of the Divine, it is necessary that we should understand how he thinks of the self that is to be thus prepared. We shall not find him with any systematically developed psychology, but one tendency inherent in his way of thinking about the self, is important.

This is the tendency to distinguish between the soul's faculties and the soul itself, or between the surface self, which has to do with the life and activities of everyday, and the soul's center or ground. The activities of the senses and the ordinary activities of the mind fall into one class, but the central self is untouched by these.

"There is a root or depth in thee", says William Law, "from whence all these faculties come forth as lives from a center, or as branches from the body of a tree. This depth is called the center, the fund, or bottom of thy soul, for it is so infinite that nothing can satisfy it, or give it any rest, but the infinity of God."<sup>1</sup>

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1. "Liberal and Mystical Writings of William Law", p.14.



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It is with this essential soul, or part of the soul, that the activities of mysticism have to do, for it is immediately to it, rather than mediately through the senses or through the faculties of intellection, imagination, and so forth, that the Divine makes itself known. "God enters the ground of the soul", says Eckhart. "None can touch the ground of the soul but God only."<sup>1</sup> The names by which it is known indicate its character. "Sometimes it is called the Synteresis, the keeper or preserver of his being; sometimes the Spark of the Soul, the 'Fünklein' of the German mystics; sometimes its Apex, the point at which it touches the heavens. Then, with a sudden flight to the other end of the symbolic scale, and in order to emphasize its oneness with pure Being, rather than its difference from mere nature, it is called the Ground of the Soul, the foundation or basal stuff, whence springs all spiritual life."<sup>2</sup>

Some of the mystics believe that this essential soul is a true part of the Divine.

Likewise", says Eckhart, "I say the divine light is working in the soul. The spark in the soul being drawn up in this light and in the Holy Ghost and being borne aloft to its first source. . . . There is a power in the soul which splits off what is base and is absorbed into God. To wit, the spark of the soul . . . ."

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1. "Works", p.4

2. Underhill, "Mysticism", p.64.

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Methinks this servant" (he is expounding Luke 14:16ff )  
"is the spark of the soul, which is sent there by God  
and is his light striking down from above."<sup>1</sup>

And even the mystics who do not think of it as  
essentially a part of the Divine feel that it is here  
that the soul is most like the Divine. Here God stamp-  
ed his image and here therefore the soul is sensitive  
to his presence. Tauler speaks of the "very innermost  
parts of the soul where the image of God is",<sup>2</sup> and  
Plotinus long before had said that "To any vision must  
be brought an eye adapted to what is to be seen, and  
having some likeness to it".<sup>3</sup>

Mystic psychology is distinguished by the belief  
that not to what we might call "the conscious self",  
but only to the innermost core of one's being, is the  
vision of God revealed.

2. The mystic method. It follows that if the  
soul is to meet God in the innermost, a special disci-  
pline must be carried out to prepare the self.

"The created soul of man", says the Theologia  
Germanica, "has two eyes. The one is the power of see-  
ing into eternity, the other of seeing into time and  
the creatures. . . . These two eyes of the soul cannot  
both perform their work at the same time, but if the  
soul shall see with the right eye into eternity, then

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1. "Works", pp.87-88

2. "Inner Way", Sermon XVIII.

3. "Ennead", I, 6, 9.

the left eye must close itself and refrain from working, and be as though it were dead."<sup>1</sup>

It is this method of preparing the soul for the Divine incoming that we call "contemplation", "a specific kind of activity which is characteristic of the mystic: a form under which his consciousness works best, and his awareness of the infinite is enriched and defined."<sup>2</sup> The word "contemplation" is not always used for the entire process, being sometimes reserved for the final state of enraptured gazing upon the Divine, but it seems more convenient to make it inclusive of this entire range of mystic activity.

a. Contemplation and prayer.<sup>3</sup> Because both contemplation and prayer are ways of approaching the Divine, there is frequently confusion between them.

There need not be. Prayer is an inclusive term, including all the ways that the soul has found of holding converse with God. It ranges from the most mechanical kind of formal repetition to the most intimate kind of wordless communication, from the most shameless begging to the most devoted "Thy will be done", from the

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1. "Theologia Germanica", Chapter VII.

2. Underhill, "Mysticism", p.358.

3. See article, "Prayer and the Mystic Vision" by Rufus Jones in "Concerning Prayer" by Lily Dougall and others.

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"Now I lay me" of the little child, to the "Into thy hands I commend my spirit", of Jesus Christ. All Christians pray and mystics pray in practically all the ways in which Christians do, but not all Christians practise contemplation.

Contemplation is, as Madame Guyon says, "a species of prayer, which may be exercised at all times; . . . it cannot therefore be the prayer of the head, but of the heart; not a prayer of the understanding alone which is so limited in its operations that it can have but one object at one time; but the prayer of the heart is not interrupted by the exercises of reason; indeed nothing can interrupt this prayer, but irregular and disordered affections."<sup>1</sup> It is mental prayer, not articulate, wholly interior, a simple listening for the voice of God, an intent gazing upon Him. Psychologically it would be defined as an intense concentration upon the Divine. Religiously, William Law perhaps defined it best when he said that in it "the soul does not so much pray as live in God."<sup>2</sup>

b. The practice of contemplation presupposes the events with which we have been dealing thus far in

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1. Guyon, "A Short and Easy Method of Prayer", Chapter I

2. Quoted in "Concerning Prayer", (see supra) p.128.

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this thesis. The divine potentiality within the soul must have been touched awake through the impulse of love. This is what the mystics sometimes call the "new birth".<sup>1</sup>

Some confusion arises in speaking of the "new birth" in mysticism, because of the tendency of some mystics, particularly those who follow Meister Eckhart, to **speak of the birth of Christ** in the soul. This is, of course, a figure and a rather clumsy one, arising out of the mystic tendency to see an allegorical and cosmic significance in all the events of the life of Christ. But whether this figure is used or not, the "new birth" means the first quickening of what Jacob Boehme calls "the supersensual life" at the time of the mystic conversion or awakening.

And also, while the contemplative or "illuminative" way (so called because in it the soul is gaining deeper and deeper insight) and the purgative way may overlap to some extent, the soul cannot really get very far in contemplation, until it has been purged of selfishness.

Compare Boehme, "Dialogues of the Supersensual Life", II, where the disciple says, "Oh my Master, my Master! I have now endeavored to recollect my soul in the presence of God, and to cast myself into the Deep where no creature doth nor can dwell. . . . but alas I, neither hear nor see as I should. There is still such a partition wall in me which beats back the heavenly sounds in their passage", and the Master answers, "This partition is the creaturely will in thee, and this can be broken by nothing but the grace of self-denial."

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1. Underhill, "Mysticism", p.63. Compare Theologia Germanica, Chapter XVI.

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When the soul is ready, however, to seek God in contemplation, the method is as follows. Technically, this method is called "orison" to distinguish it from ordinary prayer, and also from "contemplation", which includes both method and result. It should be said that the mystics do not agree as to the proper division of this way, but the fourfold division which is adopted here seems to me the clearest.

(1) Meditation. "There are two ways," says Madame Guyon, "of introducing a soul into prayer. . . . the one is meditation, the other is reading accompanied with meditation."<sup>1</sup>

The latter she describes as "the choosing some important practical or speculative truth, always preferring the practical, and proceeding thus: whatever truth you have chosen, read only a small portion of it, endeavoring to taste and digest it, to extract the essence and substance thereof, and proceed no farther while any savor or relish remains in the passage; when this subsides, take up your book again and proceed as before, seldom reading more than half a page at a time."<sup>2</sup>

"Meditation" is carried on as follows: "When, by an act of lively faith, you are placed in the presence of God, recollect some truth wherein there is substance and food; pause gently and sweetly thereon, not to employ the reason, but merely to calm and fix the mind; for you must remember that your principal exercise should ever be the presence of God; your subject, therefore, should rather serve to stay the mind, than exercise the understanding."<sup>3</sup>

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1. "Short and Easy Method of Prayer", Chapter II.

2. Ibid

3. Ibid

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The last point is particularly important. Meditation differs from thinking in that it is designed rather to promote concentration and to arouse certain affective states, such as love, than to foster understanding and analysis. It is interesting, for example, to observe how in Ramón Lull's little treatise "On the Art of Contemplation",<sup>1</sup> the "imagination" is constantly suggesting "doubts" to the soul, which at once tumbles down from its contemplation until the mind resumes its meditative thought.

(2) Meditation is followed by "introversion", sometimes called "recollection".

"From this procedure it will necessarily follow that the lively faith in a God immediately present in our inmost soul, will produce an eager and vehement pressing inwardly into ourselves, and a restraining all our senses from wandering abroad; this serves to extricate us speedily from numberless distractions, to remove us far from external objects, and to bring us nigh unto our God, who is only to be found in our inmost center, which is the Holy of Holies wherein He dwelleth."<sup>2</sup>

The consciousness having thus been concentrated on some pious meditation, slowly all that is external slips out of the mind and there is left only an intent gazing or eager listening for the coming of God. This process of transcending the activity of both senses and

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1. Translated from the Catalan by E. Allison Peers.

2. Guyon, op.cit.loc.cit.

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reason is what the Theologia Germanica calls the "closing of the left eye" of the soul,<sup>1</sup> what Boehme calls "throwing thyself for a moment into that where no creature dwelleth."<sup>2</sup>

"The Scholar said: Is that near at hand or far off?

The Master said: It is in thee, if thou canst for a while, cease from all thinking and willing, thou shalt hear the unspeakable words of God."<sup>3</sup>

(3) When the consciousness has thus been completely introverted, there is nothing to do but to wait. This is what is called the "orison of quiet".

"When we are thus introverted, and warmly penetrated throughout with a living sense of the Divine Presence; when the senses are all recollected, and withdrawn from the circumference to the center, and the soul is sweetly and silently employed on the truths we have read, not in reasoning, but in feeding thereon, and and in animating the will by affection, rather than fatiguing the understanding by study; when, I say, the affections are in this state. . . . we must allow them sweetly to repose, and peacefully to drink in that of which they have tasted; for as a person may enjoy the flavor of the finest viand in mastication, yet receive no nourishment therefrom if he does not cease the action and swallow the food; so when our affections are enkindled, if we endeavor to stir them up yet more, we extinguish their flame, and the soul is deprived of its nourishment; we should, therefore, in stillness and repose, with respect, confidence and love, swallow the blessed food of which we have tasted."<sup>4</sup>

This is not a state of mere passivity, but of

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1. See supra, p.20 and p.190

2. Boehme, "Way to Christ", Part IV

3. Ibid

4. Guyon, op.cit.loc.cit.



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alert receptiveness. The door, having been closed to the sense world, is wide open for the coming of the Divine. "Ego dormio", says the mystic in the words of the Song of Songs, "et cor meum vigilat".

(4) To the soul thus prepared, the God who has long been waiting, does not hesitate to enter, and there ensues that sweet commerce which is called contemplation in the narrower sense. For that, however, we must wait till a later chapter.

3. Criticism. What, now, from our own point of view are we to say of the mystic's contemplative method of approach to the Divine?

a. In the first place, the distinction which the mystic draws between the surface self and the soul's center or ground, has come to be familiar to modern psychology under the terms "conscious" and "sub"- or "un-conscious". F.W.H. Myers said, "The conscious self of each of us, as we call it - the empirical, the supraliminal self, as I should prefer to say, - does not comprise the whole of the consciousness or of the faculty within us. There exists a more comprehensive consciousness, a profounder faculty, which for the most part remains potential only, so far as regards the life of

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earth, but from which the consciousness and the faculty of earth-life are mere selections and which reasserts itself in plenitude after the liberating change of death."<sup>1</sup> Both mystic and psychologist seem to have come on the same group of facts and to have interpreted them in their own way.

And the assertion of the mystic that it is to this deeper self that God speaks rather than to the surface self is paralleled by the famous statement of William James, "The 'more', as we called it, and the meaning of our 'union' with it, form the nucleus of our inquiry. Into what definite description can these words be translated and for what definite facts do they stand? . . . The subconscious self is nowadays a well-accredited psychological entity; and I believe that in it we have exactly the mediating term required. . . . Let me then propose, as an hypothesis, that whatever it may be on its farther side, the 'more' with which in religious experience we feel ourselves connected is on its hither side the subconscious continuation of our conscious life."<sup>2</sup> "The further limits of our being plunge, it seems to me, into an altogether other dimension of existence from the sensible or merely under-

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1. Quoted by Pratt, "Religious Consciousness", p.46

2. James, "Varieties of Religious Experience", pp. 511-512.

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standable world."<sup>1</sup>

This is almost reminiscent of Eckhart's contention that the deeper self is really a "spark" of the Divine.

But it is difficult to see why God should communicate with the subconscious rather than with the conscious regions of the mind. As Pratt says, "It is difficult to see why God should choose to communicate with a split-off complex or a brain-cell rather than with the man himself."<sup>2</sup>

And later psychology has tended more and more to deprecate the use of the word "subconscious" to designate a kind of co-consciousness and to substitute the vaguer word "unconscious" with a variety of meanings. Pratt says, "It is important for the serious student of this subject not to be misled by glowing pictures of the 'Undermind', but to realise that the co-conscious, so far as the evidence goes, is either non-existent or practically negligible in normal persons; while in pathological subjects. . . . it is always limited and inferior to the waking self."<sup>3</sup> There is no sure proof that anything ever gets into the subconscious except

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1. James, "Varieties of Religious Experience", p.515.

2. "Religious Consciousness", p.63f

3. Ibid p.59

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through the avenue of consciousness - though certainly valuable syntheses are made there - and the whole idea of the direct connection of man with the Divine through the subliminal appears to be discredited.

b. In the second place, the condition in which the mind is put through the use of the contemplative discipline is very difficult indeed to distinguish from 'trance states induced in other ways. Coe, Leuba and others have pointed out that "meditation" is practically auto-suggestion, "introversion", self-hypnosis, and "quiet", trance.

Here, for example, are the words of Professor G.A.Coe in the Hibbert Journal (January, 1908), "From the trance practices of all religions, from the psychical effect of certain drugs, particularly anaesthetics and from the recurrent spontaneous obsession called 'cosmic consciousness' to which some persons are subject, there comes a common report. It is that the limits of the individual self are transcended through some kind of mingling in, or other immediate realization of, a larger world of the spiritual order, that this larger reality is good, and that in it the contradictions and the mystery of existence are solved"<sup>1</sup> . . . .

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1. Article, "Sources of the Mystical Revelation",  
Hibbert Journal, Volume VI, p.360

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"Mystics as a class are highly suggestible" and "their suggestibility leads them to regard as actual experiences that which analysis shows to be only interpretations of experience."<sup>1</sup> "The typical mystical process, which culminates in trance, is, formally considered, nothing else than partial or complete self-hypnosis".<sup>2</sup>

This text is expounded at length in Professor Leuba's volume on "The Psychology of Religious Mysticism", as will become apparent from the titles of some of the chapters:

Chapter II "Mystical Ecstasy as Produced by Physical Means."

Chapter III "The Yoga System"

Chapter IX "Ecstasy, Religious and Otherwise" ..

Chapter X "The Main Characteristics of Trance-Consciousness and Certain Attendant Phenomena, in Particular Those Producing the Impression of Illumination."

It would be too much to say that either Professor Coe or Professor Leuba have proved that there is nothing in the mystic experience but self-hypnosis and auto-suggestion, but they have certainly shown that the contemplative discipline offers every opportunity for self-deception and that its results need to be

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1. Article, "Sources of the Mystical Revelation", Hibbert Journal, Volume VI, p.362.

2. Ibid, p.364

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tested by other means.<sup>1</sup>

3. And in the third place, the mystics frequently show a tendency to substitute the contemplative for the active life. This naturally follows from the dualism between the activities of the surface and the deeper soul and from the adoption of a somewhat artificial contemplative discipline. Where this tendency goes the length of suggesting that a life lived out of the world is better than a life lived in it, there is clearly something wrong.

Yet we cannot but recognize that if the mystic contemplative discipline is vulnerable at points it nevertheless enshrines values which we would not willingly give up. Those times when the surface activities of the mind have been stilled, when the hum of daily life has been shut out and criticism has given way to appreciation, have been our times of deepest insight, when we have "seen into the life of things". Those of us who are not mystics would not give up those moments

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1. That the greatest mystics have recognized the liability of their system to misuse is indicated by the remark of St. Theresa, "There are persons to be met with, and I have known them myself, who have so feeble a brain and imagination that they think they see whatever they are thinking about" - Quoted in Underhill, "Mysticism", p.323n. St. Theresa herself was constantly doubting her own visions, which is not to say that she was not sometimes self-deceived.

of vision when the world has seemed to slip away from us, and we have communed with God in silence.

How are we to reconcile our conviction that our best moments are those when we have put the principles of the contemplative life into practice, with our scepticism as to the results of the contemplative discipline as a mode of approaching God?

We think that with Dr. William Brown, we must posit a lower and a higher form of mysticism. "The lower form is on the plane of immediate feeling, unmediated by thought. Such is the experience of the . . . . drug addict (and) the devotee of self-hypnosis. . . . Here is an experience of direct union on a lower plane of feeling. Then thought discriminates, distinguishes subject from object, . . . . holds the mind apart from its object and yet in that process links it up more and more closely with its object. . . . until there arises a communion, a feeling that the subject-object relationship is being transcended, and this is the true, the higher mystical experience."<sup>1</sup>

In other words, the mysticism which makes use of the contemplative discipline in order to induce states of trance is no more the best way to approach

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1. Brown, "Mind and Personality", p.290

the Divine, than the ordinary unmythical religious life. Both are partial forms of experience. The former, with its studied attempt to inhibit the higher centers or consciousness and its exclusive cultivation of what we would call the "unconscious" is a presentation to the Divine of a partial man, and the mystic has only himself to blame if he is self-deceived. But the man who approaches the Divine only from the standpoint of a cold intellectualism or listens with an ear deafened by the noise of the world is just as surely shut out from true intimacy with God by the partialness of his experience.

It is to no partial life either on the surface of consciousness or in the depths of the subliminal that God speaks best. The truest and richest messages from the Divine are reserved for the total man. But when the discipline of contemplation, the appreciative attitude, the cultivation of quietness and inwardness are added to rather than substituted for the trained intelligence and the active life, when the subconscious is not substituted for the conscious but the threshold of consciousness is pushed back to give a completer life - it is then that God is really found of the soul. Not the contemplative as opposed to the active life, but quietness, inwardness, love, brought to bear upon the life of everyday, this is the higher mysticism.

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### B. The Fourth Gospel.

1. This is the method, then, adopted by the mystic in his search after what seems to him most worth striving for, union with God. When we turn to the Fourth Gospel, however, we are immediately conscious of a difference more striking than anything we have met thus far. The contemplative discipline seems wholly absent.

This difference, moreover, is more deep-seated than any mere difference of method, it is a difference of goal. This difference of goal is brought out by the names given by the mystics and the Fourth Evangelist to that which they seek. The mystic seeks "union with God", the Fourth Evangelist is in quest of "eternal life".

Too much might easily be made of this distinction, for assuredly the mystic is seeking to realize a state, and assuredly the Fourth Evangelist is in quest of an experience. But unless we see clearly this difference of emphasis, we shall miss the points of similarity that there are in the methods. If we may call **typography** to our aid, we may put it this way: The Fourth Evangelist is seeking a **LIFE** which comes through an experience, the mystics are seeking a life which comes through an **EXPERIENCE**. The more the experience is emphasized above

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the life, the more stress will be laid on the contemplative discipline, and the more stress is laid on the contemplative discipline, the farther the mystic is from the Johannine model.

This distinction was long ago noticed by St. Augustine in the distinction he drew between Christianity and neo-Platonism: "Thou procuredst for me", he writes, "certain books of the Platonists. . . . And being thence admonished to return to myself I entered even into my inward self. . . . and beheld with the eye of my soul. . . . above my mind, the Light Unchangeable. . . . He that knows the Truth knows what that Light is, and he that knows It, knows eternity. . . . And thus by degrees, I passed from bodies to the soul. . . . And . . . with the flash of one trembling glance, it arrived at That Which Is".

Here the saint makes use of the neo-Platonic contemplative discipline and achieves thereby the experience, the vision of God.

"But I could not fix my gaze thereon, and my infirmity being struck back, I was thrown again on my wonted habits, carrying along with me only a loving memory thereof, and a longing for what I had, as it were, perceived the odor of, but was not yet able to feed on."

In other words, the saint has found it impossible to pass from the experience to the life, and so feels the need of something besides the contemplative discipline.

"Then I sought a way of obtaining strength, sufficient to enjoy Thee, and found it not until I embraced that Mediator betwixt God and men, the Man Christ Jesus. . . . But having then read those books of the Platonists. . . . I perceived what that was which through the darkness of my mind I was hindered from contemplating. . . . Upon these, I believe, Thou therefore willedst that I should fall before I studied Thy Scriptures, that. . . . I might discern. . . . between those who saw whither they were to go yet knew not the way, and the way that leadeth not to behold only but to dwell in the beatific country."I

"Not to behold only but to dwell" - here is the distinction between the experience and the life, and Augustine's contention is that to the contemplative discipline must be added the knowledge of the life of the "Man Christ Jesus", before the one passes into the other.

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1. Condensed from Augustine, "Confessions", Book VII.  
Compare also Underhill, "The Mystic Way", pp.299 ff.

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2. Nevertheless, if we do not let the recognition of this difference dissuade us from our inquiry, but ask now, how the Fourth Evangelist believes that the disciple obtains eternal life, we shall find more than a little to remind us of the mystic contemplative way.

a. The condition of life, says the Fourth Evangelist, is belief in Jesus Christ. It is not necessary to argue this point, as the statement is made over and over again in the Gospel. (Compare 3:15,16,36; 5:24; 6:47; 11:25-26; 20:31).

b. But what is necessary is that we should study very closely what is involved in this believing on Jesus through which divine life is communicated.

The first thing which must be noted is that the word is used at times in the gospel to denote something less than full belief.

"Because I said unto thee, I saw thee underneath the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these." - 1:50

"Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, many believed on his name, beholding his signs which he did. But Jesus did not trust himself to them." - 2:23-24

"But of the multitude many believed on him; and they said, When the Christ shall come will he do more signs than those?" - 7:31

"Jesus therefore said to those Jews that had believed him, If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples." - 8:31

"Nevertheless of the rulers many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess it. . . for they loved the glory that is of men, more than the glory that is of God." - 12:42-43.

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To discover, however, what is meant by the belief that issues in life it is necessary to study the experience of the disciples themselves, as the gospel portrays it.

(1) "Again on the morrow John was standing, and two of his disciples; and he looked upon Jesus as he walked and saith, Behold the lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus. And Jesus turned and beheld them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? And they said unto him, Rabbi. . . . where abidest thou? He saith unto them, Come and ye shall see. They came therefore and saw where he abode, and they abode with him that day; it was about the tenth hour." - 1:35-39.

The first step on the way to life is a becoming acquainted with Jesus. For disciples who lived after the period of his earthly life, that would mean reading about what he actually said and did, and it was for that reason that the Fourth Evangelist wrote a gospel. But it is important to observe that it is not in any critical mood that the evangelist represents these disciples as following Jesus, nor in the attitude of men seeking an answer to a question or a gift from his hand. "What seek ye?" asks Jesus, and they answer, "Where abidest thou?" Westcott's comment here shows great insight, "The answer implies that if they could be with Christ, that and nothing less than that would satisfy their want. . . . They were in need of Christ first and not

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of any special gift of Christ. They desired a quiet place for converse."<sup>1</sup>

(2) "This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him." (2:11)

The second stage is what we might call "incipient belief". It is certainly an exaggeration to say as Scott allows himself to do (though he qualifies it later) that "the 'believing' so constantly insisted on by John is something much narrower and poorer than the Pauline 'faith'. It implies not so much an inward disposition of trust and obedience as the acceptance of a given dogma. To 'believe' is to grant the hypothesis that Jesus was indeed the Christ, the Son of God." <sup>2</sup>

But it is certainly true that "to believe" as John understands it involved much more of intellectual conviction than the synoptic or Pauline "faith". Over and over again in the gospel, "to believe" is to accept the truth of a certain proposition. (Compare 2:22; 4:21; 4:50; 5:46-47; 6:69; 8:24; 11:27; 14:10,11; 16:27,30; 17:8,21). And the evangelist is convinced that these disciples who read his work, will not receive eternal life, except as they accept intellectually a certain

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1. "Commentary", Volume I, p.48 f.

2. "The Fourth Gospel", p.267.

proposition, "That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."  
(20:31)

(3) Somewhere about here, one supposes, there takes place in the disciple's life what is called the "new birth". There are two passages in the gospel in which this experience is referred to.

The first is 1:12-13. "As many as received him, to them gave he the power to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

That is to say, when a disciple is ready to receive Jesus Christ, to acknowledge, that is, that he is Son of God, and to take him for friend, there enters into him a new power. Ἐξουσία is translated in the American Revised Version, "right" but it means "ability" rather than "privilege". Paul speaks of sonship as being obtained through "adoption", the conferring, that is, of a dignity or privilege, but in the Fourth Gospel it comes through "rebirth", the infusing of new life or power.<sup>1</sup> This power, which is the result of no natural process or human willing, but solely of God's activity, lifts one from the natural to the spiritual state. It is the beginning of the attainment of eternal life.

The other passage is, of course 3:3-8. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily I say unto

1. For the distinction between Ἐξουσία and Δύναμις which also means "power", see Thayer's Lexicon, p.160, under Δύναμις.

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thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born anew. The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh and whither it goeth. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit."

This passage, which is sometimes contrasted with the passage in the prologue,<sup>1</sup> really means practically the same thing. At the very beginning of the way, there must enter into a man a new life principle. A man as he is cannot possibly "see the Kingdom of God", reach, that is, the goal of eternal life lived in the Father's presence. He must be lifted up onto a new plane of life, and this comes about partly through the rite of baptism which signifies purification<sup>2</sup> ("born of water", 3:5) and largely through the "incalculable working of the Spirit".<sup>3</sup> It is God by his power who thus makes the young believer new.

It is an interesting question for us to ask, whether this action of the Spirit on a man, engendering new life, is thought of as the infusing of fresh life or as the quickening of an already latent divine. The passages themselves seem to indicate the former. There are one or two statements in the gospel which point toward the latter.

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1. Compare Stevens, "Johannine Theology", p.248

2. Ante, p.174f.

3. Scott, "The Fourth Gospel", p.282. John 3:8.

Most important of these is the statement in the prologue (1:9) about the "light which lighteth every man". Does this mean that there is in men a divine spark which this contact with Christ touches awake? If so, the idea is not carried further in the body of the Gospel.

There is in the Gospel itself, as we have already pointed out,<sup>1</sup> a similar suggestion, though particularistic instead of universal, that certain men have within them something which responds to the Divine activity. They are "of God" (8:47). But this, also, is not enough on which to base a theory.

(4) This "new birth", however, is but the beginning of the way that leads to life.

3:36 - "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life, he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life."

In this correlation between belief and obedience, we have another step on the Johannine way to the goal. The disciple who has come to know Jesus, who has become convinced that he is Son of God, and who has thus felt within himself the stirring of new life, must keep his commandments or he goes no further.

"If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples." (8:31)

"Verily, verily I say unto you, If a man keep my word, he shall never see death." (8:51)

"He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." (14:21)

"If a man love me, he will keep my word." (14:23)

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love." (15:10)

(5) But if a man wills to do his will, he is rewarded by an everdeepening insight.

"If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak

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1. Ante, p.171.



from myself." - 7:17

"If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples, and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." - 8:31,32

"Mine own know me." - 10:14

"If ye knew me ye would know my Father also." - 8:19

"This is life eternal, that they should know thee." - 17:3

(6) It is only at some such point as this, when the disciple's insight has been deepened by his earnest seeking to do the will of Christ that he comes to anything like full belief. It is only at the very end of his life on earth that the disciples say to Jesus.

"Now know we that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee. By this we believe that thou camest forth from God." - 16:30

And even then Jesus answers, "Do ye even now believe?" (16:31) conscious that even yet they will leave him alone.

(7) But when the disciple has come thus far, to the point of that full belief in Jesus, which, according to the Evangelist, is the condition of life, he is yet at the beginning of the way. For, as Scott points out, "The gift itself is imparted, not so much through the act of belief, as through the fellowship with Christ, of which it marks the commencement."<sup>1</sup>

3. We come, then, to study lastly, that fellowship with the living Christ, which this gospel teaches is the immediate means by which eternal life is communi-

1. Scott, "The Fourth Gospel", p.283.

cated to the disciple. Here if anywhere we shall find that which corresponds to contemplation. The fellowship is prefigured in the scene at the last supper with which the life-story of Jesus closes.

a. We notice, in the first place, that this scene is a scene of the quiet converse of love. Just as the first meeting of the disciples with Jesus is a scene of such quiet converse,<sup>1</sup> so their last talk together is in the same atmosphere of quietness and love. The "disciple whom Jesus loved" is introduced leaning on Jesus' breast (13:23) and Jesus' deepest self-revelation is not begun until the traitor has left the circle. (13:30)

b. When Jesus begins to talk,<sup>2</sup> his first words are a reference to what he calls "abiding in him".

"I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away, and every branch that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it that it may bring forth more fruit. Already are ye clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you." This doubtless refers to that cleansing by obedience to which reference has already been made.<sup>3</sup> But obedience is not enough. "Abide in me and I in you." (15:1-4)

What is this "abiding in Him"?

(1) The word itself, μένω, means to dwell or remain. It is the word used when the disciples came in

1. Ante, p.207f.

2. Compare Dr.Moffatt's rearrangement in his "New Testament".

3. Ante, p.177.

to abide with Jesus (1:39), it is used of Jesus sojourning with his disciples in the flesh (14:25), of the Holy Spirit dwelling with men (14:17), and abiding on Jesus (1:32), of the Father dwelling in Him (14:10). It signifies therefore at the very least, a steady remaining in the presence of Jesus.

(2) The connection in which it is used, the figure of the branches and the vine, throws more light, of course, on the meaning. The branches not only remain steadily in the presence of the vine; they root in it immovably, so that life flows continuously from it to them. Apart from the vine they would be dead and useless (15:5).

(3) But not only does "abiding in him" signify a steady remaining in the most intimate contact with the Divine, but it is such a remaining, in the spirit of love.

"Ye are my friends". - 15:14

"Even as the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you; abide ye in my love." - 15:9

(4) And this loving, intimate, continuous contact is a contact in which the voice of the Divine is heard.

"No longer do I call you servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth, but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you." - 15:15

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(5) Finally, if we look into other parts of the farewell discourse, we discover that not only does this state in which the evangelist felt himself to be in contact with the Divine have these points of similarity with the contemplative state, but the words that he hears are "interior words". It is the "Spirit" who thus in intimate communion guides into all truth (16:12-13) and the Spirit dwells within (14:17).

In the body of the gospel this "abiding in Him" is described under the figures of "drinking the water that he shall give" (4:14), "eating his flesh and drinking his blood" (6:53), walking in the light (12:35). These passages will be up for discussion later, but to understand them in either a purely ethical or a purely physical fashion is surely a mistake. To "drink the water that he shall give", to "eat his flesh and drink his blood", to walk in the light is more than to obey his commandments. It is somehow to assimilate his spirit, as Peter indicated when he said, "Thou hast the words of" (thy words are) "eternal life" (6:68). And yet that the assimilation is not semi-physical (not in that sense eucharistic) seems proved by 6:63 ("It is the spirit that giveth life, the flesh profiteth nothing") and by the fact that the Samaritan woman and the Jews who took the sayings materialisti-

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cally are represented as misunderstanding Jesus. The idea is essentially contemplative. "Live in the presence of the Master and his teaching until it has literally become a part of you, like a well of water springing up within, like food, like an inner light."

But while the idea of "abiding" is essentially contemplative in nature, it is rather a life than a discipline. There are no "degrees of orison" here, and no tendency to separate the contemplative from the active life.

"I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (17:15-16)

It is a bringing of the contemplative ideal into the stream of life that we have in the idea of "abiding in Him".<sup>1</sup>

c. The result, however, like the result of the contemplative discipline is a vision of Christ (14:21) and a fellowship with God (14:23) which is essentially union (17:21). In the terms in which it is described at the close of the high-priestly prayer, it is really the beatific vision.

"I desire that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory" (17:24).

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1. Compare Brother Lawrence, "The Practice of the Presence of God" and William Law's definition of contemplation, ante p.191.

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This we may say, however, that such an application of the contemplative ideal to the whole of life is far less likely to result in self-deception than the more or less artificial practice of a strict contemplative discipline.

4. The way to life, then, which is essentially an indwelling of the Divine is through a fellowship with the living Christ which at least has its contemplative aspects. But this is not the only indication in the gospel that it is the work of an essentially contemplative mind.

a. The prayer of the gospel, while it is not "orison", is of a contemplative nature.

(1) 11:41-42. "Father, I thank thee that thou hearest me. And I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the multitude that standeth around, I said it, that they may believe that thou didst send me."

One always feels this to be an artificial prayer. And yet it is significant that the evangelist does not represent Jesus as asking the Father to raise Lazarus, but only as thanking him for a communion firmly established.

(2) 12:27-28. "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father glorify thy name."

This, again is not so much a petition as a

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thinking aloud in the presence of God. And it is interesting to observe that it involves not only talking, but being answered, "There came, therefore, a voice out of heaven saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." (12:28)

(3) 17:1-26. The essentially contemplative nature of what is known as the "high-priestly prayer" may be brought out by comparing it with the "Lord's prayer" - Matthew 6:9-13.

The "Lord's prayer" is short, staccato, to the point, reverent, to be sure, but essentially business-like. Four of the five phrases are petitions - the first, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name" being an ascription of praise.

The prayer of John 17, on the other hand, turns quickly from petition to fellowship. "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify thee" (verse 1) may be considered as a petition. But after that the prayer is an exalted meditation on Jesus' life-work, on eternal life, on the condition of the disciples now to be left behind, and on the union of fellowship between Father, Son and disciples' group. "O righteous Father, the world knew thee not, but I knew thee, and these knew that thou didst send me; and I made known

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unto them thy name, and will make it known, that the love wherewith thou lovedst me, may be in them and I in them" (verses 25-26).

(4) The recognition of the essentially contemplative nature of prayer, as John conceives it, helps toward the understanding of such verses as 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23-24, 26-27.

On the face of these verses they seem to encourage the most magical ideas of the results of petitionary prayer.

"Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do" (14:13).

"If ye shall ask anything in my name, that will I do" (14:14).

"Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (15:16).

"If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name" (16:23).

"Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name; ask and ye shall receive" (16:24).

"In that day ye shall ask in my name, and I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you" (16:26-27).

But the phrase "in my name" ( ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου ) read in the light of the prayers of Jesus in this gospel introduces an important modification. It is prayer "in the spirit" of Jesus that is referred to, prayer, that is, in which the petition is a part of the fellowship existent between the soul that prays and God. Such

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prayer is certain of a favorable answer, for communion with God never fails to bear fruit.

b. Not only are the prayers of the gospel of a contemplative nature. The presentation of Jesus in this gospel invites contemplation.

Principal L.P.Jacks is fond of pointing out a fundamental distinction between what he calls "space-thinking" and "time-thinking", static, that is, and dynamic modes of thought. The space-thinker habitually thinks in terms of sight, the world is there, to be contemplated. The time-thinker thinks in terms of action, all sorts of things are going on, and something must be done about it.

Obviously the mystic, with his emphasis on contemplation is a "space-thinker". And the presentation of Jesus in this gospel shows the same tendency. In the synoptics, Jesus is primarily a Master, to be followed. In this gospel, while "following" is not neglected (Compare 1:37,38,40,43; 8:12; 10:4,5,27; 12:26), Jesus is presented as a Being to be contemplated. "Before Abraham was born, I am" (8:58) and again and again, "I am", says Jesus, food to nourish, light to illuminate, the door to admit to rest and refreshment, the shepherd to protect, the life to fill, the truth to enlighten, even

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"the Way", rather than the leader or the guide. The emphasis is less on that which Jesus calls one to do than on that which he himself is.<sup>1</sup>

c. Finally, this same tendency may be observed in the references in this gospel to the Holy Spirit. Ordinarily the Holy Spirit is conceived of in dynamic fashion, a power within that propels, drives, inspires. But in this Gospel, He is the *παράκλητος*, the one called to a person's aid, and his duty is to teach (14:26), to witness (15:26), to convict the world (16:8), to guide into truth (16:13) to glorify Christ (16:14) and to declare him (16:15).

Conclusion. This chapter has, perhaps, revealed as little similarity between the Fourth Evangelist and the mystics of the historic stream as any which we shall study. And yet it has appeared clearly that he is of the same contemplative temper as they. The emphasis upon an "abiding in Christ" which is essentially a matter of quiet, loving converse is of the essence of the contemplative discipline.

What we do not find is the carefully schematized "way" (though roughly the three stages of purgation, con-

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1. This tendency in the mystics is illustrated in Evelyn Underhill's, "Mystic Way", pp.232-233.

templation, and union can be made out) and the degrees of "orison" carefully cultivated to induce an ecstatic experience. Instead of this there is a simple living in the presence of Christ, the Jesus who was incarnate, who went away and yet is ever here.

The contemplative discipline is largely the fruit of the neo-Platonic philosophy and the life of the cloister. Adopted as the only way to get to God it has made mysticism often synonymous with self-hypnosis and auto-suggestion, and has encouraged the mystic to drive a wedge between the contemplative and active lives. The Johannine mysticism is simpler, less subject to misuse, and more fruitful of positive results for the totality of life. It is a life in the world (17:15) and at the same time not of it (17:16). But if it shows none of that tendency to withdrawal which has sometimes cursed mysticism, it shows at the same time none of that fussy inattentiveness to the Divine which is the curse of life today. That quiet company in the upper room, that disciple lying on Jesus' breast ( and not for the first time), that woman in utterly unpractical fashion breaking the alabaster box at Jesus' feet, that whole experience summed up in the words "abiding in him", all that is even more foreign to our secular, pray-as-you-run age, than

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to the life of the medieval contemplatives. It is mysticism, but mysticism at its best that we are observing when we study the Johannine "contemplative way".

## CHAPTER VII.

### VISION AND ECSTASY.

"All things I then forgot,  
My cheek on Him who for my coming came,  
All ceased and I was not,  
Leaving my cares and shame  
Among the lilies and forgetting them"  
- St. John of the Cross.

#### A. The Mystics.<sup>1</sup>

1. The mystic temperament is a temperament to which abnormal psychic experiences are congenial. These experiences may be classified, moving from the milder to the more extreme forms, in three divisions.

a. The sense of presence. By the "sense of presence" is meant the feeling of the presence of God. There is no vision or audition; there is not necessarily any trance; but there is more than the mere belief in or idea of presence. Without being able to say just how or why, one is confident that God is near.

Two illustrations may be given:

(1) St. Theresa. "I was in prayer one day. . . . when I saw Christ close by me, or, to speak more correctly, felt Him; for I saw nothing with the eyes of the body, nothing with the eyes of the soul. He seemed to me to be close beside me; and I saw, too, as I believe, that it was He who was speaking to me. . . . Jesus Christ seemed to be by my side continually, and, as the vision was not imaginary, I saw no form; but I had a most distinct feeling that He was always on my right hand, a witness of all I did; and never at any time, if I was but slightly recollected or not too much distracted could I be ignorant of his near presence.

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1. Compare Underhill - "Mysticism", Part II, Chapters IV, V, and VIII and Leuba - "Psychology of Religious Mysticism", Chapters II and VII-XI.

"I went at once to my confessor, in great distress to tell him of it. He asked in what form I saw our Lord. I told him I saw no form. He then said, How did you know that it was Christ? I replied that I did not know how I knew it; but I could not help knowing that He was close beside me. . . . and that it was most certain."<sup>1</sup>

(2) St. Bernard. "But now bear with my foolishness for a little. I wish to tell you. . . . how such events have taken place in me. . . . I confess then. . . . that the Word has visited me and even very often. But although he has frequently entered into my soul, I have never at any time been sensible of the precise moment of His coming. I have felt that He was present. I remember that He has been with me; I have sometimes been able to have a presentiment that He would come; but never to feel His coming or His departure. . . . It is not by the eyes that He enters, for He is without color; nor by the ears, for His coming is without sound; nor by the nostrils, for it is not with the air, but with the mind that he is blended.

"You will ask, then, how, since the ways of His access are thus incapable of being traced, I could know that He was present? But He is living and full of energy, and as soon as He has entered into me He has quickened my sleeping soul. . . . He has begun to pluck up and destroy, to plant and to build, to water the dry places, to illuminate the gloomy spots, to throw open those which were shut close, to inflame with warmth those which were cold. . . . so that my soul might bless the Lord and all that is within me praise His Holy Name."<sup>2</sup>

Akin to the sense of presence is what Miss Underhill calls "the illuminated vision of the world", a state of spiritual exaltation, in which everything about one seems to be glorified. "Now was I come up in spirit through the flaming sword," says George Fox, "into the Paradise of God. All things were new: and all the creation gave another smell unto me than before, beyond

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1. "Vida", chapter XXVII.

2. "Song of Songs," sermon lxxiv, quoted in Butler, "Western Mysticism", pp.146-147.

what words can utter."<sup>1</sup>

b. Vision and audition. Any book on mysticism will furnish numerous examples of mystic voices and visions. As good a representative as any, because it contains both voice and vision and because it is familiar through scores of reproductions in medieval art, is the "spiritual betrothal of St. Catherine of Siena"

"She had prayed again and again, Fra Raimondo tells us, for the gift of the perfection of the virtue of faith, such that it should never be shaken or beaten down by any assault of the enemy, and ever had she heard the same answer made: I will espouse thee to Myself in Faith. At length on the last day of the carnival. . . . the Voice told her that the time had come: 'I will this day celebrate solemnly with thee, the festival of the betrothal of thy soul, and, even as I promised, I will espouse thee to Myself in Faith'. . . . 'Whilst the Lord was yet speaking there appeared the most glorious Virgin his mother. . . . and. . . . the Virgin Mother of God took the right hand of Catherine with her most sacred hand, and holding out her fingers towards the Son, besought Him to . . . espouse her to Himself in Faith. To which graciously consenting, the Only Begotten of God drew out a ring of gold, which had in its circle four pearls enclosing a most beauteous diamond, and placing this ring upon the ring-finger of Catherine's right hand, he said, 'Lo, I espouse thee to myself. . . in the Faith.'<sup>2</sup>

Here belong all those revelations and inspirations of which mystic literature is full, St. Theresa's "revelations", Joan of Arc's "voices", Boehme's divine illumination. Such an enlightening vision is described by Suso:

"What thou hast asked of God through the Servitor has come to pass, and thou must know that it was all shown to him by God beforehand. Early this very morning

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1. "Journal", volume I, Chapter II.

2. Gardner, "Saint Catherine of Siena", pp.25-26.

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when his prayer was ended, he sat down for a brief moment of repose; and his bodily senses being stilled in ecstasy, many divine mysteries were manifested to him. Among other things he was enlightened to understand how God has made diversity of form to be the individualizing principle of the angelic nature, and has given to each angel a special property which distinguishes him from the rest; all of which it is impossible for him to express in words."<sup>1</sup>

c. Ecstasy proper. Ecstasy is a state in which one seems to be lifted out of oneself. It involves complete oblivion to the world around, complete concentration of the mind, sometimes trance or even catalepsy. Here is St. Theresa's description of the ecstatic state as she experienced it:

"The soul, while thus seeking after God, is conscious with a joy excessive and sweet, that it is, as it were, utterly fainting away in a kind of trance: breathing, and all the bodily strength, fail it, so that it cannot even move the hands without great pain; the eyes close involuntarily, and if they are open, they are as if they saw nothing; nor is reading possible. . . . the letters, indeed, are visible, but, as the understanding furnishes no help, all reading is impracticable. . . . The ear hears, but what is heard is not comprehended. . . . It is useless to try to speak because it is not possible to conceive a word; nor if it were conceived, is there sufficient strength to utter it, for all bodily strength vanishes. . . . Great and most perceptible, also, is the outward joy now felt. . . .

"Let us come now to that which the soul feels interiorly. Let him describe it who knows it; for as it is impossible to understand it, much more is it so to describe it. . . . All I am able to say is, that the soul is represented as being close to God; and that there abides a conviction thereof so certain and strong, that it cannot possibly help believing so. All the faculties fail now, and are suspended in such a way that, as I said before, their operations cannot be traced. If the soul is making a meditation on any subject, the memory

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1. Suso, "Leben", Chapter XXXVI.



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of it is lost at once, just as if it had never been thought of. If it reads, what is read is not remembered nor dwelt upon; neither is it otherwise with vocal prayer. . . . The will must be fully occupied in loving, but it understands not how it loves; the understanding, if it understands, does not understand how it understands. . . . I do not understand it at all myself."<sup>1</sup>

2. For the most part, criticism of the mystics is out of place in this thesis but we cannot avoid mentioning Professor Leuba's keen study of these phenomena from the point of view of psychology.<sup>2</sup> His general conclusions are two: (a) that the reference of these experiences to a supernatural cause is unnecessary, and (b) that they have no superior claims therefore as pathways to Reality.

The proof consists largely in the pointing out of similarities between the mystic states and other states where no supernatural reference is made, the same line of argument which Coe had already found so damaging to the claims of the mystic contemplative discipline.<sup>3</sup> The "sense of presence", for example, he was able to induce in the laboratory where it was clearly an illusion;<sup>4</sup> visions and auditions are experienced in all trance-conditions, and are due sometimes directly to physiologi-

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1. "Vida", Chapter XVIII.

2. "The Psychology of Religious Mysticism".

3. Ante. p.199f.

4. Compare Leuba, op.cit. pp.280-295.

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cal factors, and sometimes to "the influence of desire or aversion (a desire to see Christ as he appeared after the resurrection, a fear of the devil, a wish for guidance in a particular situation, etc."): he says;<sup>1</sup> conviction of Divine revelation comes to people, the content of whose revelations is contradictory, (Compare the "revelations" to Mrs. P. and to Madame D., pp.218-220), or plainly the result of auto-suggestion, (Compare Mlle. Vé, pp.226ff). Even at its highest the "inspiration" of the mystic does not seem to be different from that of the literary artist or the scientist which we attribute to "unconscious cerebration". (Both great and little ideas, it is to be noticed, have come in this way).<sup>2</sup> Finally, ecstasy may be the result of drugs and other physical causes (Chapter II), of **self-hypnosis** (Chapter III), of hysteria (Chapter VIII), of epilepsy (pp.204-206), and it is exceedingly difficult to find any qualitative difference between what might be called aesthetic ecstasies (pp.206f, 209ff.), emotional ecstasies (p.207f.), poetic ecstasies (pp.236-237), the speaker's sense of inspiration (p.239) and even Tennyson's feeling of exaltation after eating a mutton-chop (p.214f).

3. One does not wish to quarrel with Professor Leuba's argument. From the psychological point of view,

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1. Compare Leuba, *op.cit.* p.253.

2. *Ibid.* p.244. The section referred to is pp.240-251.

it is not necessary to refer any of the mystic experiences to a supernatural cause and the form of the mystic experience gives it no superior claim as a pathway to Reality.

But it is necessary to say something about the implication of the argument. If it is inferred from the study of Professor Leuba that because in many of the cases which he cites, the reference to a supernatural author is a delusion, then such psychic experiences are never vehicles for the Divine, the conclusion clearly goes beyond the facts. The Divine agency is not ruled out when the psychological mechanism is discovered. The nearness or remoteness of the Divine in any given experience is to be tested not by the mechanism of the experience, but by its content. Such experiences as these may have no superior claims as pathways to reality, but it is a long way from that to the conclusion that they have no claims at all.

And even within the group of experiences which Professor Leuba cites, there is a very wide range of value. On psychological grounds there may be no difference between the revelation to Madame D. and the revelation to the Buddha, but on grounds of value they are worlds apart. To the psychologist the epileptic ecstasy

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and the ecstasy that rises from the contemplation of beauty may be indistinguishable, but it does not follow that no distinctions can be made between them.

It seems clear, therefore, that just as we distinguished between a lower and a higher contemplation, the contemplation designed to inhibit the higher centres of consciousness on the one hand, and the contemplation designed to bring a richer whole of apprehension to bear on the Divine object on the other hand, so here we must distinguish between a lower and a higher ecstasy.

The psychic experiences of mysticism go with a particular type of temperament. The mystic is a person with a mobile threshold of consciousness,<sup>1</sup> unusually subject therefore to incursions from the unconscious regions of the mind, and he is unusually developed on the emotional and aesthetic side of his nature. He will therefore be especially open to trance, to hallucination, to auto-suggestion, even to hysteria and other pathologic states. This is his misfortune, as he himself frequently knows,<sup>2</sup> and every careful student of the subject must take it into account.

But these same fundamental characteristics, the

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1. Compare Underhill, "Mysticism", p.74.

2. Compare St. John of the Cross, quoted in Butler, "Western Mysticism", p.298f. and St. Theresa, quoted in Underhill, "Mysticism", p.323 n.

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mobile threshold, the emotional and aesthetic tendencies, make him, like the artist, more richly sensitive than other men, not thus endowed, to Reality at its deeper levels. When the sense of presence, vision, audition, and ecstasy are trance-phenomena pure and simple, then we will not say they may not be avenues for the Divine, but they may just as well be avenues for delusion. But when ecstasy means the raising of the whole mind, through the power of an intense emotion, to a higher level of sensitiveness,<sup>1</sup> when vision and audition are the result of the brooding of a profound mind over the great problems of life, when the sense of presence is not induced for its own sake but realized as a by-product of a life devoted to the Divine, then the likelihood is increased many-fold that the Divine is reached thereby.<sup>2</sup> The typical experience of the medieval mystic, perhaps, belongs to the lower order. But that many of the experiences of the mystics belong to the higher order is evidenced by the experience quoted from St. Bernard.<sup>3</sup> Here there is no trance, but the "presence of the Word" is evidenced by the positive results in the whole life. And this is

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1. Compare Récéjac, "Bases of the Mystic Knowledge", p.107 and Paterson, "The Nature of Religion", p.184.

2. A similar distinction is made by Professor Nathaniel Micklem in Chapter I of "Prophecy and Eschatology" though Professor Micklem refuses to call the higher type of experience "ecstatic".

3. Supra, p. 225.

mysticism quite as much as the other.

B. The Fourth Gospel.

We turn now to a study of the Johannine consciousness in order to discover whether the Fourth Evangelist may have been of a psychic type akin to the mystic.

1. It will not take us long to discover that there is no evidence for any of the lower forms of mystic psychic experience in the gospel. Visions are seen and promised (1:32; 1:51), a voice is heard (12:28-30) and the Johannine Christ is a man of extraordinary psychic power (1:48; 4:16-19; 6:70-71; 11:11,14; 18:6). But on the whole, there is nothing of the order of crude hallucination, such as is found recorded, for example, in Matthew 27:53 or of real trance such as belonged to the life of the apostle Paul (II Corinthians 12:1-4).

2. We think, however, that there is abundant evidence for the presence of the "higher ecstasy", the ecstasy of intense emotion, in this gospel and that this passes over even into visionary and auditory experience. This we shall try to demonstrate.

a. It has long been remarked that this gospel is a work which gives the greatest impression of verisimilitude. It appears to be written out of an intimate

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knowledge of the facts of which it treats. For proof of this we may still best turn to the classic argument of Bishop Westcott, than whom no author has ever marshalled with greater completeness or clarity the facts involved.

(1) In the first place, the gospel makes claim three times to be the work of one who has personal experience<sup>1</sup> of the events related.

1:14. "We beheld" his glory. The word became flesh and tabernacled "among us".

19:35. "He that hath seen hath borne witness".

21:24. "This is the disciple who witnesseth concerning these things and who wrote these things."

(2) In the second place, there is the vivid detail of the gospel. "His narrative is marked by minute details of persons, and time, and number, and place and manner, which cannot but have come from a direct experience. And to these must be added various notes of fact, so to speak, which seem to have no special significance where they stand, though they become intelligible when referred to the impression originally made upon the memory of the Evangelist."<sup>2</sup>

The facts mentioned in support of this point are:

(1) the definite people mentioned and the distinctness of the characterization: John with his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, Nathanael, Nicodemus, Lazarus, and

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1. "Commentary", Volume I, pp. lii-lix.

2. Ibid, p. xxxix.

the connection of definite sayings and events with definite people; (2) details of time given such as the enumeration of the days before the raising of Lazarus, the note of the duration of Christ's stay in Samaria, and expressions like, "the tenth hour" (1:39), "the sixth hour" (4:6), "the seventh hour" (4:52), "it was night" (13:30), morning (18:28; 20:1; 21:4), evening (6:16; 20:19), etc; (3) details of place - Bethany (1:28), Aenon (3:23), Capernaum and Cana (4:46f.), "in the temple" (5:14), "beyond Jordan" (10:40ff.) "in the place where Martha met him" (11:30), Ephraim (11:54), as they "stood in the Temple" (11:56), "in the treasury" (8:20), "in Solomon's porch" (10:23) etc.; (4) details of manner, the scene of the call of the first disciples (1:35-51), the barley loaves (6:9), Mary falling at Jesus' feet (11:32), the house filled with the fragrance (12:3), the palm trees (12:13), the night into which Judas went forth (13:30), the seamless robe (19:23), the position of the napkin at the resurrection (20:7)<sup>1</sup>.

(3) In the third place, there is the note of the author's intimacy with the Lord. "He was conscious of His emotions (11:33; 13:21). He was in a position to be well acquainted with the grounds of His action (2:24f; 4:1; 5:6; 6:15; 7:1; 16:19). He speaks as one to whom

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1. Westcott, "Commentary", Volume I, pp. xxxix-xliv.



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the mind of the Lord was laid open. Before the feeding of the five thousand he writes, 'This He (Jesus) said trying him, for He Himself knew what He was about to do' (6:6). He says that Jesus knew in himself the murmurings of the disciples (6:61); He knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who it was that should betray Him(6:64); He knew the hour of His Passion (13:1,3), and who should betray Him (13:11); He knew indeed all the things that were coming upon Him (18:4); He knew when all things were accomplished (19:28)."<sup>1</sup>

b. Not all of these indications that the author was intimately acquainted with the events of which he tells are as cogent as they might be, but there are enough of them that are cogent to require some sort of explanation.

(1) The most obvious explanation, of course, is that the author was an eye-witness, and this is the position for which Bishop Westcott's is the classic argument. This has been denied by many on the ground of the external evidence, but as I have indicated, the external evidence seems to me inconclusive.<sup>2</sup>

To me, however, the character of the book itself makes belief in eye-witness authorship very difficult.

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1. Westcott, "Commentary", Volume I, p.xlv.

2. Ante, p.34.

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Why should an eye-witness have been so dependent on the synoptic tradition as a careful study of John shows him to have been in the relating of the incidents which they both tell? How could an eye-witness, on the other hand, have departed so far from the picture of Jesus which the sources nearer the time of his life give us, from his manner of speaking and of acting, and from the probable historic order of events in his life? No legitimate exegesis can harmonize the synoptic and Johannine accounts, though it is easy enough to trace the development from one to the other, and almost every time it is the synoptic which gives the impression of being closer to the facts. That the author of this gospel had trustworthy independent sources we may well believe. That he was himself an eye-witness we must continue to doubt.<sup>1</sup>

(2) But if the eye-witness theory appears impossible, what other theory can explain the "impression of verisimilitude"? Westcott himself suggests a second possible explanation. He speaks of "the countless small traits in the descriptions which evince either the skill of a consummate artist or the recollection of an observer."<sup>2</sup> For himself, he did not accept the former sugges-

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1. Compare especially Bacon, "The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate" and "The Introduction to the New Testament".

2. "Commentary", Volume I, p.xliii.

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tion, but it has grown in favor as the difficulties of the eye-witness theory have become more apparent. The discourses have been spoken of as free literary compositions, the detail of the stories has been compared to the detail of a great novelist and Strachan lately has made the suggestion that the gospel is a drama.<sup>1</sup>

The "literary theory" however, is open to serious objections.

(a) In the first place, it is difficult to find in the gospel a well-articulated plot. Every commentator makes his own attempt to construct an outline, but except very broadly the outlines refuse to agree. The prologue is a definite division, the break between 12:50 and 13:1 is apparent, as the break between 17:26 and 18:1 and the twenty-first chapter is a unit by itself.

But within these grand divisions it is not apparent whether the outline in the author's mind was on a logical or a chronological basis. Westcott tends to outline the gospel from a chronological point of view,<sup>2</sup> Plummer, in the Cambridge Bible to divide at least chapters 5-17 on a topical or logical basis, McClymont in the New Century Bible seeks to combine the two systems. Which is right; is this history or is it a well-

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1. "The Fourth Evangelist: Dramatist or Historian".

2. "Commentary", Volume I, pp.lxxxvii-lxxxix.

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articulated work of teaching? Later writers in their analyses have tended to recognize the difficulty and not to try for a single scheme. Garvie<sup>1</sup> posits numerous "displacements" which make a detailed outline impossible. Strachan<sup>2</sup> sees "two disparate plans of construction. On the one plan, the incidents and discourses of the Gospel are grouped according to what might be called an ideal or logical arrangement, whereby the narratives and discourses not only in themselves reflect ideas about the person of Jesus, but are grouped so as to illustrate certain aspects of faith in Him. This is the plan that governs the form and arrangement of what may be called the Johannine material (J). Another plan has been superimposed upon this, a chronological one, which has for its object to give a historically connected form to the Gospel. Its author may be denominated R (Redactor)."<sup>2</sup> But while Strachan's analysis of the "J" material (J is the "dramatist") is characterized by real insight, the outline which results appears to be rather Strachan's than the evangelist's. It has to twist the Gospel in spots to make it fit.

The conclusion to which we are driven would seem to be that the gospel, as it stands, does not have such

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1. "The Beloved Disciple".

2. "The Fourth Evangelist", p.84f.

a "plot" as to make easy the assumption that it is a work of conscious literary art. And even if you accept Strachan's hypothesis that an editor sought to impose a "chronological plan" upon the author's "ideal plan", and so spoiled the "drama", the supposed original document does not conform easily to the exigencies of an outline.

(b) But it may be answered that a "plot" or definite outline is not essential to a work of conscious literary art, as is proved, for example, by such a work as "Robinson Crusoe". This is true, but even such formless art seems to be ruled out by the fact that the author so obviously does not appear to consider himself to be writing fiction. It is difficult to imagine this author consciously embellishing his story with details which he knew to be imaginative, or deliberately writing speeches for his Lord. Even the well-known and frequently cited examples of Plato and Thucydides, or even the more relevant cases of the pseudepigraphic writers of post-exilic Judaism do not make entirely convincing this explanation of the phenomenon we are considering.

c. Is there any other possible explanation of the impression of verisimilitude which the book gives? We think there is, and that it is to be found in the mystical consciousness of the evangelist. We have discovered

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thus far in this thesis that the author of the Fourth Gospel is a mystic, albeit a mystic of a peculiarly lofty type. His work shows the characteristic emphasis on love, the characteristic immanental tendency in the thought of God, the tendency to think of sin as a deficiency or as a barrier, the approach to union with God through essentially contemplative channels. Is it not likely that he will be like the mystics in a susceptibility to unusual psychic experiences as well?

That the evangelist was conscious of an extraordinary "sense of presence" is indicated in those chapters 14-17 where he puts into the mouth of Jesus the promise of those experiences which actually did come to the disciples in later days. And the experience which Jesus promises, which we may be sure had actually been the evangelist's own, is an experience of the presence of the Divine, either of the Holy Spirit or of Jesus himself.

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again and will receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." - 14:3

"I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you. Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me, because I live ye shall live also. In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me and I in you. . . . He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him. . . . If a man love me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we

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will come unto him and make our abode with him."-14:18-23.

"I go away and I come unto you." - 14:28.

"Abide in me and I in you." - 15:4.

"Ye therefore now have sorrow, but I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice." - 16:22.

"These things have I spoken unto you in dark sayings; but the time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in dark sayings, but shall tell you plainly of the Father." - 16:25.

"Father, I desire that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." - 17:24.

"That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them." - 17:26

To these are to be added the passages on the presence of the Holy Spirit, 14:16,17; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7; 16:12-16.

So much is plain. The author was a man who frequently, if not constantly, has experienced a "sense of Presence" not unlike that of the mystic. There is nothing merely conventional about his statement that Jesus Christ has returned to dwell with his disciples. He has vividly felt it to be true.

3.If, however, this is true, more is likely to have been true. If the Fourth Evangelist was of that peculiar psychic temperament which is susceptible to the vivid sense of the presence of the Divine, we may suppose that he also on occasion saw visions, heard voices, was lifted up into ecstasy, was "inspired", in short, as the greater prophets and mystics have been inspired. The "sense of Presence" intensified, turns into this. We propose to reconstruct the process of

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authorship from this point of view, in order to discover how well this theory explains the facts.

a. The author of this gospel, as most critics are now agreed, was a prominent Christian of Ephesus around the turn of the first century. He was probably Jewish by race, but having such knowledge of Hellenistic thought as an educated man who had lived long in Ephesus might be expected to have. He is Pauline in the general tone of his theology, but felt more keenly than Paul the importance for faith of the Incarnation, the fact of the historic life of Jesus. He was greatly disturbed by many minor questionings of his day as to Christianity, as well as by two or three major tendencies of the time.<sup>1</sup> The major tendencies were (1) the tendency to make Christianity purely a religion of tradition and authority, living on the memory of the historic Christ, (2) often associated with this the apocalyptic tendency, looking in the future for such an external manifestation of the Son of God as had come in the past, (3) on the other hand, the tendency to make Christianity a mere speculation and the human life of Jesus merely an appearance or a myth.

To John, all these tendencies were dangerous.

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1. For a full discussion of the conditions out of which the Fourth Gospel was written, see Scott, "The Fourth Gospel", Chapters I-IV or Strachan, "The Fourth Evangelist", Chapters I, II, IV, and VII.



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Mystic that he was, Christianity was to him a present experience, far more than either a tradition or a hope. And yet he saw clearly the danger of cutting loose that experience from its roots in history, a danger which the mystics have not always seen.

With this sense of the church's danger on two fronts to stir him he sat down to write his book. But what form should it take? It might take the form of a theological treatise, but dogma, he clearly saw, while important was not the most important thing. It might take the form of a narrative of personal experience, but that would not emphasize as strongly as he desired to do the importance of the historic life.

The choice finally fell upon a "gospel", another story that is, of the life of Jesus. But however much the author intended to write history, he was really writing with an eye to present-day needs rather than merely with the purpose of reciting the facts of that life. In the form of history and against the background of the incarnate life, the evangelist was unburdening his soul of all that he felt he must say to his age. He was presenting Jesus so as to awaken belief in Him, he was portraying his own present experience, and he was answering the questions which people of his own day were

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asking about the Faith. He was in short writing history as a mystical theologian would write it.

The underlying plan of the gospel is simple. It has an historical framework. It begins with a brief statement of the author's philosophy, the Prologue, placing Jesus against his cosmic background, as the incarnation of the eternal Logos. This is followed by the witness of John and the call of the first disciples.

The second section is chapters 2-12, concerned with the ministry of Jesus. But its internal plan is not primarily chronological. Whether Strachan is right in his suggestion that the chronological semblance which it at present bears has been imposed on it,<sup>1</sup> or whether the complex character of this section is simply due to the fact that the author in attempting to write history is attempting that for which no mystic is temperamentally adapted, we are not able certainly to determine. However that may be, the chronological appearance of this section is purely superficial. The author within his historical frame, attempts rather under a series of pictures, to illustrate the work of Jesus. He comes to transcend the old order (turning of water into wine and cleansing of the temple); he comes to bring new life (Nicodemus and

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1. "The Fourth Evangelist", p.101ff.

the new birth, the woman of Samaria and the living water, the five thousand and the bread of life, the blind man illustrating Jesus as light, the good shepherd, Lazarus and the bringing of life). These pictures are interspersed with controversial matter in which many of the current questions are answered, and the section is closed with statements of the acceptance of Jesus by many classes on the one hand and his rejection by the Jews on the other.

The third section, chapters 13-17, gives the evangelist his chance to unfold the heart of the Christian experience. This teaching is fitted into the chronological scheme by putting it into the mouth of Jesus as he bids his disciples farewell. Finally chapters 18-20 close the gospel with an account of the passion and resurrection. Such is the general outline of the gospel, an historical framework, with the two main sections, 2-12 and 13-17 composed of something quite different from history, theological polemic and the symbolic presentation of the work of Jesus for men in the first, a devotional portrayal of the fundamental Christian experience in the second.

This very outline, which starts to be historical and then is not, proves that we are not dealing with the

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mind of an historian. I think it proves also that we are not dealing with the mind of a literary artist. But the more or less disjointed order, with the predominant interest in truths rather than facts, symbols rather than historic narrative, experience rather than tradition, is quite compatible with our contention that we are here dealing with the mind of a mystic. This is just about what you would expect of a mystic who tried to write history.

b. Let us watch that mind as it begins work on the Gospel.

(1) In the first chapter of the Fourth Gospel, there is a very peculiar phenomenon which has long excited the interest of commentators. Properly the "witness of John" begins with verse 19 and before that is the prologue. And yet twice the prologue is interrupted by references to John the Baptist (verses 6-8, and 15). The older commentators were inclined to consider this quite intentional, while the newer tend to some theory of "disarrangement" to explain it.

But if the author of the gospel is psychically of the mystic temperament, and if he had any tendency to ecstasy, one would expect that tendency to show itself in those portions of the writing where emotions would

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naturally be most intense. One of these places is the prologue, and it seems to me that ecstasy furnishes an explanation for the phenomenon of which we speak.

Originally, the prologue was to consist of the first five verses. They form a complete whole and say all that was necessary to place Jesus in his cosmic setting.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was god. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him and without him was not anything made. That which hath been made was life in him and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not." (1-5).

This foundation laid, the author proceeds to his history. "There came a man sent from God whose name was John" (verse 6). Just here, however, the plain setting forth of facts, the historian's task, is interrupted by the need for meeting a current situation. In Ephesus was a Baptist sect, which put the Baptist where Jesus ought to be.<sup>1</sup> Some had been baptized by Paul long before, but evidently some survived. A word must be put in for them. "The same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light." (6-8).

Here we have a polemic digression but the author

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1. Compare Acts 19:1-7.

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is no more pure controversialist than he is pure historian. He is mystic, given to meditation, accustomed to brood over certain great matters of the faith. And now the thought of Jesus as the Light is sufficient to carry him away into a more and more exalted meditation. It is impossible to illustrate this in type, but if the following verses are read aloud the author's growing emotional excitement appears.

"There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world. He was in the world and the world was made through him and the world knew him not. He came unto his own and they that were his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father) full of grace and truth" (9-14).

Somewhere in the course of that passage, I believe, strong emotional excitement passes over into ecstasy and verse 14, at least, is truly ecstatic. "We beheld his glory".

In verse 15, the conscious mind of the author reasserts itself and there is another attempt to begin the narrative portion of the Gospel. But the ecstatic mood has not passed and once again he is led to digress to matters of experience: "For of his fullness we all received and grace upon grace" (verse 16). Again

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emotion conquers and on a lesser scale the phenomenon repeats itself, to the climax, "The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (verse 18).

There are two other things about the prologue which strengthen our suspicion that it was written in a state bordering on ecstasy. One is its cyclic or repetitious character.<sup>1</sup> Verses 9-14 repeat the ideas of verses 1-5, the light that lighteth every man, the rejection by the world, and then go on to that avowal of personal experience which in any logical development of the gospel's theme should not have come so soon. Verses 16-18, again, repeat the ideas of verse 14. A well-disciplined mind does not thus repeat itself. A mind in profound meditation, particularly if that be ecstatic, does.

The other is the fact brought out by Rendel Harris<sup>2</sup> that the prologue is practically a catena of passages from the Wisdom Literature. It is impossible to think of the author as sitting down to compose the prologue by fitting together passages from the Wisdom literature in this fashion. And yet the fact that the prologue is so constructed is indisputable. And this is exactly what an author might do who was very familiar with the Wisdom

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1. Compare ante, p.163.

2. "Origin of the Prologue to John's Gospel", especially p.43.

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Literature and who then sat down to write in a condition bordering on ecstasy. For ecstasy unconsciously makes use of just such materials which have originally been gathered by the conscious mind.

A suggestion of Dr. Stanton, also, is in point here.<sup>1</sup> He attempts to explain the fact that while the Prologue is full of the same ideas which occur in the body of the gospel, yet its primary conception, the Logos, is not mentioned again, by supposing that "in the prologue and the remainder of the gospel we have the history of the evangelist's thought in inverse order."<sup>2</sup> That is to say, in the body of the gospel we have material over which the evangelist had brooded for years, while in the Logos conception we have a recently-acquired idea which gave "satisfactory expression to a truth which (it may be) he was already feeling after."<sup>3</sup> What if we have here an analogy to that "literary and scientific inspiration" of which Leuba speaks,<sup>4</sup> where some perhaps insignificant event (in this case the mention of the Logos-philosophy by "some Apollos who was

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1. "Gospels as Historical Documents", Part III, pp.178-9

2. Op. cit. p.178.

3. Ibid, p.179.

4. "Psychology of Religious Mysticism", pp.240ff. Compare ante, p.229.



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visiting Ephesus, in some lecture-hall or under some portico")<sup>1</sup> caused the results of this long brooding to crystallize? What if the application of the Logos idea to Jesus was in the nature of an "inspiration" and the whole prologue was written in the ecstasy of that revelation? It is not at all unlikely.

It is perfectly possible for an ecstatic mood, which is yet short of complete ecstasy, to be interrupted, (as on my theory this ecstasy would have been interrupted, by the attempt to get down to the writing of history - verses 6,8,15), and yet for the ecstatic mood not to be destroyed. Compare the account of the writing of Longfellow's "Hesperus" in Leuba, p.241. Longfellow records that he broke the writing of the poem by going to bed, but that he could not remain there. New thoughts were running through his head and he had to get up to add them to the ballad. That is just what according to our theory John would have done after having tried to recall himself to his sober task.

(2) We have thus drawn from the prologue of the gospel evidence that the author was subject to ecstatic conditions which caused him to write in a state of psychic inspiration.<sup>2</sup> There are other indications in the gospel that this is true. In chapter 3, for example, it is frequently noticed that Nicodemus, who figures in the opening of the chapter is forgotten before many verses pass and it is impossible to tell where the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus ends. May it not be that here, too, the author under stress of deep emotion slips

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1. Stanton, p.179.

2. By this phrase we only mean to distinguish between the psychological and theological connotations of the word "inspiration". This phrase is adopted to denote the kind of inspiration we have been describing.

off into ecstasy and that 3:16 is written in just such an exalted state as 1:14? If it were true it would help to explain the marvellous inclusion in that verse of practically all of John's great ideas, and also the presence of that note of the saving love of God, drawn from his deeper experience which we have seen to be a little foreign to his ordinary philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

There is another case, not of ecstasy precisely, but illustrating the fact that the mind of this author is more addicted to meditation than to narrative, in chapter 12:20ff, where after the introduction of the "Greeks", they are forgotten while Jesus goes on to speak in exalted mood of his passion. Indeed, the inequalities of the entire gospel, the way in which narrative passes into polemic and polemic into the most exalted meditation seems to indicate the mind with the "mobile threshold", rather than the mind well under control. The author is never in perfect control of his materials, and he reaches his highest points where as in the prologue and in chapters 14-17, his subject masters him.<sup>2</sup>

4. But it is high time that we should apply our

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1. Ante, p.100f.

2. For the phraseology of this last sentence I am indebted to my fellow-student Mr. John B. Noss.

hypothesis that the Johannine temperament is a mystic temperament, to the facts which started us on this quest. Are the facts that give rise to the impression of verisimilitude, actually explicable on this basis?

a. The claim to personal experience in 1:14 is explicable on the supposition that this verse was written in ecstasy. No ecstatic ever thinks of ascribing superior reality to experiences of the senses over experiences of vision. If the evangelist had beheld the Lord's glory as Paul did, it would have been quite sufficient to cause him to make this claim.

And 19:35, if indeed it is genuine,<sup>1</sup> is perfectly explicable on the same basis. The moving vision of the blood and water with its symbolism may well have been seen by one who had long brooded over the cleansing and life-giving power of the crucified Christ.

b. What of the use of vivid detail?

In Evelyn Underhill's book, "The Mystic Way", there is an excellent illustration of the way in which visions can give every indication of verisimilitude, drawn from the life of a German nun of the early nineteenth century, named Anne-Catherine Emmerich.

She was a nun whose literary knowledge of

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1. Compare Bacon, "The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate", p.309.

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Christianity was confined to the liturgic Gospels, the Church catechism, the imagery of current books of devotion and the legendary history of the Madonna and Christ, and yet her visions into which she passed from meditation on any incident in the life of Christ, represent the incident reenacted with every circumstance of realism, and with the addition of countless vivid details unknown either to the gospels or the legends. The impression given is that these are the first-hand accounts of a spectator, possessed of abnormal powers of observation, who was actually present at the event which she relates.<sup>1</sup>

"She sees the Virgin arriving at Bethlehem and stopping to rearrange her dress as she alights from the ass; Joseph running his eye down the genealogical table . . . and noticing for the first time that Mary is of the house of David. She goes with the Magi on their pilgrimage; 'the camels moving very quietly with long strides, and placing their feet so carefully that one would think they were trying to avoid crushing something. She sees Joseph busy preparing the stable at Bethlehem for his distinguished guests; and the gift of fresh roses which St. Anne sends to her daughter - 'not all the same color: some pale, the color of flesh, some yellow and some white.' She watches St. Anne, the Virgin and Mary Cleophas playing with the Holy Child - 'I said to myself as I watched them', says Anne-Catherine simply, 'Why, women with children are always the same'.

"Sometimes the sense of actuality reaches an extraordinarily high pitch. 'The night had been extremely cold,' she says in her narrative of the trial of Jesus, 'and the morning was dark and cloudy. A little hail had fallen, which surprised everyone, but towards twelve o'clock the day became brighter. . . and when Jesus after the scourging fell at the foot of the pillar, I saw Claudia Proclus send to the mother of God a bundle

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1. "The Mystic Way", pp.236-237.

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of linen. I do not know whether she thought that Jesus would be acquitted and therefore would give his mother something to bind up his wounds, or whether the compassionate pagan had a presentiment of that which the blessed Virgin would do with her gift."<sup>1</sup>

Now, the things to be noticed here are (1) that these visions are built up on the basis of the historical and traditional material of which Anne-Catherine was possessed, and (2) that the details of her visions are quite as real as if they came from memory - perhaps more so, for, as Drummond has pointed out,<sup>2</sup> memory is ordinarily not very prolific of details.

I would not wish to suggest that all the historical detail in John's Gospel is mystic vision and nothing more. Much of the narrative, I have no doubt, rests on perfectly good tradition, perhaps even on the stories of some eye-witness. But the presence of vivid detail, far from being a proof that the author himself was an eye-witness, seems to me rather to suggest vision of the type Streeter calls "creative memory"<sup>3</sup>, the vivid picturing of scenes which is frequently the result of the long brooding of a contemplative mind, and there are occasions on which this creative memory seems to pass over into veritable vision.

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1. Underhill, "The Mystic Way", pp.237-238.

2. "Character and Authorship of the Fourth Gospel", pp.376-379.

3. "The Four Gospels", pp.383-385.

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(1) One of the most striking cases of what appears to be real vision occurs in the Lazarus story. This story I must believe, is based on some genuine historic tradition - there are other stories of the raising of the dead in the gospels - and John sets out to narrate it as sober fact, albeit with a didactic and symbolic motive, as illustrating Christ's gift of life. But somewhere in the course of the story, perhaps beginning with the great word of Jesus "I am the resurrection and the life"(11:25) the evangelist begins to be carried out of himself. He is no longer narrating a tradition for a didactic purpose, he is seeing the scene, carried away by the emotional intensity of the scene which he is depicting and the depth of his own experience of the Life of which he writes. The presence of vivid details ("Arose quickly" - verse 29 - "Now Jesus was not yet come into the village but was still in the place where Martha methim" - verse 30. "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping who came with her, he groaned in the spirit and was troubled" - verse 33 - "Jesus wept" - verse 35) bears out this suggestion, and when we come to the end of the story there can scarcely be any doubt that this is not a sober account of what actually happened.

"And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. He that was dead came

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forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go." (11:43-44)

Considered as a sober account of actual fact, the picture of a man bound hand and foot coming out of a grave is absurd. In vision, it is just what we might expect.<sup>1</sup>

(2) We have suggested<sup>2</sup> that in the crucifixion story, which is a story of the same emotional tensivity, there may be more than a little of this "creative memory" and vision. "Creative memory"<sup>3</sup> may explain part of the vivid detail (the "lanterns and torches and weapons" of 18:3, the name of the high-priest's servant, 18:10, the vivid "Ecce homo" scene - 19:5 - the "place called The Pavement" - 19:13 - the three languages above the cross - 19:20 - the seamless coat - 19:23); and such scenes, full of symbolism, as that of the beloved disciple and the mother at the cross, or the blood and water that flowed from the wounded side, are quite explicable on the basis that they at least are pure vision.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Compare Strachan, "The Fourth Evangelist", p.172 and Streeter, "The Four Gospels", pp.390 ff.

2. Supra, p.254.

3. It must be understood that "creative memory" may function quite as well with traditional material as with the actual memories of an eye-witness - All that is necessary is factual material long brooded over, by a mind of the visionary type.

4. See infra, pp.344-346; 364-365; 369-370.

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(3) It would be easy, having once formed this hypothesis to see vision in the gospel many times where the author is soberly recording historical tradition. But is it fanciful to suggest that 4:35, "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest" has as its background a vision which the evangelist himself had seen as he brooded over the pagan world around him? In 6:21, commentators have had great trouble with the words, "and straightway the boat was at the land whither they were going". It is one of those unimaginable events like the climax of the Lazarus story. Could not this be a slipping off into vision, comparable to the other, as the author mused over the Synoptic story of the walking on the sea? It seems not unlikely that some of the great symbols, like the symbol of the vine and the branches, owe their origin to vision rather than to ingenuity. And the beautiful resurrection story with its unclarity as to the movements of Mary Magdalene, and its strange mingling of spiritual and material elements may easily also have taken its final form in the same ecstatic mood.

c. Finally, there is the author's intimacy with the Lord. He knows how Jesus felt; he knows what he said on every occasion. Jesus talks more in this gospel

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than even in the Gospel of Matthew.<sup>1</sup> And one of the most serious problems with which critics have had to deal has always been the fact that the style of Jesus in this gospel is so different from his style in the synoptics.

It is no part of the purpose of this thesis to deal with the relation existing between the sayings of Jesus in the synoptics and the Johannine discourses. This has been admirably done by my friend, Mr. E. H. Woods, in an Edinburgh Ph.D. thesis of 1924. It is sufficient to say here that the Johannine discourses, while certainly unhistorical, seem to be firmly rooted in Synoptic soil. They are a natural though daring development of germs that are already present in the Synoptics.

One example may be given. In that great résumé of Jesus' teaching, The Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says to his disciples, "Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick and it giveth light to all that are in the house". (Matthew 5:14-15). In the Fourth Gospel, of course,

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1. The discourses in the Gospel of Matthew are examples of the way a non-mystical mind "constructs" speeches out of pre-existing material.

this saying is not given. Nowhere are the disciples told that they are to be lights, nor that they are to be lifted up, nor that men are to see their good works and glorify their Father. But every one of these things is said about Jesus himself. "I am the light of the world" (8:12). "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself" (12:32). "I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do" (17:4).

This will suffice to illustrate the relation in which the Johannine discourses stand to the synoptic sources. They bear a remote relationship to things that Jesus actually said, and yet they are very different. And our question is, how could any writer have made the change from the one to the other?

The ordinary explanation is that John sat down with his synoptic records and other traditions before him, or if one holds to the eye-witness theory, that he drew on his memory, and wrote these speeches for Jesus, as Thucydides did for his heroes or Plato for his master Socrates, or to bring the matter down to date, as Bernard Shaw does for Joan of Arc. These were not Jesus' words, but this is the meaning of what he said, or what he might have said had he spoken on

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this subject.

I am suggesting, however, that this is not a perfectly satisfactory explanation of the process of authorship. I cannot quite imagine the Fourth Evangelist deliberately putting words into the mouth of a person whom he felt to be divine. And we have in the Bible itself a different example of how this might be done.

In the Old Testament everyone is familiar with the writing of the prophets who claimed to speak in the Lord's name. Once there was the theory that the great prophets were "pens of the Holy Ghost" speaking and writing automatically in trance. More recently the theory has held sway that the prophets were merely great statesmen, social reformers and the like, who felt justified in saying "Thus saith the Lord", because of their utter conviction that what they had to say was true. But it is just as false to ignore all unusual psychic phenomena in the prophetic consciousness as to make them all-explaining. The prophets were great statesmen and social reformers but their message took the form it did because of a peculiar psychic organization which made them particularly conscious of the presence of God. The sixth chapter of Isaiah, with its visionary and

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auditory phenomena is proof enough of that. The young Isaiah did not go into a trance like Balaam (Numbers 24: 3-4, 15-16) but neither did he simply go out with a message and no commission. Long brooding over the needs of Judah, put him into an exalted psychic state where he actually saw and heard the things he wrote. When the prophets said, "Thus saith the Lord", they were speaking out of an experience of peculiar exaltation of spirit which convinced them that the Lord had spoken to them. The prophetic consciousness, that is, is the mystic consciousness as it manifested itself in an environment where for other reasons<sup>1</sup>, true mysticism was not at home.<sup>2</sup>

I am suggesting now, that in the hypothesis that John was a mystic, or if you prefer, a "prophet of Jesus", the explanation is found for the particular form of the discourses. The prophet was able to say "Thus saith the Lord", because the words which he uttered came to him in the guise of a Divine inspiration. And the Fourth Evangelist says, "Jesus said" out of the same type of experience. He had heard Jesus say these things, though with an inner rather than an outer ear.

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1. See ante, pp. 127, 134, 143.

2. Compare Streeter, "The Four Gospels", p.367.

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.That this theory is not fantastic is proved by the words of the Gospel itself.

"But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (14:26).

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father. . . . he shall bear witness of me" (15:26).

"I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all the truth; for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak; and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you" (16:12-14).

Here certainly is evidence that John believed that Jesus had not ceased speaking when his earthly voice was stilled, and that he felt that there were times in his life when through His spirit, the still-living Lord spoke directly to him. Meditating on his materials, with the passion burning within him to make Christ real to his generation, he had actually heard Christ say these things.

Conclusion. It has been the aim of this chapter to show that while there is little evidence in this gospel to indicate that its author was a "psychic" of the type of St. Paul or most of the medieval mystics, nevertheless his consciousness was of the type that we have designated as the "higher ecstatic". He had the "mobile

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threshold of consciousness", the mind not perfectly under control, meditative rather than orderly, given to long brooding, emotional and therefore subject to the "sense of presence" and to that emotional ecstasy which frequently slips over into vision and audition of the most exalted kind. Much of the gospel we believe to have been written in a state of such "psychic inspiration". The discourses are the work of a "prophet of Jesus", who heard him utter them with his inward ear, as the prophets heard the "word of the Lord". The vividness of the narrative is the work of brooding, "creative memory" working lovingly over the material which he had received. The most sublime passages, like the prologue, are "inspired" as the most sublime work of artists is inspired. In the Bible the Fourth Gospel belongs to the same order of literature as the book of the Prophet Isaiah and in the literature of the world it takes its place with the work of the great mystics and the mystical poets of all time.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### KNOWLEDGE.

"The rest may reason and welcome;  
'tis we musicians know."  
- Browning, "Abt Vogler".

#### A. The Mystics.

##### 1. The mystic claim.

"In this my earnest and Christian Seeking and Desire, the Gate was opened to me, that in one Quarter of an Hour I saw and knew more than if I had been many years together at an University, at which I exceedingly admired, and thereupon turned my Praise to God for it. For I saw and knew the Being of all Beings, the Byss and the Abyss, and the eternal generation of the Holy Trinity, the Descent and Original of the World, and of all creatures through the Divine Wisdom: knew and saw in myself all the three Worlds, namely, The Divine, angelical and paradisical; and the dark World, the Original of the Nature to the Fire; and then thirdly, the external and visible World, being a Procreation or external Birth from both the internal and spiritual Worlds. And I saw and knew the whole working Essence in the Evil and the Good, and the Original and Existence of each of them; and likewise how the fruitful bearing Womb of Eternity brought forth. . . . yet however I must begin to labour in these great mysteries, as a child that goes to School. I saw it as in a great Deep in the Internal. For I had a thorough view of the Universe as in a Chaos, wherein all things are couched and wrapped up, but it was impossible for me to explain the same. Yet it opened itself to me from time to time, as in a Young Plant; though the same was with me for the space of twelve years, and as it was as it were breeding and I found a powerful Instigation within me, before I could bring it forth into external Form of Writing; and whatever I could apprehend with the external Principle of my mind, that I wrote down."<sup>1</sup> - Jacob Boehme.

"Now was I come up in spirit through the flaming sword into the Paradise of God. . . . The creation was opened to me; and it was showed me how all things had their names given them, according to their nature and virtue. . . . Great things did the Lord lead me unto and wonderful depths were opened unto me, beyond what can by

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1. Quoted by Evelyn Underhill, "Mysticism", p.308.

words be declared; but as people come into subjection to the Spirit of God, and grow up in the image and power of the Almighty, they may receive the word of wisdom that opens all things, and come to know the hidden unity in the Eternal Being."<sup>1</sup> - George Fox.

"I beheld the working of all the blessed Trinity: in which beholding, I saw and understood these three properties: the property of the Fatherhood, the property of the Motherhood, and the property of the Lordhood, in one God. In our Father Almighty we have our keeping and our bliss as anent our natural Substance. . . . In the second Person in wit and wisdom we have our keeping as anent our Sense-soul. . . . And in our good Lord, the Holy Ghost we have our rewarding and our need-giving for our living and our travail. . . . The high Might of the Trinity is our Father, and the deep Wisdom of the Trinity is our Mother, and the deep love of the Trinity is our Lord; and all this we have in Nature and in our Substantial Making!"<sup>2</sup> - Julian of Norwich.

"This awakening and vision of the soul is as if God drew back some of the many veils and coverings that are before it, so that it might see what He is; then indeed - but still dimly because all the veils are not drawn back - the divine Face, full of grace, bursts through and shines, which as it moves all things by its power, appears together with the effect it produces."<sup>3</sup>

- St. John of the Cross.

"When the soul has been raised to the high state of spiritual marriage the Bridegroom reveals to it His own marvellous secrets most readily and most frequently. The chief matter of His communications are the sweet mysteries of His Incarnation, and the ways and means of Redemption, which is one of the highest works of God."<sup>4</sup>

- The same.

"In this silence and tranquillity, and in this knowledge of the divine light, the soul discerns a marvellous arrangement and disposition of God's wisdom in the diversities of His creatures and operations. All

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1. Quoted by Evelyn Underhill, "Mysticism", p.309.

2. Ibid, pp.134-135.

3. Quoted by Butler, "Western Mysticism", p.323.

4. Ibid, pp.324-325.



these, and each one of them, have a certain correspondence with God, whereby each, by a voice peculiar to itself, proclaims what there is in itself of God, so as to form a concert of sublimest melody, transcending all the harmonies of the world."<sup>1</sup> - St. John of the Cross.

"But when the soul doth feel the presence of God more deeply than is customary, then doth it certify unto itself that He is within it; it doth feel it, I say, with an understanding so marvellous and so profound, and with such great love and divine fire, that it loseth all love for itself and for the body, and it speaketh and knoweth and understandeth those things of the which it hath never heard from any mortal whatsoever. And it understandeth with great illumination, and with much difficulty doth it hold its peace."<sup>2</sup> - Blessed Angela of Foligno.

"Absorbed in contemplation of divine things, the saint seated himself for a time by the road, looking at the stream which crossed it. Then the eyes of his soul were opened and were inundated with light. He perceived nothing that fell under his senses, but he comprehended marvellously a great number of truths pertaining to the faith or to the human sciences. They were so numerous and the light was so bright that he seemed to enter into a new world. The abundance of his knowledge, and its excellence were so great that, according to Ignatius, all that he had learned in his life up to his sixty-second year, whether supernatural or through laborious study, could not be compared to that which he gained at this one time."<sup>3</sup> - Ignatius Loyola.

It will be observed from the above that the mystic lays claim to three different kinds of knowledge.

(1) In the first place, he claims to know supernaturally many truths and facts, which otherwise are arrived at only after arduous mental effort ("the working of all the Blessed Trinity" - Julian of Norwich; "the

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1. Quoted by Butler, "Western Mysticism", p.325.

2. Quoted by Bennett, "A Philosophical Study of Mysticism", p.72.

3. Quoted by Pratt - "Religious Consciousness", p.406.

sweet mysteries of his Incarnation and the ways and means of Redemption" - St. John of the Cross; "a great number of truths pertaining to the faith or to the human sciences" - Ignatius Loyola).

(2) In the second place, he claims to know God, by immediate experience, (especially St. John of the Cross and the Blessed Angela).

(3) In the third place, he claims to know the relations of all things in the Universe, to have penetrated to the heart, to have seen the inner working and to have perceived the essential harmony. He has found the clue to life's riddle ( Boehme, George Fox, St. John of the Cross. )

The first claim, to particular revelation and inspiration has been sufficiently dealt with in the last chapter. It is our purpose here to deal with the claims to knowledge of a more general kind, the claim to know God by immediate contact and to have seen to the heart of the riddle of the Universe. The mystic believes that there is a Real beyond the Seen, and that that Real he knows.

It must be clearly understood that what we have here is rather what James called "knowledge of" than "knowledge about". Bennett says, "Whatever truth the

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mystics have come upon, it is not any particular truth. They have, of course, received a formidable number of revelations, but their typical achievement in this respect, and the one universally celebrated among them is not to be defined as any item or group of items to be added to our stock of scientific and philosophical knowledge."<sup>1</sup> And again, "The mystics have declared that the God whom they sought has made himself known to them in direct presence. This seems to constitute more than half the burden of their revelation; this is the announcement to which they return with wearying, if unwearied repetition. When they try to tell more, they grow inarticulate. That they know is painfully evident; what they know does not emerge."<sup>2</sup> Pratt puts it, "The noetic element of the mystic experience. . . . is characterized. . . . by the relative lack of conceptual knowledge and abstract judgments, on the one hand, and by the presence of a relatively intense immediate experience, which indeed necessarily includes some ideation, but in which immediacy is much more prominent than representation."<sup>3</sup>

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1. "A Philosophical Study of Mysticism", p.76f.

2. Ibid, p..78f.

3. "Religious Consciousness", p.401.

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Mystic knowledge differs from the knowledge derived from reasoning just in this respect. The knowledge of the reason is conceptual, mystic knowledge is rather what one might call "totality-feeling" and intense certainty-personal experience of Reality.

"Our apprehension of the One", says Plotinus, "does not partake of the nature of either understanding or abstract thought as does our knowledge of other intelligible objects, but has the character of presentation higher than understanding. For understanding proceeds by concepts, and the concept is a multiple affair, and the soul misses the One when she falls into number and plurality. She must then pass beyond understanding and nowhere emerge from her unity."<sup>1</sup>

And St. John of the Cross, - "There are two ways by which these notions and intelligent acts enter into the understanding; one is natural, the other supernatural. The first includes all the means by which the understanding receives knowledge, whether through the channel of the bodily senses or by reflection. The second comprises all that is beyond the natural powers and capacity of the understanding. . . . The spiritual supernatural knowledge is of two kinds, one distinct and special, the other confused, obscure and general. The first kind. . . . are visions, revelations, locutions, and spiritual impressions. The second kind, which is obscure and general, has but one form, that of contemplation."<sup>2</sup>

That is to say, the typical mystic knowledge, the contemplative knowledge is distinguished certainly from such as comes through reason and even from such as comes through vision and revelation, and one of its distinguishing marks is that it is "obscure and general" rather than "distinct and special". It is a knowledge of the whole, not a knowledge of the parts.

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1. "Ennead" VI. 9. Pratt, op.cit. p.401.

2. "Ascent of Mount Carmel", Book II, Chapter X.

2. Bases of the mystic knowledge.

a. The mystic knowledge which is "distinct and special" is based on such psychic phenomena as vision, audition, and inspiration and this has been dealt with in the preceding chapter.

b. There remains the more typical mystic knowledge, the intense certainty, the "immediate knowledge of God" and the conviction of essential harmony in the universe, the sense of contact with the Real.

(1) In many cases this is probably due to trance. There can be little doubt about it in the vision of Ignatius Loyola quoted above. "Absorbed in contemplation of divine things, the saint seated himself for a time by the road, looking at the stream which crossed it." The steadfast gazing at the running water would be quite enough to induce a light hypnotic trance. Boehme's initial illumination was also certainly so induced<sup>1</sup> and both Coe and Leuba have showed that that sense of certainty and of contentless revelation are concomitants of all trance states.

"During a nitrous oxide trance Sir Humphrey Davy attempted to communicate a discovery he thought he had made: 'One collection of terms', he wrote, 'presented itself and with the most intense belief and prophetic manner I explained that nothing exists but thought'.

"In our own experiments with ether, one of the subjects reported her discovery thus: 'With perfect

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1. See Underhill, "Mysticism", p.69.

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lucidity the thought came to me that the auto-introspectionists (the behaviorists) had never seen things as I was seeing them now. . . . It was so plain, I could examine minutely thoughts passing in review before me, etc.

"Dr. Weir Mitchell, after taking nescal, had a 'certain sense' of the things about him as 'having a more positive existence than usual'; and Hollingworth in his description of drowsiness states that 'in the drowsy state as in dream-life, images seem to exceed by far in intensity the clearest images of the waking state'. Tennyson, in trances induced by repeating his own name, felt that 'the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade into boundless being, and this not a confused state, but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest. . . . utterly beyond words'. Lowell 'inspired' late one evening 'spoke with the calmness and clearness of a prophet'. Nevertheless his philosophical constructions never saw the light of day. Madeleine understood with absolute clearness and certainty a variety of mysteries among them those of the Trinity and of the Immaculate Conception."<sup>1</sup>

The quotation from Coe has already been given on page 199.

The resemblance between these claims and the mystic claims to knowledge is too close to be altogether accidental.

(2) But not all of the mystic feeling of insight into Reality and sense of certainty is to be explained on this basis. Whatever may have been true of Jacob Boehme's original vision, one can hardly feel that all the profound insight of the inspired shoemaker was the result of trance, and the same is certainly true of the "inner light" of George Fox and the exalted vision of

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1. Leuba, "The Psychology of Religious Mysticism", pp. 274-275.

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St. John of the Cross. While if we turn from these great ones to certain experiences of our own, we are quite sure that in exalted moments when we have been absolutely sure of God or have seemed to see deep into the inner harmony of the world, we have not been in a condition of either drowsiness or trance.

What, then, is the basis of such mystic knowledge as is not to be traced to trance-states? In what way is it differently based from ordinary knowledge?

"Mysticism. . . . maintains as its central dogma that truth is not apprehensible by processes of intellection, but must be attained, if at all, through the immediate touch or reaction of feeling. Truth is therefore to be grasped primarily, not in intelligible forms, but rather in an act of appreciation, whose content can only be vaguely symbolized. The primal voice of experience is: I have felt; whereas the intellectual categories by means of which this content of feeling is reduced to intelligibility are secondary and unessential." So Ormond.<sup>1</sup>

And Récéjac says, "Mysticism. . . . claims to be able to know the Unknowable without help from dialectics, and is persuaded that, by means of love and will, it reaches a point to which thought, unaided, cannot attain."<sup>2</sup> Mysticism is "a tendency to arrive at consciousness of the Absolute by means of symbols under the influence of love."<sup>3</sup> "In the judgment of mystics, the Heart is an implicit of Reason and Love, in which those two powers are really subordinate. Desire, which is only the active essence of Reason, surpasses in swiftness and energy all process of Dialectics and is able to give us intuitions which establish pure Reason. It is the Heart and never the Reason, which leads us to the Absolute."<sup>4</sup>

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1. "Foundations of Knowledge", p.27.

2. "Bases of the Mystic Knowledge", p.7.

3. Ibid, p.62.

4. Ibid, p.185.

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Finally Evelyn Underhill - "Mysticism. . . . is essentially a movement of the heart, seeking to transcend the limitations of the individual standpoint and to surrender itself to ultimate Reality; for no personal gain, to satisfy no transcendental curiosity, to obtain no other-worldly joys, but purely from an instinct of love. By the word heart of course we here mean not merely 'the seat of the affections', 'the organ of tender emotion', and the like: but rather the inmost sanctuary of personal being, the synthesis of its love and will, the very source of its energy and life."<sup>1</sup>

The mystic theory of knowledge is distinguished by the place which it gives to feeling, and mysticism as a means of deriving knowledge of Ultimate Truth stands or falls with the place which we are willing to assign to feeling in the cognitive process.

3. Validity of the mystic claim.

a. The claim to particular revelations has already been sufficiently dealt with. The mechanism of mystic revelations is not different from the mechanism of other revelation, and its form gives it therefore no superior claim to validity. Mystic revelations of particular truths must be tested by the same standards by which we test truth arrived at by other means. That the Divine may and does use the mechanism of vision, audition and inspiration we need not doubt. That there is no particular sanctity about these states and that they do not guarantee the discoveries made in them, we are quite certain.

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1. "Mysticism", p.85.



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b. The certainty of God and the conviction of universal harmony that is the result of trance, leaves us very sceptical. The supposed "great discoveries" of trance are too often delusions to make us feel very comfortable about claiming validity for the similar discoveries of religious trance, just because it is religious. Insofar as the mystic knowledge, then, is based upon the trance-phenomena of mysticism, we are inclined to discredit it.

c. But much more, it appears to us, is to be said for the position that in giving a large place to feeling as a source of insight into Truth the mystics are making a valid claim.

(1) In the first place we must dissociate ourselves from those students of the subject who oppose feeling to reason as a means of cognition. It is not possible thus to chop apart the cognitive process. In every process of intellection, the whole of the mind is involved, and from the lowest to the highest, as Ormud says, "Thinking is the seeing activity".<sup>1</sup> To talk about "transcending the reason" in anything but a figurative sense is absurd.

But it is apparent that in the cognitive process,

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1. "Foundations of Knowledge", p.85.

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the feeling, the thinking and the willing activities of the mind are not always evenly balanced. People may be classified on the basis of which element is predominant, and individuals differ from moment to moment. The attitude of mind in which we work out a mathematical problem or attempt to solve a problem in philosophy is not the attitude of mind in which we appreciate a great picture or listen to a symphony. When we are engaged in critical activities we frankly try to free our minds as much as possible from emotional attitudes. But a person who is weak on the feeling, or aesthetic, side of his nature, is simply shut out from insight into the inner meaning of music, poetry or any of the arts.

And the thing which the mystic believes is that though feeling is the first of the activities of mind to manifest itself, it is also the highest. "The last and highest stage of experience must be regarded as one in which the self realizes its world in an emotional experience. To this form of experience we may apply the term appreciation. The world of appreciation is a world in which the self realizes its content immediately in an emotional experience. The stage of the higher immediacy is then one of appreciation."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Ormand, op.cit., p.85.

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But - and this is the important point - this condition of the mind in which feeling reasserts its primacy is not a state of pure feeling or a state where feeling has "transcended reason". There is no such thing in human life as a state of pure feeling unless the baby's first pleasure-gain experience is such, and reason is never "transcended", though sometimes, as in trance, it is put into abeyance. The condition of mind of which we are speaking is a state in which the whole mind is unified to a greater than ordinary degree and deeply sensitized by the power of emotion.

Miss Underhill, if we properly understand her, believes that a different organ, not usually active, is "uncovered" as it were by the power of emotion.

"Neither conation nor cognition - action nor thought - as performed by this surface mind. . . . is able to set up any relations with the Absolute or Transcendental world. Such action and thought deal wholly with material supplied directly or indirectly by the world of sense. The testimony of the mystics, however, and of all persons possessing an 'instinct for the Absolute' points to the existence of a further faculty in man; an intuitive power which the circumstances of diurnal life tend to keep 'below the threshold'. . . . This latent faculty is the primary agent of mysticism. . .

"Certain processes, of which contemplation has been taken as a type, so alter the state of consciousness as to permit the emergence of this faculty, which according as it enters more or less into the conscious life, makes man more or less a mystic.

"The mystic life, therefore, involves the emergence from deep levels of man's transcendental self; its capture of the field of consciousness, and the 'conversion' or rearrangement of his feeling, thought and will...

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about this new centre of life."<sup>1</sup>

This, we think, is not a precise picture of what happens. The soul has no different eye in this higher stage of its experience than it has had all along.<sup>2</sup>

"The ideal term is no longer explicit, and the experience is emotional in its form. But the idea is implicit, internal in the emotion. . . . Thinking is the seeing activity, the principle of insight, and when thinking acts under forms of feeling it becomes intuition; the contents of its thoughts are immediately rather than mediately obtained."<sup>3</sup> What we have is simply the ordinary means of cognition, unified, quickened, sensitized by the power of emotion. If the mind is ordinarily of a low order, it will not in the mystic state be suddenly transformed. But if its ordinary powers of cognition are keen, under the power of mystic emotion it will become an organ of peculiar insight and power.

It is necessary that we should understand what kind of knowledge this mind unified and sensitized under the power of emotion is and is not capable of attaining. The mind in this state is not capable of keen and clear analysis. "It is characteristic of feeling, however,

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1. "Mysticism", p.80.

2. See Ormond, op.cit., p.85.

3. Ibid.

that it is not overtly and explicitly cognitive, but that its seeing eye is more or less suffused with a mist of emotion which impairs its power of clear conceptual definition."<sup>1</sup> It is not capable of what we know as discursive reasoning, nor of clearly and logically evaluating facts and truths. When the mystical consciousness is appealed to for help on an intellectual or critical problem as in the cases cited by Leuba on page 264 of the "Psychology of Religious Mysticism" its answer has no value, so far as the intellectual problem is concerned.

But there are times when analysis is not what we want. We must see things whole before we can reason about them. We must have come into immediate contact with Reality before we can analyze it. And this total-seeing must be intuitive.<sup>2</sup> We have a right to believe the mystics when they tell us that they are certain of God because they have had immediate experience of Him or that they have seen the universe whole and have felt its harmony, for their type of consciousness is just the type of consciousness that can best apprehend these things. We have a right to trust the insight of the mystics in the realm of the higher values, where appreciation is involved. But we must recognize that this is

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1. Ormond, op.cit., p.480.

2. See Bennett, "Philosophical Study of Mysticism", p.93 ff.

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only part of the task of apprehending Reality. Jacob Boehme was right when, after his great vision he said, "Yet however I must begin to labour in these great mysteries, as a child that goes to school."<sup>1</sup> His mystic consciousness had given him a great insight into Truth; now his reasoning powers must work out its implications. "Wisdom", says Bennett, "lies not in choosing either mysticism or philosophy but in choosing both. Philosophy is the articulation and completion of mysticism, but mysticism in turn is needed in order to complete by correction and supplementation the work of philosophy. And this is a perpetual process. For if it is the destiny of mysticism to lose its life in philosophy, it is the destiny of philosophy to recover its hold upon its object by renewal of the mystic vision". . . . "Reason may establish our certainties, it does not initiate them."<sup>2</sup> For the initiation of our certainties we must look now as always to the mystic vision.

#### B. The Fourth Gospel.

##### 1. The Johannine claim to knowledge.

The word "knowledge" ( γνῶσις ), like the word "faith" ( πίστις ) is not used in the Fourth Gospel.

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1. Ante, p.266.

2. Bennett, op.cit., p.110.

Whether or not the reason for the omission is the same in both cases,<sup>1</sup> it seems very likely that the noun  $\gamma\nu\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ , at any rate, is omitted with a polemic purpose.<sup>2</sup> It had acquired a definite "gnostic" significance, and the evangelist, sympathetic in many respects with gnosticism,<sup>3</sup> desires to dissociate his use of the idea of "knowledge" from that significance.

But while the noun  $\gamma\nu\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ , is conspicuous by its absence, the two verbs,  $\gamma\iota\nu\omega\sigma\kappa\omega$  and  $\sigma\iota\delta\alpha$ , to know, are just as conspicuously present. With the exception of the idea of believing there is scarcely a commoner idea in the gospel than the idea of knowledge.

For the purpose of our study no distinction will be made between the two verbs. Strictly, there is a difference between them akin to the difference between "knowledge about" and "knowledge of". Abbott says that

$\sigma\iota\delta\alpha$  means "I know" or, in a popular sense, "know all about", while  $\gamma\iota\nu\omega\sigma\kappa\omega$  means, "I acquire knowledge about, come to know, understand, recognize, feel".<sup>4</sup> Thayer says:

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1. Abbott suggests a different reason for the omission of the noun, "faith". See "Johannine Vocabulary", p.22.
  2. Compare Scott, "The Fourth Gospel", p.94.
  3. Ibid, p.98.
  4. "Johannine Vocabulary", 1621-1629.

"In classic usage,  $\gamma\iota\nu\acute{\omega}\sigma\kappa\epsilon\iota\nu$  . . . . denotes a discriminating apprehension of external impressions, a knowledge grounded in personal experience.  $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\delta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\alpha\iota$  , lit. 'to have seen with the mind's eye' signifies a clear and purely mental perception, in contrast both to conjecture and to knowledge derived from others."<sup>1</sup>

But the words are not used with sufficient precision by the evangelist to justify the building of a theory on their difference. When John the Baptist speaks of knowing Jesus he uses,  $\sigma\acute{\iota}\delta\alpha$  (1:26,31), when Nathanael asks Jesus, "Whence knowest thou me?" (1:48) he uses  $\gamma\iota\nu\acute{\omega}\sigma\kappa\omega$ . When the Jews say, "We know this man whence he is, but when the Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is", (7:27)<sup>2</sup> the verb is  $\sigma\acute{\iota}\delta\alpha$  the first time and  $\gamma\iota\nu\acute{\omega}\sigma\kappa\omega$  the second. Distinctions might be drawn here, but it would be precarious. In 3:10,11 there does seem to be a clear contrast of thought.

"Art thou the teacher of Israel and understandest not these things? ( $\gamma\iota\nu\acute{\omega}\sigma\kappa\omega$  ). We speak that which we know (  $\sigma\acute{\iota}\delta\alpha$  ) and bear witness of that which we have seen."

And in 8:55, the same contrast appears:

"Ye have not known him ( $\gamma\iota\nu\acute{\omega}\sigma\kappa\omega$  ), but I know him ( $\sigma\acute{\iota}\delta\alpha$  ) and if I should say, I know him not ( $\sigma\acute{\iota}\delta\alpha$  ), I shall be a liar. . . . but I know him ( $\sigma\acute{\iota}\delta\alpha$  ) and keep his word."

It is tempting to say that direct insight into divine things, like that of Jesus, makes use of  $\sigma\acute{\iota}\delta\alpha$  (Compare 5:32, 7:29, 12:50). But then there is 5:42:

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1. Lexicon, p.118, under  $\gamma\iota\nu\acute{\omega}\sigma\kappa\omega$  .

2. Compare Abbott, op.cit., 1624.



"I know you, that ye have not the love of God in yourselves", where γινώσκω is used, and 17:25, "I knew thee, and these knew that thou didst send me" (γινώσκω).<sup>1</sup>

We shall not attempt to distinguish, ordinarily, between the verbs then, but without making such distinction notice in the first place, that in the fourth gospel, as in the mystics the claim is made that believers are distinguished from the world by their possession of superior illumination or knowledge.

a. The ignorant world.

The gospel opens with a picture of a world whose misfortune is that it does not know the light.

"He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world knew him not" (1:10).

And when the scene is transferred from the cosmic to the local setting, the note remains the same.

"In the midst of you standeth one whom ye know not" (1:26 - Compare 1:31,33).

Nicodemus is ignorant (3:10); so are the Samaritans (4:10,22). The Jews do not know God (7:28; 8:14,19,55). The trouble with the world is that it is walking in darkness and knows not whither it is going (12:35). Even the disciples are concerned about their lack of knowledge (14:5). Compare also 14:17; 15:21; 16:3; 17:25.

b. The initiated disciples.

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1. For all this see Thayer, *ibid*, and on 17:25, Abbott, *op.cit.* 1629 a.

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But on the other hand, the disciples are those who have beheld his glory (1:14). It is quite as probable that the evangelist is speaking anachronously in the name of the church as that Jesus is speaking rhetorically when in 3:11, he says "We speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen."<sup>1</sup> The Samaritan converts speak of their knowledge (4:42) which seems to be put by the evangelist in contradistinction to their former ignorance (4:22), and Jesus promises that those who do his will shall know (7:17). He is the light of the world; those who follow him shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life (8:12). Compare 9:25; 10:14; 10:38; 13:7; 13:17; 14:4; 14:7; 14:17; 14:20; 15:15; 16:13; 16:30; 17:7; 17:8; 17:25.

In all these passages it is apparent that, whatever be the fundamental ethical significance of the teaching of this gospel<sup>2</sup> the primary and immediate concern of the evangelist is with knowledge. When Jesus says to the twelve, "Would ye also go away?" Peter answers, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (6:67-68). That is, the knowledge which we gain from your words, this it is, and this is

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1. Compare B.W.Robinson, "The Gospel of John", pp.100-101.

2. How great we think it, is indicated by Chapter V of this thesis.

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the only thing, which gives eternal life.<sup>1</sup>

What is implicit here becomes explicit in the great third verse of chapter 17, "This is life eternal, ~~that~~ they should know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." All through the gospel it is apparent that the great goal of the coming of Jesus was that men might have eternal life (compare 10:10; 20:31), and the only time when anything like a definition of eternal life is given, it is defined in terms of knowledge. Eternal life is more than this, but the essence of it is that men should have a more nearly perfect knowledge of God.<sup>2</sup>

There is one other place where the result of men's believing and following Jesus is given in terms of knowledge. "If ye abide in my word", says Jesus to the Jews that had believed him, "then are ye truly my disciples, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (8:31,32). If men, that is, meditate on and live according to the teaching of Jesus, the result is for them a new enlightenment - "Ye shall know the truth" - and the new enlightenment spells for them freedom from all that has enslaved them.

We may say, then, in the first place, that quite

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1. Compare Westcott, "Commentary", Volume I, p.251.

2. Compare Westcott, "Commentary", Volume II, p.242.

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clearly the Fourth Evangelist makes claims of knowledge for Christians quite in the manner of the mystics. Whether the knowledge thus claimed is of a similar kind, is the next subject for inquiry.

2. Content of the Johannine idea of knowledge.

What is this knowledge of which the fourth gospel speaks? What is it that Christians know?

They know, in the first place, concerning the teaching of Jesus, whether it is of God, or whether he speaks from himself (7:17). They know concerning his person that he is in the Father, and they in him and he in them (14:20). They know that he knows all things (16:30). They know that he came forth from God (17:8) and that God sent him (17:25). All these are facts that they are able to discern because of their enhanced insight.

But far more important than the knowledge of these particular facts are three kinds of knowledge which the evangelist claims.

a. Knowledge of God.

"If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also; from henceforth ye know him and have seen him."  
- 14:7.

"This is life eternal, that they should know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." - 17:3.

What is meant by knowing God?

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In chapter 14, the thought is clearly of a revelation of God's nature and character. The vision that Philip has in mind is of a mystic type, a flash of light from the unknown that should give knowledge and certainty. But Jesus speaks in terms of that which seems to him infinitely better, the revelation of God which was given in his own life. "When you have known me you have known the Father. A psychic vision would be of no use to one who has seen what you have seen."

The great verse of chapter 17 must be read in the light of this passage. "This is life eternal, that they should know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." Eternal life, that is to say, consists in an accurate insight into God's character and life.

But this knowledge about God that is obtained through the revelation in Jesus Christ, does not exhaust the significance of the Johannine idea. The idea does have a greater intellectual content than the purely mystic vision,<sup>1</sup> but it does not stop with that. It is intimate "knowledge of" God into which men enter through contact with Jesus Christ, the kind of knowledge that Jesus himself had (8:55; 17:25), the kind of knowledge

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1. Ely, "Knowledge of God in Johannine Thought", p.134.

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that would restrain from wrong action (15:21; 16:3). To know God is more than to know any particular thing about Him. It is to have come into intimate contact with him and to have been lifted up to the point where you are constantly in his presence.

b. Knowledge of "the way".

"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life" - 8:12.

"And whither I go, ye know the way. . . . I am the way" - 14:4,6.

This is another idea which is more mystical than at first appears. In 8:12 the idea seems at first to be merely that he who follows Jesus knows where to walk because he can keep in the Master's footsteps. But study of the whole gospel shows that the idea is more inward than that. The light, which Jesus is, dwells within, and men know the way to go by an inward illumination.

In 14:4,6 the idea is even more subtle. Thomas, when he asks his puzzled question, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, how know we the way?" (verse 5) is thinking of the "way" as a path along which a man must walk, following a guide. But Jesus answers, not, "I have showed you the way," but "I am the way". Knowing him, that is, men know the way with one total-vision. He does not enable us to foretell the events of life

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nor does he draw for us a map of the road from earth to heaven. But to know him is to grasp the "clue" and to walk, therefore, with un stumbling feet.

Here again, more of intellectual content is involved than in purely mystic knowledge because we are dealing with a person rather than a vision, but in that it is total-seeing rather than part-seeing, insight rather than knowledge of particular fact or truth, it is akin to mystic knowledge.

c. Knowledge of "the truth".

"Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" - 8:32.

"One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see" - 9:25.

The conception of "knowing the truth" is the most completely mystical of any of the conceptions which we have been considering. But to understand it fully we must notice John's use of the idea of "truth".

The word ( ἀλήθεια ) is one of the commoner Johannine words, and used by him more commonly by far than by the synoptists, another proof of the surpassing interest of this evangelist in matters connected with knowledge.

1:14 - "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only-begotten from the Father) full of grace and truth."

1:17 - "The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

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- 3:21 - "He that doeth the truth cometh to the light".
- 4:23 - "The hour cometh and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."
- 4:24 - "God is spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth."
- 5:33 - "Ye have sent unto John and he hath borne witness unto the truth."
- 8:32 - "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."
- 8:40 - "Ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth."
- 8:44 - "He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth because there is no truth in him."
- 8:45 - "Because I say the truth ye believe me not."
- 8:46 - "If I say truth, why do ye not believe me?"
- 14:6 - "I am the way and the truth and the life."
- 14:17 - "The Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive."
- 15:26 - "The Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father."
- 16:7 - "I tell you the truth."
- 16:13 - "When he the Spirit of truth is come he shall guide you into all the truth."
- 17:17 - "Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth."
- 17:19 - "That they themselves also may be sanctified in truth."
- 18:37 - "To this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice."
- 18:38 - "Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?"

These examples indicate that the word is used throughout the gospel with one single, well-defined meaning. Truth is Reality.<sup>1</sup> When the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, it revealed the Reality heretofore unseen. Those whose doings are in accord with higher Reality, have no fear of the light. Worshippers must worship the Father

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1. Compare Ely, "Knowledge of God in Johannine Thought", p.34 and Scott, "The Fourth Gospel", p.253.



in accordance with the reality of his nature. John's witness accorded with Reality. Jesus was disliked and disbelieved because his words were not tempered to the popular ear but remained true to Reality. He embodied the Real, the Spirit who came was the Spirit of the Real, he gave an insight into the Real which the Spirit would continue to give. The word of God is a word from the Real, in which Christian disciples need to be consecrated. Christ is the witness of that unseen, Real world; everyone whose life is in inner accord with it responds to him; the Pilates of the world do not even know that there is a Real behind the seen.

This interpretation of the word is borne out by the use of the adjective, "true". There are two words for "true", ἀληθής and ἀληθινός.<sup>1</sup> The first, which means true in the ethical sense of "genuine" or "honest" is used frequently in this gospel (3:33; 4:18; 5:31,32; 7:18; 8:13,14,16,17,26; 10:41; 19:35). But the second, which means true in the philosophical sense of "real" is used very infrequently in the New Testament except in this Gospel, the first Epistle and Revelation. This fact is itself significant for our study. The true light (1:9) is the light which is in accordance with Reality; true

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1. See Trench, "New Testament Synonyms", pp.25-28.

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worshippers (4:23) are those who worship in accordance with what is really true about God; a true saying (4:37) is one that accords with the facts; true bread (6:32) is that of which physical food is but a reflection; the true vine (15:1) is the vine of which other vines are a symbol; the true God (17:3) is the God who is the only Real.<sup>1</sup> The idea of "the truth and "the true," it is quite clear, is concerned less with the ethical than with the philosophical aspects of religion.<sup>2</sup>

When, therefore, the evangelist claims that believers know "the truth", it is not any particular truth to which reference is made. Believers have penetrated behind the veil of the world and looked full in the face of Reality, and it is that enlightening vision that has made them free. Like the erstwhile blind man, their eyes are open on another world, and it is not the particular things they see that matter, so much as the fact of sight.

### 3. Sources of the Johannine knowledge.

We have now seen that the Fourth Evangelist makes for Christians a claim to knowledge quite akin to that made by the mystics. The knowledge thus claimed is distinguished from the purely mystic knowledge by its greater intellectual content, but even so it is total-seeing

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1. Scott, op.cit., p.253.

2. Compare Ely, "Knowledge of God", p.34.

rather than part-seeing, insight into Reality rather than knowledge of particular facts. We have now to ask whether in its sources this Johannine knowledge is like or different from mystic knowledge.

How is this knowledge obtained?

7:17 - "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from myself."

8:31-32. - "If ye abide in my word. . . . ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

10:38. - "Though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and understand that the Father is in me and I in the Father."

14:7. - "If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also; from henceforth ye know him and have seen him."

14:17. - "Ye know him for he abideth with you and shall be in you."

14:19-20. - "Yet a little while and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me; because I live ye shall live also. In that day, ye shall know that I am in my Father and ye in me and I in you."

17:8. - "For the words which thou gavest me, I have given unto them, and they received them and know of a truth that I came forth from thee."

3:11. - "We speak that which we know and bear witness of that which we have seen."

4:42. - "We have seen for ourselves and know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

8:19. - "If ye knew me, ye would know my Father also."

14:4,6. - "Whither I go, ye know the way. . . . I am the way."

15:15. - "The servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth, but . . . all things that I heard from my Father, I have made known unto you."

8:12. - "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness."

16:13. - "When he, the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all the truth."

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a. The first thing which we notice is that, whatever else it may be, this knowledge is not solely a product of the mystic vision.<sup>1</sup> It is a progressively deepening insight, the fruit of volitional and intellectual factors. Let a man apply himself to the doing of the will of God, then there will come to him an insight into the ultimate source of Jesus' teaching (7:17). Let him abide in his word, ponder over it, live it, then he will come to know the truth that makes him free (8:31-32). Though a man cannot respond to Jesus in belief, let him be intellectually convinced, on the basis of his works, and that will be a good beginning of knowledge (10:38).

And most of all, as we have already hinted<sup>2</sup>, the fact that the knowledge of God is the result of a knowledge of the life of Christ, removes it out of the realm of purely mystic vision. God is presented in this gospel as a "Christlike God". We come to a knowledge of his nature and character through the knowledge that we have of the nature and character of Jesus. "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (14:9). The Johannine knowledge has far more of the rational at its base than purely mystic knowledge. It is based on an

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1. See on the argument of this section, Ely, "Knowledge of God in Johannine Thought", Chapter IV.

2. Ante, p.288.

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intellectual apprehension of the teaching, the commands, the character and the person of Jesus. (17:8; 15:15; 8:12; 8:19; 14:4,6).

b. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that for the Christians to whom John wrote, the knowledge of Jesus, itself, was essentially a mystic knowledge. They would learn of his words, his works, his character and his person, to be sure, by reading about his earthly life, by reading the synoptic accounts and the gospel which the Fourth Evangelist himself was writing. But all this, while a step on the way to knowledge was far from being, by itself, the way into that knowledge of God which is eternal life. For that there must be a knowledge of Jesus that amounted to personal experience (3:11; 4:42), a knowledge which was equivalent to sight.

Such a knowledge as that is not to be gained by any purely rational processes. It is not a matter for rational apprehension alone. It is the fruit of an inner harmony with the Divine. "The sheep follow him, for they know his voice", says Jesus. "I know mine own, and mine own know me" (10:4,14). Such knowledge is not intellectual. The heart answers to the heart. So again, after Jesus was gone in the flesh, the world which has only physical eyes with which to see, would behold him

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no more, but his disciples, who saw with the eyes of love, would continue to behold him. In that mystic communion he and they would live one life, and then they would know, by no act of reason but with an inner certainty, that they and the Father and he were one (14:19-20). Knowledge at its highest is not the result of any intellectualizing process, but the gift of a Divine Spirit who dwells within (14:17; 16:13).

Here, then, while there is a striking absence of any anti-intellectual note in the conception of knowledge, the author is true to the mystic type which puts love as the "hierophant of the mysteries of God". "He that loveth me", says Jesus in 14:21, "shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him". The way to the highest knowledge is through the door of love.

The relationship existing between the conception of knowledge in the Fourth Gospel and the mystic conception as it appears in the mysteries has been dealt with by Dr. E. F. Scott in an article entitled "Hellenistic Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel" in the American Journal of Theology.<sup>1</sup> He points out that, just as in the mysteries, knowledge in the Fourth Gospel is a matter of Divine revelation and illumination, rather than of human attainment. And in particular he points out what we have been noticing both in the last chapter and in this, that "communion with God through Christ is described as no mere momentary rapture, induced by certain rites or physical conditions, but as a tranquil and constant mood of the soul which has been reborn."<sup>2</sup> Also he notices that the knowledge of the

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1. Volume XX, pp.345-359.

2. Op.Cit., p.351.

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Johannine Christian differs from that of the Hellenistic mystic in its grounding in historic fact.<sup>1</sup> What we have is a person of mystic temper of mind, developing his piety in a Hellenistic atmosphere, but kept from any sort of mystic excess in this respect as in others by his consciousness of the importance of the revelation of the historic Jesus. Mystic fellowship as a basis for knowledge we have, but any sort of mystic cult-practice we do not have.

Conclusion. We have discovered in this chapter the same sort of claims to superior knowledge on the part of the Fourth Evangelist as characterize all mystics. We have found that in general this knowledge which is claimed is of the nature of total-seeing, an insight into the meaning of Reality rather than a knowledge of particular facts. And we have seen that in the last analysis much emphasis is laid on the part played by love in the gaining of such insight.

But on the other hand, it has become apparent to us that the characteristic Johannine knowledge is fuller of content than the purely mystic knowledge and that there is much more of the volitional and rational in its attainment.

Our conclusion, then, must be that in the Fourth Gospel we have a true mysticism, but a mysticism free from the exaggeration of its peculiarities, a mysticism which is enriched particularly by the author's interest

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1. Scott, *op.cit.*, p.354.

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in the historic Jesus and his insistence on bringing the whole of his mind to bear upon him. We have, in fact, the "higher mysticism".



## CHAPTER IX.

### THE UNIO MYSTICA.

"Secrets are revealed to a friend who has become one thing with his friend, and not to a servant." - St. Catherine of Siena.

#### A. The Mystics.

We come now at last to the climax of the mystic way, in the mystic union.<sup>1</sup> All that we have been studying thus far, whether purgation; contemplation, or psychic phenomena, has been directed toward this end, viz. that the soul might come into union with the Divine. The desire for union with the Divine is the sine qua non of mysticism. Unless we find in any form of religion under discussion a desire for communion with God, so intense that it passes over into a desire for union, we do not have the mystical type of piety. So much is clear, but it is not so clear just what the mystics mean by union. This chapter is devoted to the attempt to understand it.

1. The first step toward understanding must be to get before ourselves, some characteristic passages in which the mystics speak of their communion and union with God. We shall find them falling roughly into two divisions, according as the union is thought of in semi-

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1. Compare first portion of Chapter X (Part II) of Underhill's "Mysticism".

physical or in personal terms.<sup>1</sup>

a. Semi-physical. By "thinking of the union in semi-physical terms", we mean the tendency, perhaps the most common among the mystics, to think of both God and men in terms of substance, and of their union, therefore, as a substantial union. It is to this tendency that we owe the language of absorption, that reaches its climax in "deification".<sup>2</sup>

Tauler - "When a man is drawn up above all that he can comprehend, then do these precious and divine fruits grow more sweet and delightful than either sense or reason can conceive, and it is possible for him to be carried so far that his spirit is as it were sunk and lost in the abyss of the Deity, and loses the consciousness of all creature distinctions. All things are gathered together in one with the Divine sweetness, and the man's being is so penetrated with the Divine substance that he loses himself therein as a drop of water is lost in a cask of strong wine. And thus the man's spirit is so sunk in God in divine union, that he loses all sense of distinction; and all that has brought him to this point, such as humility, the seeking God's glory, - nay his very self, - loses its name, and there remains a secret, still union, without cloud or color. And all good purposes are fused into a true and pure oneness, and a real but silent mystery, such as human powers can scarce apprehend."<sup>3</sup>

St. Catherine of Siena - "These souls, thrown into the furnace of My charity, no part of their will remaining outside, but the whole of them being inflamed in me, are like a brand, wholly consumed in the furnace, so that no one can take hold of it to extinguish it, because it has become fire. In the same way, no one can seize these souls, or draw them outside of Me, because they are

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1. Underhill, op.cit., p.496.

2. On this see Inge, "Christian Mysticism", Appendix C, pp.356-368.

3. Sermon for Septuagesima Sunday, in Winkworth, "Tauler's Life and Sermons".

made one thing with Me through grace."<sup>1</sup>

Ruysbroek - "Yet all loving spirits are one fruition and one blessedness with God without distinction; for that beatific state, which is the fruition of God and of all His beloved, is so simple and onefold that therein neither Father, nor Son, nor Holy Ghost is distinct according to the Persons, neither is any creature."<sup>2</sup>

"For when we go out in love beyond and above all things, and die to all observation in ignorance and in darkness, then we are wrought and transformed through the Eternal Word. . . . In this idleness of our spirit, we receive the Incomprehensible Light, which enwraps us and penetrates us as the air is penetrated by the light of the sun. And this Light is nothing else than a fathomless staring and seeing. What we are, that we behold; and what we behold, that we are: for our thought, our life and our being are uplifted in simplicity and made one with the Truth which is God. And therefore in this simple staring we are one life and one spirit with God."<sup>3</sup>

Eckhart - "I say God must be very I, I very God, so consummately one that this he and this I are one is, in this is-ness working one work eternally; but so long as this he and this I, to wit God and the soul, are not one single here, one single now, the I cannot work with nor be one with that he."<sup>4</sup>

In these passages, language is tortured to express the closeness of the union between the soul and God.

b. But on the other hand, the Christian mystics, at least, seem to feel that they have not told all the truth, when they have expressed the union in other than personal terms. And so another set of illustrations could be chosen on that basis, ranging again from the milder to the more extreme.

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1. "Dialogo", Chapter lxxviii.
  2. "Book of Supreme Truth", Chapter XII.
  3. "The Sparkling Stone", Chapter IX.
  4. Sermon XCIX, "Works", p.247.

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St. Catherine of Siena - "If they, through displeasure at their imperfection, and love of virtue, dig up, with hatred, the root of spiritual self-love, and mount to the throne of conscience, reasoning with themselves, so as to quell the motions of servile fear in their heart, and to correct mercenary love by the light of the holy faith, they will be so pleasing to Me, that they will attain to the love of the friend. And I will manifest myself to them, as My Truth said in these words: 'He who loves Me shall be one thing with Me and I with him, and I will manifest Myself to him and we will dwell together'. This is the state of two dear friends, for though they are two in body, yet they are one in soul, through the affection of love, because love transforms the lover into the object loved, and where two friends have one soul, there can be no secret between them."<sup>1</sup>

Ruysbroek - "But further we find a more subtle and inward difference between the secret friends and the hidden sons of God; and yet both these alike by their inward exercise maintain themselves in the Presence of God. But the friends possess their inwardness as an attribute, for they choose the loving adherence to God as best and highest of all that they ever can and will reach . . . . (but) they have as images and intermediaries between God and themselves, their own being and their own activity. And though in their loving adherence, they feel united with God, yet in this union, they always feel a difference and an otherness between God and themselves. . . . And though they have clear understanding and discernment of all virtues that may be conceived, the simple staring with open heart into the Divine Brightness remains unknown of them. . . . They feel themselves uplifted to God in a mighty fire of love, yet they keep something of their own selfhood. . . . They may desire to live forevermore in the service of God and to please Him eternally, (yet) they will not die in God to all the selfhood of their spirit, and receive from him a God-formed life. . . . The friends feel nought else but a loving and living ascent to God in some wise; but, above this, the sons experience a simple and death-like passing which is in no wise."<sup>2</sup>

St. Bernard - "When the beloved soul shall have been perfected, the Bridegroom will make with her a spiritual marriage (spirituale coniugium) and they shall be two, not in one flesh but in one spirit, according to the saying of the Apostle: 'He that is joined unto God

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1. "Dialogo", Chapter lx.

2. "The Sparkling Stone", Chapter VIII.

is one spirit."<sup>1</sup>

"This is the contract of a marriage truly spiritual and sacred. And to say this is to say little; it is more than a contract, it is embracement (complexus). Embracement, surely, in which perfect correspondence of wills makes of two one spirit. . . . This belongs exclusively to a wedded pair, and to it none other attains, not even a son. . . . Wherefore, as I have said, to love thus is to be wedded (nupsisse); because it is impossible to love thus and yet not to be greatly loved, and in the consent of the two parties consists a full and perfect marriage (connubium). . . . Happy the soul to which is granted to experience the embracement of such sweetness, which is nought else than. . . . a love mutual, intimate, powerful, which not in one flesh but in one spirit joins together two, and makes them no more two, but one, according to St. Paul, 'He that is joined to God is one spirit'." <sup>2</sup>

2. The thing that one feels most powerfully in reading these attempts of the mystics to put into words their experience of union with God, is that none of the language used is adequate.

a. The semi-physical language is not adequate, because while expressing the way the experience feels, it seems to do violence to the personality of both God and man. The language of absorption is appropriate to an Asiatic, pantheistic type of thought, but in Christianity it must always seem something exotic. The language of deification was not out of place on the lips of the Greeks, but it will always sound strange to the ears of the West.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Canticle lxi-i (Quoted by Butler, "Western Mysticism", p.161 f.)

2. Canticle lxxxiii (Butler, "Western Mysticism", pp.162 ff.)

3. Compare Inge, "Christian Mysticism", p.356 ff.

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This the mystics themselves have understood as well as anyone. There is a passage from Suso, quoted by Miss Underhill, which we did not quote above, because it was so similar to the quotation given from Tauler. But it illustrates admirably the mystic's dissatisfaction with the language which he felt compelled to use.

"When the good and faithful servant enters into the joy of his Lord, he is inebriated by the riches of the house of God; for he feels in an ineffable degree, that which is felt by an inebriated man. He forgets himself, he is no longer conscious of his selfhood; he disappears and loses himself in God, and becomes one spirit with Him, as a drop of water which is drowned in a great quantity of wine. For even as such a drop disappears, taking the color and the taste of wine, so it is with those who are in full possession of blessedness. All human desires are taken from them in an indescribable manner, they are rapt from themselves, and are immersed in the Divine Will. If it were otherwise, if there remained in the man some human thing that was not absorbed, those words of Scripture which say that God must be all in all, would be false."<sup>1</sup>

Here we have language than which nothing could more clearly imply that the soul in union is utterly lost and absorbed in God. But Suso's intellectual conscience must have troubled him about that time. He would not take back anything he had said about the completeness of the soul's union with God, and yet on the other hand, it must not be supposed that in this union a man's being was utterly and completely done away. And so he continues:

"His (i.e. man's) being remains, but in another form, in another glory, and in another power. And all this is the result of entire and complete renunciation. . .

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1. "Buchlein von der Wahrheit", Chapter IV (Underhill, "Mysticism", p.507).

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Herein thou shalt find an answer to thy question;<sup>1</sup> for the true renunciation and veritable abandonment of a man to the Divine Will in the temporal world is an imitation and reduction of that self-abandonment of the blessed of which the Scripture speaks. . . . Remark well that which is said of the blessed: they are stripped of their personal initiative and changed into another form, another glory, another power. What, then, is this other form if it be not the Divine. . . . Being. . . . which. . . . becomes one thing with them? And what is that other glory, if it be not to be illuminated and made shining in the Inaccessible Light? What is that other power, if it be not that by means of his union with the Divine Personality, there is given to man a divine strength and a divine power that he may accomplish all which pertains to his blessedness? . . . And thus it is that, as has been said, a man comes forth from his selfhood."<sup>2</sup>

Ruysbroek, also makes it quite clear that in using the language of deification, he does not desire to be taken too literally.

"Though I have said before that we are one with God, and this is taught us by Holy Writ, yet now I will say that we must eternally remain other than God, and distinct from Him, and this too is taught us by Holy Writ. And we must understand and feel both within us, if all is to be right with us." Then he explains that first we feel God in his grace, secondly, when we possess the God-seeing life, we feel ourselves to be living in God. "When we follow the brightness above reason with a simple sight, and with a willing leaning out of ourselves, toward our highest life, there we experience the transformation of our whole selves in God; and thereby we feel ourselves to be wholly enwrapped in God."

After this follows the third way of feeling, that we feel ourselves to be one with God. "For through the transformation in God, we feel ourselves to be swallowed up in the fathomless abyss of our eternal blessedness, wherein we can nevermore find any distinction between ourselves and God. . . . This is our highest feeling, which we cannot experience in any other way than in the immersion in love. And therefore, so soon as we are up-

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1. The question had been, "What remains to a blessed soul which has wholly renounced itself?"

2. Suso, op.cit. pp.507-508.

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lifted and drawn into our highest feeling, all our powers stand idle in an essential fruition; but our powers do not pass away into nothingness, for then we should lose our created being. As long as we stand idle, with an inclined spirit, and with open eyes, but without reflection, so long we can contemplate and have fruition. But at the very moment in which we seek to prove and to comprehend what it is that we feel, we fall back into reason, and there we find a distinction and an otherness between ourselves and God, and find God outside ourselves in incomprehensibility."

So follows the fourth way of distinction, which is that we feel God and ourselves.<sup>1</sup>

This is as much as to say that a description of the way the experience feels is not adequate as an explanation of what the experience is. But since the experience is essentially ineffable, we must take refuge in paradox, and believe that the soul is both one with God, and other than He.

b. And when the mystic turns from the use of semi-physical language which involves him in hopeless paradox, to the use of the language of personal relationship, he finds that language, also, completely inadequate. The semi-physical language had accurately described the feeling, but fallen short of what the Christian believes to be the facts about the nature of God. The language of personality appears to be more adequate to the facts of God's nature, but does not begin to describe the feeling.

For no personal relationship that we know anything

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1. "Sparkling Stone", Chapter X. Compare another example from Ruysbroek in Underhill, "Mysticism", pp. 505-506.



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about is as intimate as the union between the mystic's soul and God. In the experience of friendship personalities do get inside one another, some of my friend beginning to live in me and some of me in him, and yet the intercourse of even the best friends is a pitifully external thing. And God can draw far closer to us than the best of friends can do.

And if friendship is not intimate enough to serve as an adequate picture of the relation of men to God, neither is any other personal relationship. As we have seen<sup>1</sup> the mystic has tried both sonship and marriage. But both of these are in the same way too external. The son certainly has something of the father inside him as no friends ever have, and yet for all that the son partakes of the father's nature, he often is very far from being and never is quite one with him. The marriage relationship is the nearest thing to a real union of personalities that human life knows, and it is no wonder, therefore, that the pages of the mystics are full of references to it. Yet even marriage is not so intimate as the mystic union. Lovers know how, try as they will, they never become as completely one as they desire. For the flesh separates, and not lips nor eyes can utter all the soul. And so to the last we remain separated beings,

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1. Ante, pp.303-304.

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vainly trying to give and receive in fuller measure than human limitations allow. The most intimate personal relationship proves an inadequate symbol for the mystic union, and besides as we have seen,<sup>1</sup> it is not wholly appropriate on other grounds.

It is because personal language does seem thus inadequate that we find the mystic constantly turning back again to language that sounds pantheistic. We are quite frankly in the presence of an experience before which all language seems to fail. We who look on from the outside must draw what conclusions we can from the language that is used, and not be too literalistic nor too critical in our interpretation.

As unmythical a theologian as Professor Mackintosh recognized this in an article he wrote in the *Expositor* in February, 1909. After pointing out the fact that the category of substance was used by the mystics because "a substantial union was the deepest and most real that the human mind could imagine",<sup>2</sup> he goes on, "I think there are certain aspects of union with Christ which are insufficiently described by the epithet, 'moral', and which many people have dimly in their minds when they still hanker after the word 'mystical'. . . . They feel that the Union in which they are personally identified with Christ is far and beyond anything they have experienced in their relations to fellow-men. . . . In our relations to Christ separateness has disappeared; things happen as if it were no longer there. I do not say it is non-existent. . . . but I do say that great saints. . . . have felt that language which spoke of its absence was far truer than language which assumed its presence."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ante, p. 86 ff.

2. Seventh Series, Volume 7, p.139.

3. Ibid, p.147.

3. But if the language which is available for the description of the mystic experience is thus inadequate, must we therefore give up all attempt to understand it? Not so. The recognition of the mystic's difficulty with language may make us cautious both in our criticism and in our assumption that we wholly understand, but we have surely gotten past the time when any teaching, merely by insisting that it deals with the ineffable can hold itself above criticism and study. If the mystic experience is not pure delusion, and we do not think it is, then somewhere in our experience it ought to be possible for us to find something that will help us to an understanding of it.

a. Let us say, first of all, that the feeling that everything, even consciousness itself, is lost in the Divine, is due in large measure to the psychic aspect of the mystic experience. Psychically, the experience of union, is an experience of complete concentration, in which the self is not in any degree being attended to. Any such experience will leave the impression that the self has been completely merged in the object of attention, but the fact that that feeling remains does not prove that it was actually so. Indeed the fact that this feeling of complete mergence is always transient, would

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seem to prove the opposite. The union, the mystic believes, once accomplished continues, but this feeling does not continue. It would appear, therefore, to be an illusion, and so far as the language of absorption means utter mergence, it would seem not to help us much toward understanding what it is that really happens.

b. But also, the language of personality is not particularly helpful without redefinition. Too often personality is thought of as "that which gives us distinctness from our fellows and makes us remain distinct".<sup>1</sup> So long as personality is thought of in that fashion, it is not an adequate category for the mystic union. But that is individuality, not personality. There has been a veritable revolution in our thought of personality in recent years comparable to that in our thought of matter. Where matter used to be thought of as solid and impermeable, it is now thought of as composed of electrons and protons separated by distances which comparable to their bulk are like the distances of the solar system. And in the same way, personality, which used to be thought of as simple and self-enclosed, is now being thought of as a complex whole, and infinitely open both to incursions from every side and to excursions beyond itself. Personality, says Lofthouse, is "inclusive, not exclusive..."

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1. Lofthouse, "Ethics and Atonement", p.250.

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that which diffuses, rather than isolates itself; draws other personalities to itself and itself enters into them; its work is not limitation, but expansion."<sup>1</sup> In the thought of personality as complex and open rather than simple and closed lies the possibility of better understanding what happens in the mystic union.

c. Making use of this newer idea of personality, then, we may now build up our picture something like this:

Professor Macdougall has pointed out that personality in man is the result of a process of integration, instincts being integrated into sentiments and sentiments into character.<sup>2</sup> This would seem to be a most helpful way of thinking of the process of development of those very complex beings we call "ourselves".

But if we may think of personality in God as something of the same kind, then the process is not completed when each of us has built up for himself an integrated personality under the headship of the "self-regarding sentiment". For so long as our complex personalities remain self-enclosed, they are nothing. They must in turn be built into something vaster than themselves. Each of us is as incomplete and useless when not built into the personality of God, as a sentiment of our own which has

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1. Lofthouse, op.cit., p.251.

2. "Social Psychology", pp.222 ff., "Abnormal Psychology", Chapters XXXIII and XXXIV and elsewhere.

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not been built into the personality we call ourselves. It is our manifest destiny to be modes of expression for the Divine, and we have no ultimate significance except as we are that.

Beyond the process, then, of the integration of our own personality must go the process of building ourselves into the larger whole. The little Human must be fitted into the greater Divine and used as its vehicle.<sup>1</sup>

The mystic way is simply the process of this higher integration. By purgation, the self-regarding sentiment is transmuted into love for the Greater-than-Self. By contemplation the thought of the human personality is concentrated on the Divine Other under the influence of love. And when the personality has thus been ethically cleansed, emotionally sensitized and mentally concentrated, integration takes place and we slip into place as parts of a Whole. The will that formerly operated independently is now a mode of expression of a greater will.<sup>2</sup> The man has voluntarily made himself part of a personality that transcends his own. In becoming part of It, he has not lost his identity, but he has immensely increased his significance. It is only as we fulfil our

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1. Ante, p.132.

2. "The union of God and man is brought about not by confusion of natures, but by agreement of wills", says St. Bernard. (Butler, "Western Mysticism", p.167).

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destiny by being used of God and in that sense lost in Him, that we attain to the highest of which we are capable. In the mystic union, we would say, there has taken place a union of will, rather than of substance, but when that union of will is thought of in terms of integration into a personality greater than our own it becomes a union of the greatest intimacy. I know no picture that better combines the intimacy of the substantial with the separateness of the old-time personal category than this.

"This union", says the *Theologia Germanica*, "is such that we should be purely, simply, and wholly at one with the One Eternal Will of God, or altogether without will, so that the created will should flow out into the Eternal Will, and be swallowed up and lost therein, so that the Eternal Will alone should do and leave undone in us."<sup>1</sup>

This is confessedly only a picture, and perhaps little more successful than the others in helping us to understand the mystic union. Probably no picture that we can ever make will be wholly successful in making clear just how God relates himself to man. Like all the mystics we can only make our attempt and say

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1. Pratt, "The Religious Consciousness", p.439.

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at the end, "We have but been able to approximate. The reality lies beyond." Somewhere between the most intimate that we know in human relationships and the region of the union of impersonal substances, somewhere in a realm into which perhaps the inner organization of our own personalities enables us to see a little way, lies the fact of mystic union. In it man and God are infinitely distant, as Ruysbroek said, man the part and God the Whole, yet they are One. In it man retains his being, yet he is not his own, but Another's. In it while consciousness is retained, will is merged and we become "to the Eternal Goodness what his own hand is to a man".<sup>1</sup> In it we live, yet it is no longer we, but Christ liveth in us.

#### B. The Fourth Gospel.

There is not the slightest doubt that the idea of union between man and God is one of the leading ideas of the Fourth Gospel.<sup>2</sup> We must now seek to discover in how far the Fourth Evangelist is like the mystics of the main stream in his thought of it.

1. Let us note first the language which is used to describe the relationship between the Divine and the

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1. "Theologia Germanica"

2. Ante, p.59.



human. It may be divided as the language of the mystics was, into the semi-physical and the personal types.

a. Semi-physical.

(1) The new-birth.<sup>1</sup>

1:12-13. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

John is here trying to convey the idea that on receiving Christ, something happens inside a man. It is not anything physical - the threefold negation of verse 13 makes that clear - but just as in the moment of birth, or rather (for the verb is γεννάω, to beget) in the moment of conception, something new springs to life, so in the moment of receiving Christ, something new springs to life within. What we have here is in no sense the mystic union, but it is significant that we have thus early the idea of the germ of a divine life being implanted in the human.

3:5. "Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Here the idea of a closer union between Divine and human than a merely ethical is apparent. In the moment of baptism - although it would be going beyond the evidence to say that John meant "by the agency of"

1. Compare ante, pp.209 ff.

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baptism - the divine Spirit enters and dwells within. It is impossible to know, I think, just how John thought baptism to be related to the new birth, but Westcott is certainly right when he says that it is something more than merely a figure.<sup>1</sup> Quite as definitely as the water cleanses the body, the Spirit in that moment cleanses and quickens the soul.

(2) The well of water.

4:14. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, . . . the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up into eternal life."

7:38-39. "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture saith, from within him shall flow rivers of living water. But this he spake of the Spirit which they that believed on him were to receive."

The symbol of the well of water springing up within, or the rivers of water flowing from within is of the same order as the symbol of the new birth. Something divine, something which was not there before is thought of as actually springing into life within the soul of a man.

(3) The bread of life.

So far we have simply been leading up to the idea of a substantial union between the Divine and the human. The figures with which we have been dealing, while they look in that direction, are yet short of the mystic union itself.

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1. "Commentary", Volume I, p.108.

But when we come to the discourse of chapter 6, we have a typically mystic use of language. "To eat and be eaten", says Ruysbroek, "this is Union",<sup>1</sup> and the Fourth Evangelist is not less daring in his expression. Perhaps that is the reason the multitude so little understands in this chapter. Mystic expression is ever hard for the literal mind to grasp.

It is interesting to observe how the evangelist is led into those great assertions about eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man. In verse 35, the evangelist expresses in quite sober, though obviously symbolic language, his characteristic teaching that Jesus himself is the center of his own message, that Jesus' giving of Himself is his supreme work. It is the development of the synoptic passage, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." (Matthew 5:6). Jesus has previously spoken of himself, as we have seen, as able to eternally satisfy the thirsty; now the symbolism is extended to the hungry also. "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." (6:35).

So satisfactory is the figure that it occurs again in verse 48, "I am the bread of life" and once more, with

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1. Underhill, "Mysticism", p.509.

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an extension of the application in verse 51, "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; yea, and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world."

But it is this new thought, of Jesus' broken body given for the world's life as commemorated in the communion feast, that coupled with the thought of Jesus as satisfaction of the world's hunger gives us the symbol of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man.

The idea of "eating the God" has since the most primitive times been a part of the sacrificial cultus.<sup>1</sup> And something like it is also found in the mysteries of the period of the gospel's writing.<sup>2</sup> But it is surely a mistake to read into this chapter any literalistic significance (Compare verses 52 and 63). In this eucharistic discourse we see the mystic, John, joyfully catching up the physical symbolism of the Supper, just as mystics throughout the centuries have delighted in it, because it so well suggests intimate participation in the divine nature. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves"

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1. See W. Robertson Smith, "Religion of the Semites", pp. 289 ff., 357 ff.

2. Angus, "Mystery Religions and Christianity", pp. 127-133. Berguer - "Some Aspects of the Life of Jesus", pp. 43-45.

(6:53). Exactly. Flesh and blood, the vehicles of life, when eaten and drunk transfer the life to the eater. The bread and wine of the sacrament, eaten and drunk, become part of the life of the communicant. Even so, Jesus joined to the soul in the mystic union, gives of his life to the life of the believer. "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life. . . . For my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him." (verses 54-56). Verse 56 - "dwelleth in me and I in him" - is the verse which most clearly gives the key to the entire passage. It is pure symbol for the mystic union, expressed under a semi-physical category. "As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father" (note that the relationship is essentially personal even when expressed in these semi-physical terms), "so he that eateth me, he also shall live because of me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he that eateth this bread shall live forever." (verses 57-58).

(4) The vine and the branches.

The fourth case of the use of semi-physical, or "substantial" language to describe the mystic union is in the allegory of the vine and the branches. The evan-

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gelist has said that the union which gives eternal life is like the union which brings about birth, in which something of the Divine is actually implanted, or quickened, in the human soul. It is the implanting of a spring of living water; it is a union as close as that between the eater and his food, so that the life of the divine actually becomes part and parcel of the soul's life. But still it seems he has not found the most eminently satisfactory symbol. Where in nature, we can imagine him asking himself, do we have the thing I am trying to describe, a continuously flowing stream of life from one thing to another united with it?

The vine and the branches leap to mind. The sap, which is the life, flows from vine to branches, and there could be no life in the branches except through that union. So the life of Christ flows into those united to him and they could have no life except in him. It is a symbol made ready for the mystic's hand, and in the use of it the Fourth Evangelist reaches almost his highest point in expounding the relation of the believing soul to its living Lord.

b. Just as in the case of the mystics, however, the evangelist cannot be satisfied with semi-physical symbolism to describe the relation which exists between

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the Divine and the human. Since the Divine, revealed in Jesus, is always thought of as personal, the relation between Divine and human must be thought of in personal terms.

(1) In the first place, the relation of earthly disciples to their glorified Lord has already had its prototype in the relation of the disciples to the human Jesus. "Let not your heart be troubled. . . . If I go. . . I come again. . . I will not leave you desolate. . . Yet a little while and the world beholdeth me no more, but ye behold me." (14:1,3,18,19). If the relation of the human Jesus to his disciples had been a relation of intimate personal intercourse, then there can be no doubt that the relation of Christians to the exalted Christ belongs to the same order. This is fundamental in the understanding of this gospel's teaching.

(2) And it is borne out by the language of chapter 15. It is very illuminating to observe that the discourse which is based on the text, "I am the vine, ye are the branches" (15:5) is for the most part couched in purely personal terms. "As the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you, abide ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. . . ."

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This is my commandment, that ye love one another even as I have loved you. . . . Ye are my friends." (15:9,10,12,14)

The relation between the Divine and the human, therefore, is put by John, in one of his most beautiful passages, on the basis of friendship. "Ye are my friends if ye do the things which I command you. No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from my Father, I have made known unto you. Ye did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." (15:14-16).

(3) As the semi-physical symbolism of birth, springing water, food and wine did not entirely satisfy, however, because they were not personal, so the language of friendship does not entirely satisfy because it is not intimate enough. And at the height of the Fourth Evangelist's teaching we have a use of language which is neither "substantial" nor in the ordinary sense "personal", the "Ye in me and I in you" language of the supper discourse and final prayer.

"Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth me no more, but ye behold me; because I live, ye shall live also. In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father and ye in me and I in you." (14:19-20).

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There is no form of picture that will help to make clear what the Fourth Evangelist here says. The idea of "ye in me, I in you, and both of us in God" is totally unpicturable, and yet when John wants to tell exactly what to him the union of human and divine means, this is the language he is forced to use. A great community of life, in which the human shares with the Divine so that their mutual boundaries become indistinguishable, and yet they are not lost the one in the other, a sharing of life which is reciprocal, so that it is just as true to say that the human is in the Divine as that the Divine is in the human, this is the conception to which the evangelist rises, as he thinks of his relation to Jesus and the Father.

"That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be in us; that the world may believe that thou didst send me. And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given unto them, that they may be one even as we are one; I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them even as thou lovedst me. Father, I desire that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me. . . . that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them and I in them." (17:21-24,26).

2. So much for the language which the Fourth Evangelist uses to describe the union between the Divine and the human. We have yet to try to put it together into a unified conception and to compare it with the mystic idea. But before we do that we must call attention to what seems

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to be a defect in the treatment of this matter by Professor Scott.

Professor Scott, in his treatment of the mystic union, finds the same two threads which we have found to be present.

"In his words, in the mystery of the Eucharist, Christ offers himself to his people; but something further is necessary before they can fully participate in His eternal life. He requires that they should enter into a relation of permanent union with Him, abiding in Him continually, like the branches in the vine. This doctrine of a mystical union, in which the higher life flows uninterruptedly from Christ to the believer, contains the central and characteristic thought of the Fourth Gospel. It cannot be discussed in its whole significance apart from those conceptions of the Spirit and the ever-living Christ, which will occupy us in later chapters. For the present, it will be enough to indicate that two ideas, are involved together in the doctrine of union with Christ."<sup>1</sup>

But to him these two strands are "essentially disparate". It is not, that is, possible to reconcile them. The semi-physical thread is to be traced to the Logos-doctrine, which was with John an afterthought. An experience of a personal, ethical type is forced into the mold of an alien Logos-Christology and suffers thereby.

But this we think is not quite true. At least, our study of the mystics leads us to believe that this is not quite the proper explanation. What we have here is not the attempt to force one very simple and personal line of thought into an alien, semi-physical mode of

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1. "The Fourth Gospel", pp.288-289.

thought. What we have is simply the familiar mystic dilemma. The Christian mystic knows that "semi-physical" language, the language of absorption or deification is not wholly appropriate to his subject, and yet none of the terms of personal human intercourse are adequate to the intimacy of the union he feels with God, and so he oscillates from one type of symbolism to the other, in the attempt, forever vain, to make himself clear. In the same manner, John, knowing quite well that the best language to express his fellowship with the Divine is the language of personal, ethical relationship, is yet hauntingly conscious that this does not make the intimacy of it clear, and so he turns, under the influence, no doubt, of Hellenistic metaphysic and Asiatic mystery, to the symbolism which we have called "semi-physical". It is not the attempt to fit a personal relationship into an alien mode of thought that leads to the presence of these two strands, but the attempt, familiar in mystic literature, to find symbolism adequate to an experience which transcends the ordinary personal categories.

Let us look again at the two passages where semi-physical symbolism is used most prominently to see whether this hypothesis is not adequate.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you", says Jesus,

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"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves" (6:53). Scott thinks that these words must in a measure be taken literally and that "it must be granted that John in this chapter lays an emphasis on the outward rite which cannot be wholly reconciled with his higher, more spiritual view."<sup>1</sup> But in verse 57, the idea is expanded - "As the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father; so he that eateth me shall live because of me." And here the reference is clearly to a personal relationship, though a relationship closer than any human one. Is it not quite enough, then, to say that the image is used not because it is physical, but because it is intimate? It is only ten verses later (verse 63) when the Evangelist says clearly that a literalistic interpretation of the symbol is farthest from his thoughts - "It is the spirit that giveth life, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life".

In the same way, the explanation that this is merely the symbolism of intimacy and not to be taken in any sense literally suffices for the allegory of the vine and the branches. "I am the vine, ye are the branches," says Jesus. "He that abideth in me and I in him beareth much fruit, for apart from me ye can do nothing (15:5). But

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1. "The Fourth Gospel", p.125.

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verse 9 shows what he is talking about, "Even as the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you; abide ye in my love". It is a purely personal relationship, but one of unparalleled intimacy.

To lay emphasis on the "semi-physical" in the Fourth gospel is to turn poetry into prose. There is semi-physical symbolism, but the physical element is only in the image. Like the semi-physical in all the mystics it is meant to express an extreme degree of intimacy, but to interpret it literally is to misunderstand it.

3. But if it is wrong to say with Scott that there is really anything semi-physical in the Johannine idea of union, it is just as wrong to say that there is nothing which goes beyond the purely "moral".

"Do not put too mystical an interpretation on this 'abiding' in or union with Christ", says R.H.Strachan in his exposition of 15:4. "It is more a matter of will and moral effort than of feeling, though the latter is necessarily a part of it as well as thought. 'Abide' equals 'remain'. The Evangelist himself is drawing his own life from Jesus as he speaks. To be 'in Christ' (in this Gospel) is just to accustom oneself to breathe the atmosphere of the moral standard Jesus has set, both in our own inner life and in our attitude towards men and things, to develop within us a set of Christian instincts."<sup>1</sup>

But certainly this interpretation is too thin. Surely in a gospel as full of the mystic temper as this, the presumption is rather that there will be mystic sig-

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1. Strachan, "The Fourth Gospel, Its Significance and Environment", p.178.

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nificance here than that there will not. Why should we suppose that there is "more of will and moral effort" here than of "feeling" when as we have seen, the entire gospel is pitched to the key of love, and the contemplative element is always present, while direct moral teaching like that of the synoptics is conspicuous by its scarcity? What right have we to talk of "breathing the atmosphere of a moral standard" in a gospel where except for the precept "Love one another" moral standards are scarcely mentioned? Why talk about "developing a set of Christian instincts" in a gospel where the emphasis is not at all on principles but entirely on a personal presence? Such interpretation is merely another attempt to fit the Gospel of John to the mode of minds tuned to the synoptic manner of thought, whereas the Gospel of John is not like the synoptics but belongs to another type of religious experience. The key to this passage is not found in any such un-Johannine thinking. It is found in two Johannine doctrines, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the doctrine of the Divine Son.

(1) The doctrine of the Holy Spirit, as Scott points out,<sup>1</sup> is no necessary part of the Johannine system. John's characteristic thought is of a living

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1. "The Fourth Gospel", pp.320 ff.

Lord who dwells within, and to speak of the same experience sometimes as the indwelling of the living Lord and sometimes as the presence of the Holy Spirit is only confusing.

But in one way the presence of a doctrine of the Holy Spirit as practically synonymous with the doctrine of the indwelling Christ is illuminating. The idea of an indwelling Spirit is easier to picture than the idea of a union of personalities. And so, when Jesus in the same breath says, "I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Paraclete" (14:16) and "I will not leave you desolate; I come unto you" (14:18), we begin to realize what he means by "abiding in him and he in us". This "mystic union" is the experience of a personal presence more intimate than anything the world knows. The presence of an inner helper, teacher, guide, that is what is involved in the mystic union.

(2) We are helped, in the second place, to an understanding of what is meant by the "mystic union" between Jesus and the disciples by noting that in Jesus' thought, the union of the disciples with him follows the same model as his own union with the Father. "That they may all be one", he prays in chapter 17, "as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee. . . . And the glory which thou

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gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one." (17:21-22).

We cannot do better than to quote Westcott's comment at this point.

"The idea of the divine unity, which has been given generally before (verse 11 and verse 22), is set out in detail in its correlative manifestation. Compare 10:38; 14:10,11,20. There is, so to speak, an interchange of the energy of the divine Life (Thou in me, and I in Thee) which finds a counterpart in the harmonious relations of the members of the Church. The true unity of believers, like the Unity of Persons in the Holy Trinity with which it is compared, is offered as something far more than a mere moral unity of purpose, feeling, affection; it is, in some mysterious mode which we cannot distinctly apprehend, a vital unity (Romans 12:5; Ephesians 4:4). In this sense it is the symbol of a higher type of life, in which each constituent being is a conscious element in the being of a vast whole. In 'the life' and in 'the life' only, each individual life is able to attain to its perfection. Such a conception, however imperfectly it may be grasped, meets many of the difficulties which beset the conception of an abiding continuance of our present individual separation."<sup>1</sup>

The believer becomes one with the Divine in some such sense as Jesus is one with the Divine, not in an indistinguishable fusion but in an ineffably intimate yet personal union.<sup>2</sup>

4. We are, perhaps, now ready to try to state in our own words the Johannine doctrine of union. To John, the thing that supremely matters is "eternal life".

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1. "Commentary", Volume II, pp.255-256.

2. Even 10:30 does not say that Jesus and God are identical, (  $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  ), but that they are "one thing" -  $\epsilon\upsilon$  - "united most closely in will and spirit". Compare Thayer, "Lexicon", p.186.



While we are not yet ready to define eternal life completely, we may say that it is more than a new way of living. It is life of a new quality and on a new level, life of a divine rather than a human kind, life enlightened and empowered. This kind of life belongs to God of right. In it the Son by nature shares (5:26). For the Son is an outgoing from the Father, the Father's word made flesh. A distinct Person, he is yet one life with the Father, moved by the same vital Principle which God himself is.

But now men, men also are potential possessors of eternal life. By nature they do not live on that level, nor are they moved by that Principle. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (3:6). If they are to fulfil their destiny, they must be raised to that level, animated by that Principle. And the way is through union with the Son. In the same way that Christ was one with God, so close to him that is, that one spring moved them both, so close that the Son and the Father lived one life, not two, so the disciple may become one with his Lord. Upon the completion of the first vital contact the divine potentiality springs to active life. So long as union ("abiding") is maintained, that life, which belongs to

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the Father and the Son is participated in by the disciples. And so without loss of identity Father, Son and disciples are bound together in one community of life, for one vital Principle moves them all. Union is not fusion, but it is the abiding contact which makes human and Divine participate in one stream of life.

Conclusion. It ought now to be clear that, essentially, the Johannine conception of union with the Divine and the mystic conception are one. Both are concerned with a larger richer divine life with which contact is to be made, both conceive of union as something transcending the merely "moral" relationship, transcending indeed anything for which we have analogies in the realm of human personal relationships.

But one notices three differences:

a. In the first place, we might say that John has a more robust conception of human personality. There are in the mystic experience, always two movements, a going and a returning movement. The soul moves toward the Divine until it is united with It, then it returns, participant in a new life. The typical mystic is concerned with the going movement, the motion toward the Divine which reaches its climax in being lost in Him. John is

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rather concerned with the returning movement, the soul living, not lost in God, but with the life of God in him.

That is one way of stating it. Or we might say that to the mystic union there are two parties, God and man. The typical mystic thinks most about the life of God of which the soul becomes a part, John about the life of man which participates in the Divine.

At any rate, while John inevitably makes use of "semi-physical" symbolism, and while he does talk about the human being in the Divine, he does not talk about being "lost" in God and he is more interested in the presence of the Divine in the human than in the presence of the human in the Divine.

b. In the second place, as we have already noticed in an earlier chapter,<sup>1</sup> John is kept by his Hebrew "reverence" from certain kinds of mystic excess. If our explanation of the two kinds of symbolism in the Fourth Gospel is correct, the evangelist is quite as conscious as the mystics that the language of ordinary personal intercourse is inadequate to the mystic union and desires to supplement it. The lengths to which he will go are shown by his use of the symbolism of "eating the god". But with all that, he never makes use of the "deification"

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1. Ante, pp.111-112.

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or "marriage" symbolism which is so popular with the mystics. Something - some high sense, born of his balanced nature, some instinct of reverence - seems to hold his hand. It is not suitable and it is not used.

c. And, finally, John introduces a distinct social note into the conception of union. It is not true that there is no such note among the mystics of the historic stream. There is, but it is not prominent. So far as the great experience is concerned, it is thought of by them as a "flight of the alone to the Alone".<sup>1</sup>

In the seventeenth chapter of John, however, the fact of union with God is coupled directly with union with the brethren. If I am in Christ and you are in Christ, then by that token we are one with each other, since the same stream of life flows through us both. I pray, says Jesus, "that they may all be one, I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one" (17:21,23). Here is the possibility of a social mysticism which has never been adequately developed.<sup>2</sup>

Once again, then, we come to the same conclusion. There can be no doubt about the essentially mystic character of this Johannine doctrine of divine union, but in it

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1. Plotinus, Compare ante, p.10.

2. It is interesting that that idea is emphasized after a fashion in the Eastern Church. Compare Arseniew, "Mysticism and the Eastern Church", pp.59-60.

the Fourth Gospel reaches a mysticism of a peculiarly exalted type.

## CHAPTER X.

### SYMBOLISM.

Σωβομένου πολλάκις τοῦ ἀληθοῦς  
πνευματικοῦ ἐν τῷ σωματικῷ ὡς ἂν  
εἴποι τις ψευδέϊ.

- Origen.

#### A. The Mystics.

"Mysticism", says Récéjac, "is the tendency to draw near to the Absolute in moral union by symbolic means."<sup>1</sup> Whatever we may think of that as a definition, there is no doubt that a large use of symbolism is characteristic of the mystics.

##### 1. Illustrations.

a. Boehme - "Here the virgin (which manifesteth herself in the dear name of Jesus Christ, the Treader upon the serpent, God's Anointed) cometh to the soul, and kisseth it with her sweetest love in the essence, most inwardly, and impresseth her love into its desire for a token of victory. And here Adam in his heavenly part riseth again from death in Christ. Of which I cannot write, for there is no pen in this world that can express it! It is the wedding of the Lamb, where the noble Pearl is sown with very great triumph, though in the beginning it is small, like a grain of mustard-seed, as Christ saith."<sup>2</sup>

b. Ruysbroek - "The spirit transformed in extasy by the power of unity burns in love; yet if it looks at itself while thus burning it sees the abyss between itself and God. But there comes a moment in the midst of the conflagration, when simplicity throws a veil over the abyss and the spirit sees nothing more; nothing but the pure unity: for the boundless love of God absorbs, drowns

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1. "Bases of the Mystic Knowledge", p.64.

2. "Way to Christ" (Watkins, pub.), p.55.

and consumes all that it holds in its embrace. Into this same unknown love we cast ourselves as homeless wanderers; and it will lead us about in the boundless breadth and we shall bathe in it, and flow far from ourselves in unknown delights, amid the treasures of the divine goodness; and we shall burn and melt, absorbed and lost in glory eternally and infinitely."<sup>1</sup>

Ruysbroek - "It is of the nature of love to be always giving and always receiving. Now the love of Jesus is exacting and generous. He gives all that He has and all that He is. All that we have, all that we are He takes. He asks more than of ourselves we are able to give. He has an immense hunger which desires to devour us wholly. He enters into the very marrow of our bones, and the more lovingly, by we allow Him to do so, the more fully we taste Him. But He consumes us without being satisfied; His hunger is boundless, insatiable. He well knows that we are poor, but He makes no account of it and spares us nothing. He himself makes His own bread in us; first burning up vices, faults, sins, in His love, then when He sees us pure, He comes, like a bird of prey with mouth open ready to devour everything. He desires to consume our life in order to change it into His own. Ours full of vices, His full of grace and glory; all prepared for us if we will but renounce ourselves. Now if our eyes were clear enough to behold this eager craving of Christ who hungers after our salvation, do what we would, we could not prevent ourselves from flying into His open mouth.

"I seem to be talking absurdly, but they who love will understand me."<sup>2</sup>

c. Augustine - "What do I love when I love Thee? It is a certain light that I love, and melody and fragrance and embrace that I love when I love my God - a light, melody, fragrance, food, embrace of the inner man; where for my soul that shines which space does not contain, that sounds which time does not sweep away, that is fragrant which the breeze does not dispel, and that tastes sweet which fed upon is not diminished, and that clings close which no satiety disparts. This it is I love when I love my God."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Baillie, "Reflections from the Mirror of a Mystic", pp.66-67.

2. Ibid, pp.75-76.

3. "Confessions", X, 8 - Quoted in Butler, "Western Mysticism", p.61.

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These quotations may perhaps suffice to illustrate the riot of symbolism that plays over the pages of the mystics. Nothing seems to be said in straightforward fashion; everything is expressed in terms of something else. And the images are frequently of the most grotesque kind, bearing no discoverable rational relation to the realities behind them.

2. Why, it is necessary that we should ask, does the mystic make use of this language? Would it not be better for him to speak in a way that the ordinary man can understand?

In reply it must be said that there is a superabundance of symbolism in the style of some mystics. One feels, for example, in reading Jacob Boehme that the symbolism overruns the page, and obscures rather than clarifies the thought. Jacob Boehme was an unlettered man whose thoughts were far, far beyond his powers of expression and few will ever penetrate his diffuse style with its strange alchemic symbolism to the heart of his message. To a degree, the same thing may be said of Ruysbroek, whose symbols are truly graphic but lack discipline. But St. Augustine, from whom we have also given one example, is a consummate literary artist, marshalling all the resources of symbolic language to do justice to his great

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theme.

This said, it must still be recognized that the mystic does not make use of symbolism out of a perverse desire to be as obscure as possible, but rather because he cannot help himself. There are examples in literature of the use of symbolism to hide one's meaning, to hide it, that is, from the mass, while revealing it only to a select few. Such is the case in apocalyptic literature, where the triumph of the right must be predicted without the charge of sedition being incurred. Such is the case with the symbolism of esoteric sects like the mystery religions.

But the mystic uses symbolism for quite the opposite reason. He uses it, strange though it may seem, to make his meaning clear.

In order that we may understand how this is, we must stop to define our term.

a. A symbol is to be differentiated, in the first place from a sign or emblem. A sign or emblem is a short-hand or pictorial expression of a known thing. It is adopted, not because the thing which it represents is inexpressible in any other way, but because it saves time or is more convenient to express it in that way, or because the other form of expression might not be under-

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stood.

b. A symbol is to be differentiated also from a figure. A symbol is a figure, but a figure of a certain definite kind. For a figure is any use of language, in which a thing is made to stand for something else than itself, and figurative language is frequently of a highly rational character, the connection between the figure and the thing it represents being a connection of ideas.

c. But the symbol has two outstanding characteristics. In the first place, it expresses a fact which is not expressible by direct, unsymbolic language. And in the second place it is the best possible expression of that fact not because it gives rise to a certain train of thought, but because it rouses in the hearer an analogous feeling. Symbolism, therefore, may be defined as a figurative use of language in which the essentially inexpressible is represented by forms or objects of known content which are related to it by the bonds of feeling.

For the background of this discussion see Jung, "Psychological Types", pp.601 ff, where the distinction is drawn between symbol and sign, on the basis that a sign is "an analogous or abbreviated expression of a known thing" while a symbol "always presupposes that the chosen expression is the best possible description or formula of a relatively unknown fact", and Ormand, "Foundations of Knowledge", pp.313 ff. where the additional point is made that "a symbol, in so far as it is

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purely symbolic, will be a form or object that will have no direct defining power, but will represent by means of association or analogy", that is, if I properly understand him, by association of feeling, since he rules arbitrariness out of the meaning of symbol, and refuses to call primitive language symbolic because it is "truly cognitive or conceptual". Dean Inge makes the predominance of the feeling element clear when he says, "I prefer to use the word symbol of that which has a real and not merely a conceptual affinity to the thing symbolized."<sup>1</sup> To the mystic the real affinities in the universe are those that are discoverable only by the mind that is sensitized by emotion.<sup>2</sup>

The mystic, let us then recall, is dealing throughout with that which is essentially inexpressible. God cannot be defined, and the experience of communion with Him is, as all the mystics say, ineffable. The person who would have to do with these high things at all, must either use the language of symbol and suggest that which he cannot say, or else remain silent.

I am aware that there are those who will scoff at this. "Why", they will say, "anything that is true, is expressible. If these men cannot tell what they are thinking, without going to all those fantastic extremes, they either are not thinking of anything in particular, or they are too lazy to reduce their thoughts to clarity." The scientific mind deals with blacks and whites and with quantities that can be neatly tied up and labelled. And when the scientist (or the "scientific" theologian - God

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1. "Christian Mysticism", p.251.

2. Ante, pp. 277 ff.

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forgive him) or the literalist of any kind sees the mystic struggling with his bundles that will not stay tied, his "fancies that break through language and escape",<sup>1</sup> he puts him down for a madman.

But it would be almost truer to say that anything which is very deeply true cannot be expressed. One is becoming accustomed these days to hearing scientists declaring that science itself is a symbolic discipline and the truth behind it essentially inexpressible.<sup>2</sup> And the theologians have long known (though ecclesiastical heresy-hunters have not) that creeds are feeble, very feeble symbols of great truths that sweep and soar above language and will not be caged.

This is the first reason for the mystic's use of symbol. The mystic is dealing almost wholly with the transcendental realm, he is talking about experiences which our poor language, geared to the humdrum of the market place, cannot begin to describe. He has been, in the words of Dionysius the Areopagite, "where the simple, absolute, and unchangeable mysteries of heavenly Truth lie hidden in the dazzling obscurity of the secret Silence",<sup>3</sup> and no language but symbol will serve his

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1. Browning, "Rabbi ben Ezra".

2. E.g., A.R.S.Eddington in "Science, Religion and Reality" (ed. J.Needham), pp.199 ff., 207 ff.

3. "The Mystical Theology", Chapter T.

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3. "The Mystical Theology", Chapter I.

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3. But there is another reason for the mystic's use of symbols. He uses them not only because the nature of his subject demands it, but because it is his own nature to do so. We have said<sup>2</sup> that the state which we have called the "higher ecstasy", in which the mind is sensitized by the power of a deep emotion, is a state where the threshold of consciousness has been pushed back and the powers of the unconscious make their contribution to the total activity of the mind. If this is true, the study of the unconscious will help us to understand the activity of the mystic total-conscious.

And one of the best-known powers of the unconscious is its symbol-making power. To take only one example, one of the staples of the newer psychology, is the symbol-making power of the unconscious as it is studied in dreams. The work of Freud and Jung in this field is well-known. Both of these men have built up elaborate systems of dream-interpretation which are sure to be greatly modified,<sup>3</sup> but no one doubts nowadays that dreams are frequently if not always symbolic.

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1. Compare Spinoza - "With words and images, it is possible to form a much greater number of ideas than with the principles and notions upon which all our natural knowledge is founded". Récéjac, p.104 n.

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In an appendix to his volume, "Reality", Canon Streeter has suggested the application of the methods used in studying dream-symbolism to the mystic vision. "When the waking thoughts of a normal person are deeply and earnestly preoccupied", he says, "with some philosophical or religious quest, this may on occasion, find symbolic expression in a dream."<sup>1</sup> The dreamer does not consciously seek symbols to illustrate his conscious thought. But the material of his conscious thought, as the mind continues to act on it unconsciously in sleep is thrown into symbolic form. And sometimes a solution is reached through that symbolic dream-thinking that would not be reached so soon, if at all, in any other way.

This may be illustrated by Peter's vision on the housetop at Joppa (Acts 10:9 ff.). Peter had probably been brooding over the question of the conversion of the Gentiles. As he sat on the housetop waiting for his dinner, looking out no doubt to sea where ships came in from distant lands, the problem may have been more than ordinarily in his mind. He fell into a trance, and in the trance the materials of his subconsciousness, his ingrained abstention from unclean meats, his hunger, the sails ( ὀρθόνη , sheet or sail) of the ships he had been

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1. "Reality", p.320.



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seeing shaped themselves into a symbol of his problem, and in the symbolic dream the solution came.<sup>1</sup>

Such is the activity of the unconscious. But the mystic in meditation is in a state where the unconscious makes large contribution to his total consciousness. Like the dream, the "higher ecstasy" is a form of picture-thinking. The mystic makes use of symbolism not intentionally, but as naturally as most of us think abstractly. His symbols are not arbitrarily chosen, nor the result of reflection. The symbols are the thought.<sup>2</sup> Picture-thinking is not natural to most of us, but to the mystic temperament it is normal so to think.

Dr. Jung seems to indicate that symbol-making at its highest is the work of the conscious and unconscious working together, in his discussion of the subject in "Psychological Types": "The symbol", he says, "is always a creation of an extremely complex nature. . . . neither rational nor irrational. It certainly has one side that accords with reason, but it has also another side that is inaccessible to reason; for not only the data of reason, but also the irrational data of pure inner and outer perception, have entered into its nature. . . . The living symbol cannot come to birth in an inert or poorly-developed mind. . . . Only the passionate yearning of a highly developed mind, for whom the dictated symbol no longer contains the highest reconciliation in one expression, can create a new symbol. But inasmuch as the symbol proceeds from his highest and latest mental achievement and must also include the deepest roots of his being, it cannot be a one-sided product of the most highly differentiated mental functions, but must have at least an equal source, in the lowest and most primitive notions of his psyche."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Streeter, op.cit., pp.329-331.

2. Compare Streeter and Appasamy, "The Sadhu", p.53.

3. Jung, "Psychological Types", pp.606-607.

## B. The Fourth Gospel.

The exegetical fashion of our day is against the symbolical interpretation of Scripture. And for the most part, this is great gain. For surely a fair canon of interpretation for any writing is that we should seek to discover what the author really meant to say, not what by an exercise of exegetic ingenuity we can make him say. If some good sermons have been killed by our austere exegetic canons, more poor ones have been prevented from coming to birth.

But it is possible to go too far in this direction. For just as surely as many of the Biblical writings were not meant to be taken symbolically, so surely many of them were and to treat as history that which was meant to be symbol is quite as misleading as to treat as symbol that which was meant to be history. The Book of Jonah, for example, was never properly understood till it was read as a parable.

I do not propose in this chapter to argue that the Gospel of John is to be considered as a fable or a myth. The Fourth Evangelist is deeply concerned, as we have seen,<sup>1</sup> to keep before the minds of men the historic Jesus. He seems to have felt that he was writing history,

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1. Ante, pp.243-244.

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though doubtless something more as well, and he made use of such historic tradition as was available to him. I have no hesitation in saying that I believe there is some historic background for practically everything that John records and that in some cases this historic tradition may be very good indeed.

But while this is true, I am convinced that we utterly fail to catch the significance of the Fourth Gospel when we read it primarily as an historical work. For the most part, the history of the life of Jesus is to be found, if found at all, rather in the Synoptic Gospels than here. With this view of the Fourth Gospel the majority of present-day scholars are agreed, with the result that it has ceased to be the fashion of scholarship to make much use of this gospel in reconstructing the life of Jesus.

But with the predominant interest of scholarship in history, this has meant that the Gospel of John has been almost entirely neglected in recent years. There has not been in English a first-rate commentary on the gospel since Westcott and most scholars who have dealt with it have been content to discuss its authorship and pass its content by. This is a great loss, for were we content to read it for its deeper meanings, we should

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again find it, as simple Christians have always continued to do, one of the incomparable books of the Bible.<sup>1</sup> It is the purpose of this chapter to try to show what happens when the Fourth Gospel is interpreted as the work of a mystic symbolist.

1. But first perhaps we ought to justify ourselves further for proposing to read the gospel in this way.

a. The first reason that we feel justified in reading the Gospel after this fashion is found in the pages of this thesis thus far. We have found the fourth evangelist to be a person of the mystic type of mind, dealing with matters that in many cases are beyond expression, and it is to be expected therefore that he will be one with the mystics also in his use of symbolism.

b. In the second place, symbolization was a widespread habit in the world out of which the Fourth Gospel came.

(1) One may speak particularly of Philo,<sup>2</sup> one of whose well-known characteristics was his use of the "allegorical method". "In his exposition of the great

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1. In general my position is that of Dr. L. A. Muirhead as stated in the preface to his volume, "The Message of the Fourth Gospel". For a position somewhat more extreme but essentially similar see Bacon, "The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate", pp. 438-439, 340-355.
  2. For a good exposition of Philo's contribution to religion, see the volume of that name by H. A. A. Kennedy.

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text-book of Judaism, the Mosaic law", says Kennedy, "he had set himself as a rule to show that the details of ritual and biography were but a rich symbolism veiling the story of the soul's progress from the sense-bound life of earth to the vision of perfect reality in God."<sup>1</sup> So to Philo, everything which he touches in the Old Testament means something else, or rather has two meanings, its surface meaning "which cannot be challenged" and a hidden one.<sup>2</sup> And this being true, no generation which knew Philo would think it strange if other works prepared for their attention contained deeper meanings than those upon the surface.

(2) Nor did Philo stand alone in that ancient world in his symbolizing temper. Behind Philo is Plato who made use of the myth, pure symbol in the sense of this thesis, to say things which the ordinary language of philosophy could not say.<sup>3</sup> Behind and beside Philo are the mysteries, with their esoteric truths embodied in symbolic stories, while in the Judaism of the day were the allegorizing tendencies of the rabbinic schools, tendencies which may be seen carried over into Paul's interpretation of the "rock" in the wilderness (I Cor.10:4)

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1. "Philo's Contribution to Religion", p.3.

2. Ibid, p.36.

3. Compare J.A.Stewart, "Myths of Plato", pp.1-3, 42-45.

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and into his use of the Hagar and Sarah story (Galatians 4:21-31). And farther back is the complicated symbolism of apocalyptic and the simpler symbolic action and speech of the Old Testament prophets.

No one, who is familiar with the Greek and Hebrew literature for five hundred years before and a hundred years after our Lord, would think it at all strange if there should be found in any work written at that time and in that environment a symbolizing tendency.

c. And in the third place, there is abundant evidence on the surface of the gospel itself that the author was of a symbolizing temper.

(1) The author shows his symbolizing tendencies first in the use he makes of Old Testament Scripture.

3:14. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up."  
6:32. "It was not Moses that gave you the bread out of heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread out of heaven."

In both these cases the Old Testament incidents are evidently thought of as types of deep-lying truths which find expression in the life of Jesus.

And in addition we have numerous examples of the claim to fulfilment of prophecy (1:23; 2:17; 12:15,38-40; 13:18; 15:25; 17:12; 18:9; 19:24-36) which sound a little strange in as anti-Jewish a book as this, but which are

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further evidence of the way in which the author viewed the Old Testament as pointing beyond itself.

(2) The evangelist once betrays the fact that he is frequently speaking symbolically when you would not expect it, by putting in an explanation of a place-name which he means to bear a particular symbolism.

9:6-7. "When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and anointed his eyes with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent)."

(3) Several words which the author uses point in the direction of symbolism:

(a) "True" ( ἀληθινός ) and "truth" ( ἀλήθεια ) meaning the Real, of which the external is a symbol.<sup>1</sup>

(b) σημεῖον , "sign", to designate the miracles of Jesus, indicating that they are "acts with a meaning" (2:11,18,23; 3:2; 4:54; 6:2,14,26,30; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18,37; 20:30)

(c) παραβολή , "a symbolic or figurative saying, used of Jesus' manner of discourse.

10:6. "This parable spake Jesus unto them; but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them."

16:25. "These things have I spoken unto you in dark sayings; the hour cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in dark sayings but shall tell you plainly of the Father."

16:29. "Lo, now speakest thou plainly and speakest no dark saying."

1. See for the words "true" and "truth", ante pp.290-293.

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as the story of the woman of Samaria (John 4), or the difference between the pericope adulterae (John 7:53-8:11) and the rest of the gospel. In the former you have pure historic narrative, in the latter history devoted to the uses of symbolism.

2. It is time now, however, that we should look at that symbolism which we have proved we have a right to expect. We will take the clearest cases first, moving toward the less obvious.

(1) The allegories. Allegory is expanded and intellectualized symbolism. An allegory is a story in which every detail bears a symbolic meaning. And in John's Gospel there are two, or perhaps three allegories.

The first is the allegory of the Vine and its branches (15:1-6). Jesus is the Vine; his disciples are the branches. They draw their life from him as the branches draw sap from the vine. And when they draw their life from him, they are fruitful, bearing the fruit of good works. But when they cease to be fruitful, there is a husbandman, the Father, who cleanses them if that is all they need, or "takes them away", if the contact has been entirely broken and they have become withered.

The other allegory, which may be two rather than

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one is in chapter 10,<sup>1</sup> and the difficulty in interpreting it rises from the fact that the symbolism is still in a fluid state, not wholly intellectualized. Jesus is thought of under the symbolism of the Door and the Shepherd. In relation to the fold, which in the allegory represents the church, he is the one, the only way by which sheep or under-shepherds may legitimately enter in. In relation to the sheep he is the other, the one who cares for them and who dies for them at last.

In the first six verses, the thought is somewhat mixed. In general it is of the false shepherds (false teachers without the Church, like the Jewish opposers to Christianity or within it, like the teachers of I John 2:22) who seek to lead without believing in Christ himself. These are thieves and robbers. But the true **shepherds** (or pastors) who come in by the Door, are the ones to whom the people must listen and whom they must follow. In verses 7-10, Jesus is thought of entirely as the Door, except that in verse 10, the thought seems to be passing into the thought of Jesus as shepherd. In verses 11-16 we have the allegory of the Good Shepherd, proper.

Professor Manson well points out the difference

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1. The best exposition of this passage known to me is W.Manson's in "The Incarnate Glory", pp.151-158.

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between an allegory of this sort and a parable. A parable is a story which can stand in its own right. It illustrates one point in the train of thought of the speaker, but the details of the story need not be and usually are not meant to bear any inner meaning. An allegory is told entirely for the symbolism and sometimes the details are dictated rather by the symbolism than by the probabilities of the story itself.<sup>1</sup> The historic Jesus, doubtless spoke in parables.<sup>2</sup> The mystic John, lover of symbolism, converted them into allegories. The way in which the Fourth Evangelist uses this historic material is well illustrated by a comparison of the Synoptic parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15: 3-7; Matthew 18:12-14) with the Johannine allegory of the Good Shepherd. The underlying material is the same, but in John all is used for a symbolic purpose.

(2) In the second place, we may pass rather rapidly over the commoner symbols. There is the lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world, the sacrificed lamb being a symbol of the Christ who died for men. There is the symbolism of light (1:4-9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35-36,46), of birth (1:13; 3:1-8), of bread

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1. Compare Manson, op.cit., pp.153 f, 157 f.

2. Though Matthew, for example, practically makes of the parable of the tares an allegory (Matthew 13:36-43) and the parable of the sower is allegoric in form.

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(6:26-59), of water (4:7-15; 7:38). When Jesus talks to Nicodemus of the mysterious and quiet way in which the life of God comes into the soul, the wind which "bloweth where it will" (3:8) becomes a symbol, and when the Greeks come to Jesus, it is the grain of wheat that he uses as the symbol of his own coming fruitfulness through death (12:24).

(3) If such symbolism as this, however, is too obvious to require extended comment, the case is otherwise with the miracle stories. For here the question of the historicity of the accounts has commonly blinded us to the far more important question of their meaning.

To many minds the most important question about any story is, "Did it happen?" They are like the child who must always be satisfied that this is a "true" story before he can settle down to enjoy it. And of course there are times when the question of historicity is important. It would be very serious indeed if it could be proved that the chief events narrated by the synoptists never occurred and that Jesus was either a myth or a very different person from what he is represented to have been.

But I am very sure that when we are reading a work whose chief import lies in its deeper meaning the

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question of the actuality of the events recorded is a very minor matter indeed. For the events are not recorded primarily as events, but as symbols, and their value lies in what they say, not in whether they actually happened just as represented.

It is some such feeling as that, that I have about the miracle stories in the Fourth Gospel. They doubtless have some sort of historical foundation. But when we bother too much about what that foundation was, we miss through our fussiness the thing that the evangelist was most concerned to say. Regardless of how much or how little actual fact there is in these stories, the evangelist did not tell them primarily for historical purposes. The evangelist told them for their symbolic value. They were useful and meaningful to him, not as historic facts, but as symbols of eternal truth.

(a) The feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-14). Since the feeding of the five thousand is a synoptic story, there is probably as little doubt of its historicity as of any miracle story in the fourth gospel. Hence it furnishes a particularly good illustration of my thesis. For why is this story told? Not, surely, to say over again what the synoptists have already said. It is told for its symbolic value. The story represents Jesus as

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giving sustenance to a great multitude. And in a spiritual sense, this is just what John is most anxious to say that Jesus does. He is the Bread of Life. No better text could be wanted from which to preach that sermon.<sup>1</sup>

(b) But now, if the story of the feeding of the five thousand is told in the Fourth Gospel with a symbolic purpose why not the story of the giving of sight to the blind man, also? (9:1-41). There is no reason to doubt that Christ healed blindness, unless we deny miracles altogether. But one has only to read the controversy that arose over this particular incident, the neighbor's obtuseness, the Pharisees' futile investigation and final impotent wrath, and the man's defence, to know that the evangelist was far more concerned with the various reactions of men and women to Jesus, the Light of the world, than with the case of healing which he records. All the people in this story are symbolic, and the blind man particularly was the symbol of many souls who had come into spiritual light through the power of Jesus. As just another story of a blind man cured, this ninth chapter of John would not be of any particular significance. As the classic example of religious experience in the presence of its foes, it is immortal.

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1. Professor B.W. Robinson thinks that the Fourth Gospel is essentially a book of sermons - "Gospel of John", pp.53-55.

(c) The turning of the water into wine. (2:1-11). The difficulty with the interpretation of the story of the miracle at Cana is not the difficulty of understanding how such a thing could be done. The time has certainly gone by when we seriously think it necessary to deny the possibility of everything which we do not understand. The difficulty is to see any adequate reason for the performance of such a miracle. Jesus was certainly not in the habit of using his God-given powers for the purpose of helping distraught hosts out of embarrassment. He would have been a good deal more likely to say, "Don't make so much fuss over a little wine. Look to the wine of life in your soul. Have you enough of that?" A minor difficulty, also, is the difficulty of Jesus' question to his mother, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" which, translated as euphemistically as possible can never be made to sound quite kind.

But if we think ourselves back into the symbol-loving mind of the author, it becomes more and more apparent that he did not tell the story either to illustrate Jesus' kindness or his power to transcend chemical laws. He told it, like a text set at the beginning of his book, to symbolize what Christ came to do. He came to turn the water of Judaism into the wine of

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Christianity. The life that Jesus brought had a sparkle and a tang to it that the life mediated by the old religion did not have. He had to bring that life in his own way, though that way was not in accordance with even the best elements in the old Judaism. But do it he did, and the whole gospel is concerned with the way in which Jesus thus transforms life.<sup>1</sup>

(d) The raising of Lazarus (11:1-44). The story of the raising of Lazarus is an even more striking example of the way in which we are led into the heart of these stories when we recognize that their most important aspect is the symbolic.

The chief difficulty in the interpretation of this story is not that it is such a very great wonder. There are stories of raisings from the dead, in the synoptics not essentially different from this - though the length of time that Lazarus had been in the grave makes this more marvellous - and one either accepts their possibility or else does not. The chief difficulties are in the story itself. How, for example, if the story is true to history are we to explain satisfactorily the fact that the Jesus whom we know from the Synoptics, the loving sympathetic Jesus, could have waited two days when he

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1. For a complete interpretation of the story from this point of view, see Muirhead, "Message of the Fourth Gospel", chapter V. Also Manson, "The Incarnate Glory", pp.80-81.

knew his friend was dying, and then said, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe." (11:15)? How could such a stupendous miracle have been overlooked by the synoptists, if it played the part in subsequent history that this gospel says it did? How are we to explain to sorrowing hearts, if this miracle is true to history, the fact that Jesus never, never gives our dead back to us in this fashion today? These are some of the difficulties that face us when we insist on the historicity of this story in every detail.

But if we turn from seeking to defend the historicity of a story which has every indication of being allegorical in form if not in origin, to ask "Why did the author tell this story? What does it symbolize?" the answer is plain. One can hardly think of a better representation of the central theme of this Gospel, Jesus, the Life, than this picture of Jesus at the grave's mouth, calling back into life a friend already four days dead. It is a symbol of extraordinary power, and every generation of Christian preachers with a sense of the eternal values has found it so. It may never be possible for men to agree on the exact degree of historicity to be accorded to this story, but its symbolic value is certain, and - this is the point - our excessive interest in the

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former and less important matter often blinds us to the second and more important.

(e) The minor miracles. It would overload this chapter to argue the point at great length in regard to the other miracle stories. The story of Jesus and the storm-tossed ship (6:16-21) probably symbolized in the author's mind the power of Jesus to help the church, storm-tossed in an angry world.<sup>1</sup> The story of the healing of the impotent man (5:2-9) symbolizes the way in which Jesus gives life directly to those who have been wont to depend on times and seasons and the help of others for salvation.<sup>2</sup> The story of the healing of the nobleman's son (4:46-54) presents the least reason for being treated as symbolical, but even here the power of Jesus to give life even in absence is plainly meant to be understood in a spiritual as well as in a physical sense.

(4) Symbolic incidents. Not only are the stories of miracles meant to bear a symbolic meaning, but of many of the other incidents the same thing may be said.

(a) This is clearly the case with the incident of the washing of the disciples' feet (13:1-11), for there

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1. Compare Bacon, "The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate", p.343 n.

2. Compare Muirhead, "Message of the Fourth Gospel", pp.85-88 and Manson, "The Incarnate Glory", pp.167-168.

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the evangelist himself explains the symbolism. This was not merely a case of Jesus washing his disciples' feet because they were tired and dirty and would not do it for each other. It was that, an example of kindly helpfulness (verses 14-17), but it was more than that. The washing was also a symbol of that heavenly cleansing, of which even after baptism they were constantly in need (verses 8-10), the purifying that comes from constant contact with Jesus. And beyond that, it was a symbol of the entire life of the incarnate Son, the divine condescension that spared nothing in the giving of Himself to men (verses 1-4).

(b) But if this incident so clearly bears all this rich symbolism, then, again, it is not unlikely that the same can be said about many other incidents. Take, for example, the effusion of blood and water from the wounded side of Jesus (19:34). There has been much argument on the part of medical men and theologians as to whether such a phenomenon could occur and what it would mean if it did, and physicians have been found to contend that this was proof that Jesus actually "died of a broken heart".<sup>1</sup> Other commentators have said that this is merely an anti-docetic reference to show that

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1. Compare Westcott, "Commentary", volume II, p.319.

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Jesus had a body and actually died.<sup>1</sup> But then if that were all, an effusion of blood alone would have been enough. In the light of the character of this gospel, however, and also of the parallel reference in I John 5:6-8, it is much more likely that the water and blood are symbolic. They are John's great symbols of life and purification, which issue for all mankind from the broken body upon the tree.<sup>2</sup>

(c) The anointing at Bethany (12:1-8). Here as in the case of the feeding of the five thousand and the walking on the water we have the retention of a synoptic story, somewhat changed, for a symbolic purpose. In contradistinction to the niggardliness of Judas, Mary of Bethany pours out on Jesus' feet the richest ointment until the house is filled with its odor. Far from condemning the wastefulness, Jesus praises the gift, "Suffer her; it is that she may reserve it for the day of my burying" (verse 7). In other words, It is because I am about to die that she has done this. The gift is more than a gift. It is "a rich symbol of the extravagant profusion of his own dying love."<sup>3</sup>

(d) The coming of the Greeks (12:20 ff.). There

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1. See Scott, "The Fourth Gospel", p.20 f.

2. Compare Manson, "The Incarnate Glory", p.226.

3. Strachan, "The Fourth Evangelist", p.279.

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can be little doubt that the coming of the Greeks symbolized to the evangelist's mind something greater than itself. On any other basis, Jesus' reply (verse 23 ff) is unintelligible. Why should this have been taken as the sign that the hour had come for the Son of man to be glorified? Why in this connection the remark about the grain of wheat and all that came out of it? Simply because the coming of these Greeks symbolized the turning to Jesus of the Gentile world, and when that movement had begun his task was truly accomplished.

(e) The garden of the resurrection. (20:11-16). "The story of the appearance to Mary in the garden", says Strachan, "is a dramatic rendering of a spiritual perception, the rich symbol of a universal experience".<sup>1</sup>

I know of no scene in the Bible containing a tenderer poetry. Mary, looking into the grave for her Master, while all the time he stood behind her in the land of the living, is the symbol of all of us who seek for the living among the dead. And, as we have already suggested,<sup>2</sup> her recognition of Him only in the moment of hearing her name is symbolic of the part that the evangelist felt personal experience must play in the lives of all true disciples.

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1. Strachan, "The Fourth Evangelist", p.302.

2. Ante, p.45.

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Nicodemus, for example, who comes to Jesus by night and who cannot understand how anyone who is old can start over again (3:1-4). Nicodemus, who when he appears the second time is rather timidly defending Jesus (7:50-52) and who, in his final appearance is caring for the body of Jesus along with Joseph of Arimathea who was a disciple "secretly for fear of the Jews" (19:38-39), "represents for our Evangelist and his first readers those Jews of his own day who were deeply impressed by the spectacle of the Christian Church and were willing to regard Jesus as a Teacher come from God" but "shrank. . . from a reformation of the old religion of types and shadows through the substitution for it of a religion of reality." <sup>1</sup>

The woman of Samaria (4:7-42) with her five husbands, her interest in the externals of worship, and yet her ultimate possibilities is "a living symbol of what heathenism is and does". <sup>2</sup> She is interesting as an individual, but she becomes even more interesting when we realize that for the Evangelist she is Samaria, and she is all mankind when their throats are parched for living water and the Messiah has not yet come.

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1. Muirhead, "Message of the Fourth Gospel", p.60.  
Compare Manson, "The Incarnate Glory", pp.87-83.

2. Muirhead, op.cit. p.68

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Nathanael, if he is not a symbolic figure of the apostle Paul,<sup>1</sup> stands at least for the type of Israelite whose prejudices melt away before the spectacle of Jesus<sup>2</sup> (1:45-51), and hence for all whose hearts are open to the influence of Jesus' character; while Thomas (11:16; 14:5; 20:24-29) stands just as surely for the somewhat dull, literalistic but utterly faithful Christian. Nathanael is the mystic, Thomas in every way his opposite, but both of them belong to the disciples' band.

We have already pointed out that the beloved disciple, whatever else he may be, is certainly the evangelist's symbol of the ideal Christian.<sup>3</sup>

And finally let us notice that the mother of Jesus seems in this gospel to be symbolic also. Twice she appears, once at the wedding feast in Cana (2:1-12) and again at Jesus' cross (19:25-27) and both times there are difficulties about considering the story a straightforward historic account. We have already dealt with the difficulty of the Cana story.<sup>4</sup> The difficulty in the story of the mother at the cross lies in the disagreement with the synoptics. In the synoptic

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1. See Scott, "The Fourth Gospel", pp.46-48.

2. Manson, "The Incarnate Glory", p.77.

3. Ante, p.94 f.

4. Supra, p.360 f.

account (Matthew 27:55 f.; Mark 15:40 f.; Luke 23:49), the women are far off and the mother of Jesus is not there, and this is surely much more likely to have been the fact.

But we already have synoptic warrant for thinking of the mother of Jesus in symbolic fashion (Compare Mark 3:35; Matthew 12:50; Luke 8:21) and it seems altogether likely that in these stories she is more symbol than reality. She stands for the best in the old Judaism, from which he sprang. To it he owed much, but it could not direct him (2:4); tenderly to the last he hoped that it might find a new home in the house of His disciple (19:27).<sup>1</sup>

(6) Even the individual words and phrases of this gospel are allusive rather than direct. We can only hope to call attention to a few of these.<sup>2</sup>

(a) The evangelist is very fond of words that may be taken in more than one sense. Such are ἀνωθεν (3:3) meaning "again" or "from above", and πνεῦμα (3:8) meaning "wind" or "spirit"; such also are the verb ὑψώω (3:14; 8:28; 12:32,34) which for Jesus meant "exaltation" as well as literal "lifting up" on the cross, the expression ὑδωρ ζῶν (4:10), which might mean "spring water" as

1. Compare Muirhead, "Message of the Fourth Gospel", pp.42 f., 212 f. Scott, "The Fourth Gospel", pp.74-75.

2. Compare Kennedy, "Philo's Contribution to Religion", pp.47-48.

well as the "water of life" to which Jesus referred, the very verb *ζάω* itself, which might mean (as in 5:25) physical resurrection or spiritual life, and the verb *κοιμάω* (11:11-13) which might mean ordinary sleep or the sleep of death. Another play upon words is in 1:30: "After me cometh a man who is become before me, for he was before me", (*Ὅπισθ' αὐτοῦ ἔρχεται ἄνθρωπος ὃς ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν*).

Indeed it might almost be said that the use of words in a sense different from that in which they are understood (in a symbolic sense when they are understood literally) is the evangelist's favorite rhetorical device. We have already discussed the senses in which the words "Destroy this temple" (2:19-21) are to be understood.<sup>1</sup> "Born anew" (3:3) is misunderstood by Nicodemus, "living water" (4:10) by the Samaritan woman, "I have meat to eat that ye know not" (4:32) by the disciples, "eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood" (6:53) by the multitude, "thy brother shall rise again" (11:23) by Martha, even "I and the Father are one" (10:30), "Ye do the things which ye heard from your Father" (8:38), "Where I am ye cannot come" (7:34), "A little while and ye behold me not" (16:17) and "Thou

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1. Ante, pp.47-49.



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sayest that I am a king" (18:37). And besides these cases there are many others, where no misunderstanding is noted, in which language is used in other than the ordinary sense (Compare 3:29; 4:35; 7:38; 12:24; 13:8-10, perhaps even 4:18). An interesting case where the high priest is made to use language allusively without knowing it is 11:47-52, where it is made clear that Caiaphas does not realize the deep significance of his saying, "It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people."

(b) But these are very obvious examples of the symbolizing temper. There is much subtler symbolism than this. Who can say, for example, what depth of allusion there is in the story of the call of Nathanael, the "Israelite indeed in whom is no guile", who was marked by Jesus underneath the fig-tree and who was promised the vision of "angels. . . ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (1:46-51)? Everyone of these details calls for an insight beneath the surface of the record. The same may be said of the conversation with the Samaritan woman (4:16-26) and many other stories.

I do not argue that all the symbolism is elaborately worked out by the author after the manner of the

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allegorists. It is rather after the manner of the poet, to whom symbolism is more natural than literal prose and for whom every word has its overtones. When an author like this writes that when Judas went out to betray Jesus "it was night" (13:30), that Nicodemus came "by night" (3:2) and Mary Magdalene sought the tomb "while it was yet dark" (20:1), that Jesus was walking on Solomon's porch "in the winter" (10:22) and that when he was crucified with the two thieves Jesus was "in the midst" (19:18) one need not doubt the historical accuracy of the details but one may be sure the author had in mind a deeper symbolism behind them.

(7) We have left till the last the somewhat more doubtful matter of the allegorism of number and place. It has been conjectured again and again with more than a little plausibility that the details of number in the Fourth Gospel are allegoric, also. Thus the five husbands of the Samaritan woman (4:18) are the five foreign gods of the people who came to dwell in Samaria after the exile of the ten tribes (II Kings 17:24-33), and the five porches at Bethesda (5:2) are the books of the Law.<sup>1</sup> One cannot be sure. In Philo as in the Jewish apocalypists numerical allegorism played

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1. For a longer list of these possible numerical allegorisms see Encyclopedia Biblica, 1796-7.

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a great part.<sup>1</sup> And as Scott has pointed out<sup>2</sup> the presence of a numerical scheme in the composition of the Gospel cannot be wholly denied.

Nor is it possible to be certain what place names may carry in themselves an allegorical meaning. Certainly Siloam was intended to do so (9:7) and, if Siloam, why not others? "Aenon near to Salim" (3:23) for example - "Fountains near to Peace"<sup>3</sup> - carries every indication of being allegoric.

But these details are of minor importance. Whatever may be true as to any single detail, there can be little doubt that when we are dealing with the Fourth Gospel we are dealing with a work in which symbolism plays a major part.

Conclusion. The symbolism of the Fourth Gospel is a much better disciplined, subtler and more spiritual symbolism than the symbolism of many of the mystics. John's symbolism, as Scott says<sup>4</sup>, is very infrequently, if ever, "merely arbitrary" and it never "dissolves history into pure allegory". The Fourth Evangelist is

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1. Compare Kennedy, "Philo's Contribution to Religion" p.48.

2. "The Fourth Gospel", pp.21-22.

3. Compare Moffatt, "Introduction ", p.548

4. "The Fourth Gospel", p.57 f.

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concerned for the facts of Jesus' life, but he is more concerned for their meaning. His is the mystic temper, and for him everything which is seen becomes a sacrament of that which is not seen. No man enters into the heart of the Fourth Gospel and catches its true message unless he has something of the poet in himself. Clement of Alexandria said long ago that it was a "spiritual" gospel<sup>1</sup> and Dean Inge in our day has put the matter well: "The theology of the Incarnation, taught in the form of a historical narrative, with an underlying framework of symbolism and allegory, which though never obtruded, determines the whole arrangement and selection of incidents - this is the topic of the Fourth Gospel. And unless it is read in the light of this purpose and with a due recognition of the peculiar method, the seven seals of the Apocalypse will remain set upon the 'spiritual gospel'."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Eusebius, Hist. Eccl. VI - 14.

2. Article, "John, Gospel of" - Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels", Volume I, p.886.

## CHAPTER XI.

### SUB SPECIE AETERNITATIS.

"Du sprichst: Versetze dich aus  
Zeit in Ewigkeit: Ist denn an Ewigkeit  
und Zeit ein Unterscheid?"

- Angelus Silesius.

#### A. The Mystics.

The last chapter has brought us within sight of another peculiarity of the mystics, their attitude toward external things. We will begin our study of that attitude by noticing one of the most famous attacks which have been made on the mystics in recent times.

1. Until the recent attacks upon the mystical type of religion from the standpoint of psychology by Leuba and others, attacks of which we have had to take account in this thesis, the most formidable opposition to it came from the Ritschlian school of theologians. The center of the Ritschlian position was its devotion to the historic Jesus, an emphasis which the Ritschlians did much to bring back into our theology, and their opposition to the mystics was occasioned by what they called the mystic "neglect" of history.

a. The position will perhaps be found best stated in Wilhelm Herrmann's classic "Communion of the Christian with God."<sup>1</sup>

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1. The following summary is made from Chapter I, pp.19-32.

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There is, of course, says Herrmann, a mystical element in all religion. But since it is in all religion there is nothing distinctively Christian about it. That which is distinctive about Christianity is its revelation of God in the historic Jesus. But that is just what the mystic thinks he can get along without. The historic stream of mysticism is neo-Platonic and not Christian at all. In it the influence of God upon the soul is found solely in inward experience; nothing external to the soul is clearly perceived or firmly grasped, no thoughts that elevate the spiritual life are aroused by the positive contents of an idea.

"Whenever the religious feeling in the mystics soars to its highest flights, then they are torn loose from Christ and float away into a sphere where they meet the non-Christian mystics of all ages. . . Their yearning after God Himself could never endure the trammels of the historical."<sup>1</sup>

"On that plane itself, and in those moments when enjoyment of the highest is vouchsafed, the soul knows itself to be loosed from all external things. If such a freedom of the soul in God be regarded as the blessed goal, then any command to hold fast by what is historical cannot count on certain obedience. For the fact that everything historical sinks into insignificance when God is really found, may so dominate the feeling of the individual that he may become totally indifferent to the dogma that formulates the meaning of the historical in Christianity."<sup>2</sup>

Hence, Herrmann concludes that within the Christian community, the way of mysticism must be abandoned.

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1. Herrmann, op.cit., p.23.

2. Ibid, p.24.

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For the mystic "lifted above all that fetters men and brings unrest" has "left Christ behind". "At the highest point to which (mysticism) leads, Christ must vanish from the soul along with all else that is external." But when Christ vanishes, Christianity vanishes, too.

"It is not in this or that emotion, concerning which all that can be said is that in the emotion, God is touching the soul, that we perceive the Redeemer who came to us in history. God would be in such case only a hidden, inscrutable power. . . . We have God just in so far as He Himself comes near to us. Now if I have to say that for me this happens in a stirring of the soul in which the vision of a personal power that spiritually dominates and liberates me is entirely blotted out, then this process is for me the form of God's appearance; and it is this that brings me all that I can grasp of God. But then, the revelation of God in history loses all its worth."<sup>1</sup>

In Herrmann's view, mysticism, a mode of religion dependent solely on inner experience, and Christianity, a mode of religion dependent on outward revelation stand opposed. We cannot have both - it must be one or the other.

b. There can be no doubt that in Herrmann's description of the mystical type of piety there is much that is true. Mysticism does take its rise in those experiences of the presence of God which form the common substratum of all religion, and Christian mysticism has been greatly influenced, not wholly for good by the

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1. Herrmann, op.cit., p.31 f.

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neo-Platonic philosophy as learned through the writings of the pseudo-Dionysius. Mysticism does lay its emphasis upon a meeting with God in the inward soul, and the experience which ensues is of an indeterminate kind as regards the nature and the character of God. We have been constantly pointing out in this thesis precisely that tendency to the neglect of the historical of which Herrmann makes so much.

But before we are ready wholly to acquiesce in Herrmann's condemnation, three things are to be noticed.

(1) In spite of what Herrmann calls the neglect of the historic Christ, the pages of the mystics are full of the tenderest love for Jesus, and the most ardent desire to follow Him.

Julian of Norwich - "In this time I would have looked fro the cross and I durst not; for I wist well, whiles that I beheld the cross I was sure and safe. . . Then had I a proffer in my reason, as it had been friendly said to me, 'Look up to heaven to his Father'.. Here me behoved to look up, or else to answer; I answered inwardly with all the might of my soul, and said, 'Nay, I may not, for thou art my heaven'. This I said, for that I would not, for I had leaver have been in that pain till dooms-day, than have come to heaven otherwise than by him. . . Thus was I learned to choose Jesu for my heaven. . . . Me liked no other heaven than Jesu."<sup>1</sup>

St.Catherine of Siena - "Wherefore I have told thee that I have made a Bridge of my Word, of my only-begotten Son, and this is the truth. . . I wish thee to look at the Bridge of my only-begotten Son, and see the greatness thereof, for it reaches from Heaven to earth, that is, that the earth of your humanity is joined to the greatness of the Deity thereby. I say then, that

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1. "Revelations of Divine Love", 9:19.



this Bridge reaches from Heaven to earth, and constitutes the union which I have made with man. . . . You must all walk across this Bridge, seeking the glory and praise of my name in the salvation of souls, enduring with patient suffering your many fatigues, following the footsteps of this sweet and amorous Word; for in no other way can you arrive at Me."<sup>1</sup>

And one could quote to the same effect the "Imitation of Christ", Suso's "Little Book of Eternal Wisdom" the "Little Flowers of St. Francis" and many other mystical works.

(2) In the second place, even though Herrmann is right in saying that in the mystical experience itself even Christ is left behind along with everything else external, he is not right in saying that the fact of Christ makes no difference therefore to the Christian mystic.

The experience of the mystic, as we have said,<sup>2</sup> is an ineffable experience. It gives certainty without ideational content.<sup>3</sup> It only finds at its climax a transcendent Something infinitely lovable. Of course, as we have already pointed out,<sup>4</sup> the fact that It is lovable suggests that it is personal, but there is no clear content of personality in the experience itself.

But this does not mean for a moment that the Christian mystic's experience of God is the same as

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1. "Dialogo", Chapters XXI-XXIII.

2. Ante, e.g. pp.280-281, 342.

3. Compare Underhill, "The Life of the Spirit and the Life of Today", p.98.

4. Ante, p.131.

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though Christ had never been, for it is to the revelation in Christ that he, like every other Christian, turns, for the ideas with which to fill up the certainty which his experience has given him. That God is, he learns from his experience, any clear idea as to what He is must still come from the historic revelation in Christ.

For illustration of this, see the quotation already given<sup>1</sup> from the "Confessions" of St. Augustine (Book VII. 23-27) particularly paragraph 24, beginning "Then I sought a way of obtaining strength, sufficient to enjoy Thee, and found it not, until I embraced that Mediator betwixt God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." Also St. Theresa, "Life", chapter XXII - "That we should carefully and laboriously accustom ourselves not to strive with all our might to have always. . . the most Sacred Humanity before our eyes - that, I say, is what seems to me not to be right; it is making the soul, as they say, to walk in the air, for it has nothing to rest on, how full soever of God it may think itself to be."

(Compare "Interior Castle", Sixth Mansion, Chapter VII.)

(3) To this it may, of course, be said that if the mystic experience is in itself such a negative thing and dependent on the historic revelation for content, then it is really not worth bothering about. To meet God in the story of Jesus is enough. It were folly to seek any other experience. But to meet God only in the story of Jesus is not enough. That God with whom we become acquainted there, we want to meet in our hearts.

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1. Ante, p.205.

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This brings us to our third criticism of Herrmann's position.

In Herrmann's purely historical religion, there is no place for a present experience of Christ.

"If God, in bringing Christ near to the individual soul, gives to that soul the full tidings of what is in God's heart, and if He thereby gives the soul clear vision and peace, then He makes that soul feel His own Almighty power, and deals with such a soul in the most direct and intimate way possible. A more immediate contact of the soul cannot be conceived or wished for, save by those who do not think of their God as a Personal Spirit but as an impersonal substance. The Personal Spirit communes with us through manifestations of His inner life, and when He consciously and purposely makes us feel what His mind is, then we feel Himself."<sup>1</sup>

But do two persons never come closer to one another than they do in conversation? Taken at its highest, what happens when we meet the historic Jesus in the pages of the gospel is that we hear God speaking through that medium certain things about Himself. Surely we can get closer to God than that. Surely there is a more intimate communion with God possible for men than the discovery of "what His mind is". The highest ideas that we can get about God are found in the historic Christ. But the highest ideas about God do not constitute personal contact with Him. That comes, in its most intimate form, not without, but within.

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1. "Communion with God", pp.184-185.

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To Herrmann, however, all such talk about a present Christ is delusion.

"It is not of course difficult for an imaginative person so to conjure up the Person of Christ before himself that the picture shall take a kind of sensuous distinctness. . . . But what such a person communes with in this fashion is not Christ Himself, but a picture that the man's own imagination has put together. . . . Such a picture does not bring us the possibility of communion with Christ."<sup>1</sup>

And the way that he knows it to be delusion is one of the most amazing things in theological literature. First "life is not in this picture but in the historic Christ" (p.282). Second, "that contemplative love to Christ which is supposed to gaze on Him as something alive and present, takes away from the Christian hope of a future perfection" (p.287). Third, "this contemplative love to Christ refuses to find in Him that very blessing by which alone He becomes our Redeemer, namely, the way to the Father" (p.288).

We cannot take space to discuss the third reason which is in direct contradiction to the earlier argument which condemned mysticism because it did pass beyond Christ to God.<sup>2</sup> But the first two cry aloud to Heaven

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1. "Communion with God", pp.281-282.

2. Compare p.32, "We (non-mystical Christians) find in God Himself nothing but Christ". There the argument was that mystics were wrong because they found in God more than Christ. Here it is that they are wrong because they stop with the contemplation of Christ instead of going on to God.

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to be condemned. Christ came in the past, says Herrmann, but it implies "unbelief" in that past for us to require any further experience of Him in the present.

"That is the true presence of God in our hearts when we experience how the tidings He gives us through Christ place the world and our sin beneath our feet. And this is the presence of Christ. . . when his appearance in history comes home to our hearts as the most important thing in all the world. We Christians cannot experience any other presence of God and Christ and we desire no other."<sup>1</sup>

Christ will be present to us in the future, but to desire such presence now is to injure our hope of future bliss.

"If any assert that they have already this sort of communion with Christ. . . then we cannot but have the impression that these good people are injuring their Christian hope for the future."<sup>2</sup>

A Christ in the past and a Christ in the future, but at present only the history in the pages of the Gospel to mediate our contact with God! Nothing could show more clearly the poverty of an unmystical Christianity than this. To meet Christ in the pages of the Gospels is good, but to go on from this to meet him in the heart is better. And such a turning from the outward to the inward is the contribution that the mystic has to make to Christian experience.

2. This review of Herrmann's attack on mysticism

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1. Herrmann, op.cit., pp.283-284.

2. Ibid, p.287.

may have served to make clear both the truth and the falsity of the frequently made statement that the mystic's interest is wholly within.

a. It is unquestionably true that if, as Heine asserts, every man is either a Platonist or an Aristotelian, or, as Jung suggests, mankind may be divided into "extraverts" and "introverts",<sup>1</sup> then the mystics are introverts, par excellence. For by nature, the mystic's attention is centered in the world within. That which he finds in the depths of his own soul appears to him to be Reality, and his whole effort is concentrated on transcending the world without, that he may come into union with the Reality within. For this, as we have seen, he has perfected a technique which, long before Jung, was known by the name, introversion.<sup>2</sup> The mystic's characteristic activity is the turning away from the external, which is superficial appearance, to the internal which is identified with the transcendent Real

b. When he is most distinctively himself, therefore, the mystic tends to regard the great outside world, which to most of us constitutes nearly the whole of life, as of minor account. This attitude may be illustrated as follows:

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1. Compare Jung, "Psychological Types", pp.9 ff., 412 ff.

2. Ante, p.194.

## (1) Mystic fear of the things of sense.

"I have now to speak of joy in sensible goods, wherein the will rejoices. By sensible goods I mean all that is cognizable by the senses, of sight, of hearing, of smell, of taste, and of touch. . . In order to render the will blind to and purified from all joy in sensible objects, directing it to God, we must take for granted this truth, namely, that the sense of man's lower nature is not, and cannot be. . . capable of knowing or comprehending God as he is. . . . Therefore to occupy the will with the joy that has its source in any of these apprehensions, will be at the least but vanity, and a hindrance in the way of employing the strength of the will upon God by rejoicing in him alone. This is what the soul can never wholly do unless it purifies itself from and makes itself blind to joy in the things of sense, for if it should rejoice herein at all, that, as I have said, will be but vanity."<sup>1</sup>

## (2) Mystic superiority to the historical.

"And notice that that love of the heart is in a manner carnal, with which the heart of man is affected towards Christ according to the flesh, and towards the actions which he did or commanded while in the flesh. . . (For) He afterwards pointed out to them a higher degree of love when He said, 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing' (John 6:63). I think that he who said, 'Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now hence forth know we Him no more' (II Corinthians 5:16). . . stood upon higher ground. . . Such devotion towards the flesh of Christ is a gift of the Holy Spirit and a great gift; yet I must call such love carnal, at least in comparison with that other affection, which has regard, not so much to the Word as flesh, as to the Word as Wisdom."<sup>2</sup>

(3) Even as regards the sacraments, the mystic is perhaps most consistent when he takes up the attitude of George Fox.

1. St. John of the Cross, "Ascent of Mt. Carmel", Book III, Chapter XXIII. 1, 2.

2. St. Bernard, "Sermons on the Canticles", XX, 6-8.

"And also the apostle was tender concerning the baptising with water, but when they began to make a sect of it, and setting up Paul and Apollo, he judged them and called them carnal and thanks God he had baptised no more but such and such. . . .

"Another great objection they had that the Quakers denied the sacrament, as they called it, of bread and wine, which they was to do and take in remembrance of Christ to the end of the world, they said.

"To which I answered. . . Christ saith, 'As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, do it in remembrance of me', and the apostle says the same. . .

"Now as the apostle saith, 'The things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal. . . .

"So as Christ saith, as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, do it in remembrance of his death. . . . and Christ said he was the bread of life from heaven and he would come and dwell in them. . . . but ye eat and drink this in remembrance of Christ's death, and there is your fellowship. But will you come no nearer to Christ's death than to take bread and wine in remembrance. . . .

"And therefore the fellowship of bread, water, wine, circumcision, outward temples and things seen will have an end, but the fellowship in the gospel, the power of God. . . is eternal and will stand."<sup>1</sup>

(4) And because this is so, there is something to be said for the contention of Rufus Jones that the mystics "have saved Christianity from being submerged under scholastic formalism and ecclesiastical systems, which were alien to man's essential nature and need."<sup>2</sup> Here is a passage, for example, in which Rulman Merswin, good Catholic that he was, rises beyond narrow dependence on an external institution like the Church:

1. "Journal" (unabridged) Volume I, pp.252-254.

2. "Studies in Mystical Religion", p.XXX.



"If a Jew or Mohammedan fears God from the depths of his heart and leads a good and simple life; if he does not know any better religion than the one in which he was born; if he is ready to obey God in case he reveals to him a better faith than his own, why should not such a man be dearer to God than wicked and impious 'Christians', who though having received baptism, wilfully disobey the commands of God: When God finds a good Jew or Mohammedan of pure life He feels a thrill of love and infinite pity for him. . . . and God will find some way of saving him unknown to us. . . . If baptism cannot be conferred upon him, though he has a desire for it, God can baptize him in the holy desire of his will, and there are in the eternal world many good pagans who have been received in this way."<sup>1</sup>

3. But while the mystic's characteristic movement is the inward-turning movement, it is a very great mistake to think of him as in practice opposed or indifferent to the external. Beside the above illustrations could be put another series in which the mystic is seen turning back to the things that are without.

(1) Beside the quotation from St. John of the Cross, for example, should stand this from St. Francis:

"Praise be to Thee, my Lord, with all thy creatures,  
 Chiefest of all, Sir Brother Sun,  
 Who is our day, through whom thou givest light:  
 Beautiful is he, radiant with great splendor,  
 Of The Most High, he is a true revealer.  
 Praise be to thee, my Lord, for Sister Moon and for the  
 stars;  
 In heaven hast thou formed them, bright, precious and fair.  
 Praise be to Thee, my Lord, for Brother Wind, and for the  
 air and for the cloud, for clear sky and all weathers,  
 By which thou givest nourishment to all thy creatures.  
 Praise be to thee, my Lord, for Sister Water; she  
 Most useful is, and humble, precious and pure.  
 Praise be to Thee, my Lord, for Brother Fire; by whom  
 Thou lightest up the night:  
 And fair is he and merry, mighty and strong.

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1. "Book of the Nine Rocks", quoted in Jones, op.cit. p.255.

Praise be to Thee, my Lord, for our Sister, Mother Earth,  
The which sustains and keeps us:  
She brings forth diverse fruits, the many-hued flowers  
and grass.

O Creatures all! praise and bless my Lord, and grate-  
ful be,  
And serve him with deep humility."<sup>1</sup>

(2) Beside St. Bernard, should stand the quotations  
given above from Julian of Norwich and Catherine of Siena.<sup>2</sup>

(3) Beside George Fox should stand this from Suso:

"Eternal Wisdom: Thou hast me in the sacrament, be-  
fore thee and with thee, as truly and really God and man. .  
as truly as my pure mother carried me in her arms, and as  
truly as I am in heaven in my perfect glory. . . In what  
manner my glorified body and my soul. . . are in the Sacra-  
ment, this no tongue can express. . . . (It is much as) a  
great house should shape itself in a small mirror. . . or. .  
the vast heavens should compress themselves into so small  
a space as thy small eye.

"The Servant: O noble and loving Lord, I have often  
desired in my heart that like holy Simeon in the temple I  
might have received thee bodily in my arms. . . But now,  
Lord, I see that I receive thee as truly as he, and so much  
the more nobly as Thy tender body is now glorified. . . . I  
see no difference except that Simeon received thee visibly  
and I receive thee invisibly."<sup>3</sup>

(4) And beside Rulmin Merswin should stand St.

Catherine of Siena:

"If thou shouldst ask Me how it is that the sin of  
persecution of the holy Church is graver than any other,  
and why it is that the sins of clerks should not diminish  
the reverence paid to them, I should reply, 'Because all

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1. "Canticle of Brother Sun" - Fr. Cuthbert, "Life of St. Francis", p.421. For other illustrations of "nature-mysticism" see Evelyn Underhill, "Mysticism", pp.249, 310 ff., and chapters on the mystics and nature in Herman, "Meaning and Value of Mysticism" and Inge, "Christian Mysticism".

2. Supra, pp.379-380.

3. "Little Book of Eternal Wisdom", Chapter XXIII (condensed).

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reverence which is paid to them is not paid to them, but to Me.<sup>1</sup>

The mystic is no more indifferent to the outside world in practice, than anyone else. Indeed, it might be almost truer to say that it means more to him than to most

How are we to explain this seeming contradiction? Or what are we to say concerning the mystic's attitude toward the external world? Simply this. That while the mystic's primary interests are within, no one in a world of external objects can be indifferent to the world without. Even unconsciously, the object takes its revenge on the introvert.<sup>2</sup>

And consciously, even at the risk of contradicting himself, the mystic must turn back from the world within to the world without. But when he does so turn back - accustomed as he is to the timeless life within - he looks at the world without with strangely different vision. He sees it now sacramentally. Nature, history, the sacraments, the church, the mystic looks at them and through them at once. He sees them, not as simple and isolated facts, but *sub specie aeternitatis*.

This twofold movement in the mystic's attitude to external things has been profoundly studied by Baron von Hügel.

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1. "Dialogo", Chapter CXVI.

2. Compare Jung, "Psychological Types", pp.477-480.

"The mystic finds his joy", he says, "in the recollective movement and moments of the soul; and hence ever tends qua mystic, to ignore and neglect, or to over-minimize, the absolutely necessary contact of the mind and will with the things of sense. . . . Yet this drift is ever more or less contradicted by his practice, often at the very moment of such argument, for no religious writers are more prolific in vivid imagery derived from noble sensible objects and scenes than are the mystics, - whose characteristic mood is an intuition, a resting in a kind of vision of things invisible."<sup>1</sup>

"Again, the mystic finds his full delight in all that approximates most nearly to Simultaneity and Eternity; and consequently turns away, qua mystic, from the Successive and Temporal, presented by History. - Yet here also there are two movements. . . . He will, by the one. . . . strive hard to get into close and ever closer touch with the successivenesses of History, especially those of our Lord's earthly life and of His closest followers. . . . And yet, here again. . . . (he will) try and apprehend what appears to us stretched out successively in time, as simultaneously present in the one great Now of God."<sup>2</sup>

The mystic's characteristic attitude is neither wholly turned within nor wholly turned without. But his love for the inward makes him look at the outward with different eyes. The external means both more and less to him than to others. Less, as being but the shadow of Reality, more because being thus a shadow it is also a gateway through which Reality is reached.

This characteristic twofold attitude of the mystics to the external world explains certain peculiar mystic doctrines.

(1) There is, for example the way that the so-called "nature-mystics" have of looking at the world, the things they see in it that most of us do not, "I see everything I paint in this world", wrote William Blake to

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1. "Mystical Element of Religion", p.284.

2. Von Hügel, op.cit. pp.285-286. Compare also chapters I-III in "Essays and Addresses", Second series.

Dr. Trusler on August 23, 1799, "but everybody does not see alike. . . The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the eyes of others only a green thing which stands in the way. . . You certainly mistake when you say that the visions of fancy are not to be found in this world. To me this world is all one continued vision of fancy or imagination and I feel flattered when I am told so."<sup>1</sup>

(2) There is the peculiar mystic doctrine that the events of Christ's life must be recapitulated in the lives of Christians. "The one secret, the greatest of all", says Coventry Patmore, is "the doctrine of the Incarnation, regarded not as an historical event which occurred two thousand years ago, but as an event which is renewed in the body of every one who is in the way to the fulfilment of his original destiny."<sup>2</sup> So Tauler says that Christ must be born in us, and Eckhart begins a Christmas sermon: "Here in time we make holiday because the eternal birth which God the Father bore and bears unceasingly is now born in time, in human nature. St. Augustine says this birth is always happening. But if it happen not in me, what does it profit me? What matters is that it shall happen in me."<sup>3</sup>

(3) There is the thought of the life of Christ, and particularly, the Cross, as a cosmic event, a window whereby we see into the heart of God. "The Cross", says Traherne, "is a well of life beneath, in which we may see the face of heaven above, and the only mirror wherein all things appear in their proper colors."<sup>4</sup> And Mrs. Herman makes much of this in her chapter on "Mysticism and Theology".<sup>5</sup> "The very thing which is supposed to constitute their disparagement of history", she says, "their easy passage from the Christ of the gospels to the 'pneumatic' Christ. . . is their supreme tribute to the eternal value of history. Theirs was the only true philosophy of history - that spiritual appropriation which incorporates it vitally into the timeless present. That they erred formally in their conception of the value of historical fact cannot be denied. . . . But their

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1. "Letters of William Blake", p.62.

2. "The Rod, the Root, and the Flower", Homo, XIX.

3. Pred.I. Compare Underhill, "Mysticism", pp.141-146.

4. "Centuries of Meditations", I, 59.

5. See pages 326-340.

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religious use of history amply compensated for all theoretical defects."<sup>1</sup>

(4) Finally there is the doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ. We quote Mrs. Herman again: "As the Holy Spirit represents at once the intensifying and the extension of the Christ in man, so the Spirit-created Church represents the continuation and extension of the Incarnation. She is the Body wherewith the ascended Christ clothes Himself for his continuous dwelling in the world, . . . the Body in which He suffers and offers His atoning sacrifice for all mankind."<sup>2</sup>

So the mystic, looking at objects in space and events in time which to most of us have become commonplace, sees them transfigured with a heavenly glory. Above and beyond and through them he sees the Eternal shining and giving meaning to our human world.

#### B. The Fourth Gospel.

It will be our purpose now to show that this same tendency is one of the marked characteristics of the Fourth Evangelist. In his dealing with external objects and events he sees them under the similitude of eternity.

##### 1. The life of Jesus.

I presume it is not necessary to say again that this evangelist is interested in the historic Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

"The very fact that the work takes the form of a gospel, a record of the actual life of Christ, indicates that the

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1. Op.cit. p.331.

2. Ibid, p.356.

3. Ante, pp.243-244, 347.

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author set a supreme value on that life, once visibly lived in the flesh."<sup>1</sup> And there is reason to suppose that many details which appear in the Gospel "(e.g. the print of the nails, the spear wound, the allusions to thirst, weariness, etc.)" were put there with the conscious purpose of emphasizing the real humanity of Jesus. Scott sees the same motive in the omission of Simon of Cyrene, and the statement, "Jesus went out, bearing the cross for himself" (19:17) and it seems not unlikely that it appears also in the emphatic statement of the prologue, "The Word became flesh" (σὰρξ ἐγένετο, 1:14). The fourth evangelist was writing in a time when the denial of Christ's real humanity was a growing heresy, and he desired to throw the weight of his authority against it.

And yet, in spite of that conscious purpose, the picture which is given of Jesus in this gospel is not so much human as superhuman. It is set in a cosmic frame, it is given an eternal significance, and its lineaments are the lineaments of divinity.

(1) In the first place, from the beginning we are constantly being reminded of the cosmic significance of Jesus' life. It has frequently been noticed that

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1. Scott, "The Fourth Gospel", p.91.

while Matthew carries the genealogy of Jesus back to Abraham, thus fixing his place among the Jews, and Luke carries it to Adam and God, thus placing him in the center of all mankind, John says nothing of his human genealogy at all, placing him at once in the center of the cosmic scheme. The ordinary explanation of this is that it is an attempt to relate the picture to Greek thought and to make it appeal to Greek minds.<sup>1</sup> But while the Logos doctrine may be thus explained, we think the cosmic atmosphere of the prologue cannot be adequately thus explained. Rather, it is the expression of the author's mystic temper, which naturally desires to see its facts against the background of eternity. "Ye are from beneath, I am from above; ye are of this world, I am not of this world" (8:23). So the mystic always sees his objects.

And when we pass beyond the prologue, we do not pass beyond this tendency:

3:13. "No one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven."

8:58. "Before Abraham was born, I am."

13:3. "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came from God and goeth unto God."

16:28. "I came out from the Father and am come into the world; again I leave the world and go unto the Father."

17:5. "And now, Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

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1. Compare Scott, "The Fourth Gospel", Chapter V.



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We are to think of the life of Jesus as a passage from glory to glory, from God to God. About him there always hangs the aura of eternity.

It is worth noting that while in the synoptic gospels the word "glory" when used in connection with Jesus refers almost without exception to his future exaltation ( Compare Matthew 16:27; 17:28; 24:30; 25:31; Mark 8:38; 10:37; 13:26; Luke 9:26; 21:27; 24:27), the one exception being Luke's story of the transfiguration (9:31-32), in the Fourth Gospel, Jesus carries his glory with him (1:14; 2:11; 11:4; 17:22). The heavenly exaltation which he possessed pre-existently, he never, to the Fourth Evangelist, really lost.

(2) Secondly, not only is the picture of Jesus set against a cosmic background; in itself it is the picture of a Divine Being.

(a) Jesus moves through this gospel as if superior to the ordinary laws and vicissitudes of life. He is the master of every situation, the superior of every company, even while joining in human joys and sorrows, giving the impression of belonging to another realm. He walks upon the scene in 1:29, a majestic solitary figure to whom the Baptist can only point and whom the disciples follow timidly at best. His mother approaches him at Cana, when the wine fails, as if there were no doubt of his power to meet the necessity (2:3-5). He drives the traders out of the temple at the very beginning of his ministry, as if from the start his authority could not be successfully questioned (2:13-22).

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His miracles are of the most marvellous order, the nobleman's son is healed, though he is in another city from Jesus (4:46-54), the impotent man has been sick for thirty-eight years (5:5), the blind man blind from birth (9:1), Lazarus in the grave four days (11:17,39). When the five thousand are to be fed, though he asks advice, he has no need of it (6:6), he accepts the anointing at Bethany as his right, even against the claims of the poor (12:8), his washing of the disciples' feet is as from a great height (13:3-4) and one of the last words of his ministry is "I have overcome the world" (16:33). Throughout the passion story the demeanor of the Johanne Christ is kingly. He is self-possessed in the court (18:20-21,23,34), so impressing the superstitious Pilate that he almost feared to have anything more to do with him (19:4,8,12). He claims to the last that he is a king (18:36-38), he goes to his doom like a king (19:17), he is self-possessed even on the cross itself (19:26-27), he even seems to contemplate his own death as from the standpoint of God (19:28), he gives up the ghost like a king (19:30) and his body is not mutilated like the common criminals in death (19:33). Truly is it said of him that "he that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is of the earth and of the earth he speaketh:

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he that cometh from heaven is above all" (3:31).

(b) Particularly is it noticeable that from first to last in this gospel, Jesus is possessed of superhuman knowledge. He knows Nathanael before he has had anything to do with him (1:47), he knows too much about men to trust himself to the disciples who early flock around him (2:23-25), he knows the inner life of the Samaritan woman (4:16), he knows his enemies (5:42), he knows what he will do by the sea of Tiberias (6:6), he knows when the multitude is about to make him king (6:15) he knows the inner character and intentions of Judas (6:70-71; 13:18,21 ff;), he knows what has happened to Lazarus (11:14) and he knows that he will be raised (11:42). It is no less than a divine Being of whom such things as these can be said.

(c) And finally, the picture of Jesus as a divine Being is the result quite as much of what is omitted as of what is said. This is not the place for an exhaustive study of the Johannine omissions of synoptic material, but a few of the more important must be noted.<sup>1</sup> There is no account in John's Gospel of the birth of Jesus, of his baptism, temptation, transfiguration, agony or ascension. It has been said that the reason

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1. Compare Scott, "The Fourth Gospel", pp.42-43.

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for these omissions is that the evangelist "had no mind to repeat what for all practical purposes had been fully related in the gospels that lay before him",<sup>1</sup> but some further reason seems to be needed for omissions of such importance. And they may be quite well explained on the hypothesis that they too are the result of the Evangelist's tendency to look at the life of Jesus sub specie aeternitatis.

To one to whom the cosmic life of Jesus and his earthly life were all of a piece, the detail of how he got his body and how he got rid of it were unimportant. Sufficient that he was the eternally existent Logos, that he appeared for a little while in human flesh and then went away again to his Father, where he is really nearer to his disciples than ever before. One supposes that Jesus was born, and the ascension is referred to in passing (20:17), but the details of birth and bodily ascension slip out of the picture, as unnecessary.

In the same way the baptism of Jesus, his temptation and agony in the garden are alien to the thought of the Evangelist. It is not necessary to suppose that he would have denied their occurrence. Indeed, the baptism is hinted at (1:32-33) and the agony is present in

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1. Nolloth, "The Fourth Evangelist", p.121. Compare Worsley, "Fourth Gospel and the Synoptists", pp.29, 33, 34-37.

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sublimated form (12:27). But John found nothing in his experience of Jesus to correspond with them and hence it was easy to pass them by.

And to one for whom the whole life of Jesus was accompanied by "glory",<sup>1</sup> a momentary glory like the transfiguration meant very little. The disciples of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel beheld his glory, not only at moments of special favor, but constantly as they communed with him.

These omissions are all calculated to strengthen the impression of a Being whose temporal life was but a part of his eternal.

(3) In the third place, not only do we have a picture of a Divine Being, set against a cosmic background; the cross and death, as well as the life are seen in a larger setting.<sup>2</sup>

There are at least three chief ways in which the cross and death of Jesus may be viewed. The cross may be thought of as a tragedy and Jesus as a martyr, or as a sacrifice and Jesus as a victim or as the crowning event of the divine self-revelation and Jesus as passing through it to a position of commanding power.

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1. Supra p.396.

2. On this subject compare Strachan, "Fourth Evangelist: Dramatist or Historian", Chapter IX and Scott, "The Fourth Gospel", pp.223-233.

The last is, for the most part, the Fourth Evangelist's point of view.

(a) Throughout the Gospel, Jesus is represented as choosing the cross, going to it of his own free will.

"I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep. . . I lay down my life for the sheep. . . Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again; this commandment received I from my Father." (10:11,15, 17-18).

Thus he does not fear to go to Judea, though the Jews are hostile, knowing that they cannot touch him until he is ready (11:8-10). Thus he bids Judas go out for the betrayal (13:27). Thus when he has finished his farewell talk with the disciples, he deliberately goes out to his doom (14:31). Thus he holds the band of soldiers at bay till he is ready to give himself up (18:48). Thus he tells Pilate, "Thou wouldest have no power except it were given thee from above (19:11). His death is a deliberate self-giving for larger ends, not a tragedy.

(b) The cross itself is not a shameful thing, but a throne, his place of exaltation, by which the world is drawn to him and evil routed.

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (3:14).

He died "that he might also gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad" (11:52)

"Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted

up from the earth will draw all men unto myself." (12:31-32).

(c) By the cross, he is not humiliated, but admitted to a larger saving life.

"Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone, but if it die it beareth much fruit." (12:24)

"I go to prepare a place for you" (14:2)

"Greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father." (14:12).

"If ye loved me ye would have rejoiced because I go unto the Father, for the Father is greater than I" (14:28).

"It is expedient for you that I go away" (16:7).

"I came out from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world and go unto the Father" (16:28).

"Father, the hour is come. . . glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (17:1,5).

Through the doorway of the cross, in this gospel, one sees straight into glory.

And so it is that this evangelist, confronted with the historic tradition of the life of Christ, reacts to it in mystic fashion. The life and death are viewed sub specie aeternitatis, as making one piece with the life that is eternal.

We perhaps ought to look again at those passages which are usually cited against this theory of the Evangelist's treatment of Jesus' life.

4:6. "Jesus, therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus by the well." Here, it is said, we have a picture of purely human weariness, inconsistent with that picture of a Divine Being which, we have been insisting, John has for the most part drawn. That is quite true, and it seems altogether likely that the reference is consciously made with an anti-docetic

1. Compare Mrs. Herman, "Meaning and Value of Mysticism", pp.330-333 and von Hügel's article, "John" in Enc.Brit.

motive. But it is not the evangelist's natural mode. Only a few verses later, he strikes his natural key note, when he has Jesus say to the disciples who wonder at his not being hungry, "I have meat to eat that ye know not" (4:32).

11:33. "Jesus groaned in the spirit and was troubled" and 11:35 - "Jesus wept". This again looks like a human Jesus, who could weep in sympathy with his friends at the grave-side. But Bacon has pointed out that the groaning and trouble of verse 33 are occasioned rather by pity for their unbelief than by sympathy,<sup>1</sup> and the weeping of verse 35, if caused by sympathy is surely out of place when Jesus knew that Lazarus was at once to arise.

12:27. "Now is my soul troubled". This appears to be human weakness but it is a very mild parallel indeed to the scene in Gethsemane, which it displaces.

13:21. "When Jesus had said this, he was troubled in spirit." This is a statement like 11:33 and is surely to be read in the light of 13:1-3.

19:28. "I thirst". Again this may be anti-docetic but according to the statement of the gospel itself, it is rather a fulfilment of prophecy, than a sign of human weakness.

The picture of Jesus in this gospel, we repeat, while it is of course, a picture of a Man who lived among men, is a picture of One who was more than man. It is the eternal significance of Jesus in which the evangelist is interested, and we are never allowed to forget it.

## 2. The Johannine treatment of eschatology.

Not only in his backward look, but in his forward look over history, the Fourth Evangelist shows his tendency to transmute successiveness into simultaneity, to look at time from the standpoint of eternity.

So far as the Synoptics are concerned, whether one agrees with the school of Schweitzer and Johannes Weiss or not in making them entirely eschatological, there can be no doubt that they contain a very distinct "doctrine of

1. "Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate", pp.347-348.



the last things".<sup>1</sup> The future is seen as a series of events leading up to a cataclysm, when the Kingdom of God shall be established on the earth.

And to some extent this point of view is reflected in the fourth gospel.

This is the will of him that sent me, that of all that which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. . . . No man can come unto me, except the Father that sent me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day. . . . He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (6:39,40,44,54).

"He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my sayings hath one that judgeth him; the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day." (12:48)

"Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment" (5:28-29).

But for the most part, the attitude of the Fourth Evangelist to the future is not that of the synoptists. John has a doctrine of the future but it is the same as his doctrine of the present. There is a life which is timeless - a life where there are no firsts nor lasts, - and it is that life to which he directs our attention. The common synoptic ideas of the Kingdom of God, the second coming, the last judgment and the future resurrection are by John transmuted into other conceptions in

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1. Compare the chapter on Eschatology in Moffatt, "Theology of the Gospels".

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which time plays no part.

(1) The idea of the Kingdom is replaced in this gospel by "eternal life". Already the phrases had been used synonymously in the synoptic gospels (Mark 10:17,23; Matthew 19:16,23; Luke 18:18,24). But now the second is clearly substituted for the first. Once toward the beginning of the gospel the phrase "Kingdom of God" appears (3:3,5) but when it has been replaced by "eternal life" in 3:14, it is never used again.<sup>1</sup> It is as though the Evangelist had said, "It is too easy to think of the coming of the Kingdom as an external event in the future. Actually the kingdom has come for you when you experience the eternal life within the soul".

(2) The idea of the temporal second coming is replaced by that of the mystically present Christ. This has been demonstrated by Scott who points out that "the Supper discourses form the Johannine counterpart to those apocalyptic chapters which in the other Gospels precede the story of the Passion. There also Jesus, before He closes his life work, throws His mind into the future, and shadows out the history of His church and His own coming again in glory."<sup>2</sup> But while the

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1. Compare Stevens, "New Testament Theology", p.224.

2. "The Fourth Gospel", p.300.

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synoptists reflect the hope of his coming again in outward semblance, John prophesies his coming again to dwell in the soul. To him Christ had already come again, more wonderful than before. Indeed, he had scarcely gone away. The resurrection, the ascension, the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Parousia, events which to the historian were thought of as successive in time and separated by periods of varying length, to him appeared as one. Christ had died, and yet John felt him with him in living presence. There could be only one explanation -- he had returned. There is no need to develop this theory. We have had occasion to refer to it again and again in this thesis, and Scott has shown conclusively that to John's mind, the mystical presence was the return.<sup>1</sup> But the fact that it is so, proves if there were no other proof, the theory for which we are contending, that John in his attitude to the doctrine of the last things was pure mystic.

(3) The conception of the "last judgment", while, as we have seen, superficially retained,<sup>2</sup> is really transformed into a timeless judgment within.

"He that believeth on him is not judged; he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten

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1. "The Fourth Gospel", Chapter X.

2. Supra, p.404.

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Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil." (3:18-19).

Judgment is not primarily an act, nor a process. It is a condition, the condition of damnation in which those stand who being in the presence of the light have turned their backs and gone down again to their darkness. If "he that believeth not is condemned already", the need for a future judgment is gone. The righteous and the wicked are irrevocably separated by the fact of their choice. (Compare 3:36; 9:39; 12:31; 16:11).<sup>1</sup>

(4) In the same manner the idea of future resurrection is but superficially retained.<sup>2</sup> The characteristic thought of John is that of a timeless life, obtainable now, not that of an everlasting life to begin some time in the future.

"Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." (11:23-26).

It is clear that Jesus and Martha are moving here on entirely different planes. To her no life is

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1. Ante, p.166.

2. See supra, p.404.

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real but a life that can be translated into objective terms. To him the true life is the life within which physical vicissitude does not harm. John has translated into terms of this inner existence the hope of a resurrection at the last day. (Compare 3:36; 5:21,24; 6:33,47; 8:51; 10:10,28; 14:6).

So in his treatment of eschatology, as in his treatment of the life of Jesus, the fourth evangelist is seen to look at history as the reflection of the eternal. That which is of vaster importance than the succession of events in time is the eternal Now behind the world, where all that happens has its real and timeless home.

### 3. The Johannine attitude to nature.

It is not only in his treatment of history, past and future, that the Fourth Evangelist shows himself a mystic. He is mystical also in the attitude which he takes toward nature, in his use of objects in the natural world only to point beyond themselves.

One of the most attractive things about the synoptic Jesus is his love of nature, for its own sake.<sup>1</sup> He is constantly using it for illustrative purposes, to

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1. Compare Glover, "Jesus of History", pp.31 ff.

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be sure, but his parables in which it is so used are instinct with life also in their own right. The story of the sower who went forth to sow, the picture of the mustard plant with the birds sheltering beneath its branches, the scenes by the sea side, the picture of the fallen sparrow, the lilies of the field and the ravens, the fig tree, the vineyard, the lost lamb, the great sycamine tree, all these speak of a Christ, who moved in the outdoor world, loving it, and who wove it into his teaching because it belonged to the woof of his life.

But when we come to the Fourth Gospel, the Christ of the open country is gone. This is a city Christ, a Christ of Jerusalem, of Cana, of Capernaum. And even in the outdoor scenes, the love of nature is not there. The story of Jesus by the Samaritan well-curb, even the stories of the feeding of the five thousand and the walking on the water, were not written by a man to whom nature itself made a primary appeal. The only place in the gospel where there is anything like the synoptic love of nature is in the appendix, and there the scene is covered with a luminous haze, half-revealed and half-concealed.

Yet the Fourth Gospel is full of allusions to nature. There is the wind that bloweth where it will, the water that springs up alive, the light and the dark-

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ness, the corn of wheat that is buried in the ground and then springs up to new life, the vine with its branches and their fruit, even the shepherd leading out his flock and giving his life for the sheep.

But the contrast between the shepherd allegory and the parable of the lost lamb is typical of all. Both are drawn from the outdoor world which Jesus knew so well, but the one is written out of a love for the thing itself, the other out of a care only for the thing symbolized. In the parable, even while the narrator tells it to illustrate spiritual truth, he is almost as much interested for the time in the little lost lamb of the story as in the sinner it represents. But in the allegory the interest is all in the inner meaning. The shepherd and the sheep are looked at, only to be seen beyond.

Of the Johannine use of nature throughout, the same may be said. One is never tempted to forget the meaning in the interest of the picture. Nature is used, indeed, but viewed only against the background of eternity.

4. But now, if the Fourth Evangelist's distinctive attitudes toward the life of Jesus, toward eschatology, and toward nature are, as we believe them to be,

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the result of his mystical temper of mind, we should find in this gospel also traces of the same curious twofold attitude toward the sacraments and the Church which so commonly characterizes the mystics. This will be our last subject of study.

(1) The sacraments.

a. Baptism.<sup>1</sup> It is a commonplace of present-day criticism that the Fourth Evangelist's attitude to baptism is complicated by a controversy with a Baptist sect, followers of John the Baptist rather than of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> But leaving this controversy to one side, what is the attitude of the author to baptism as revealed by the gospel?

In the first place, there seems to be a tendency toward a depreciation of baptism, a constant emphasis on the value of the spiritual as over against the material rite. Thus we are told that Jesus' baptism "in the Holy Spirit" is a much greater thing than John's baptism with water (1:33). Thus the baptism of Jesus himself by John is suppressed, and we are specifically told that during his ministry "Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples" (4:2). Thus in the third chapter, the emphasis is all on being born "of the Spirit".

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1. Scott, "The Fourth Gospel", pp.129-132.

2. Ibid, pp.77-86.



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But on the other hand, it is certain that baptism does seem to be considered by this author a necessary rite. "Except one be born of water and the Spirit", says Jesus, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God". The external rite is intimately and necessarily connected somehow with entrance into the kingdom.

And two symbolic details elsewhere in the Gospel bear this out. "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam", says Jesus to the blind man (9:7). "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me", says Jesus to Simon Peter. . . . "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit", (13:8,10).

In a gospel like this such details cannot be overlooked. The blind man's seeing is the result of his contact with Jesus, but it is not completely accomplished until he is also washed. The disciples were cleansed by their intercourse with Christ (this would seem to be the meaning of verse 8), yet baptism also seems to be pre-supposed.<sup>1</sup>

This seeming contradiction is not so hard to understand after one has read the mystics. It is the characteristic inward and outward turning of the mystic mind. The inward cleansing is, of course, that which is

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1. Compare Scott, op.cit. p.130 and also Westcott, "Commentary", Volume II, p.150.

important, but the outward rite, like all things in the outer world, is a direct gateway to that which is within.

b. The Lord's Supper.<sup>1</sup> One could not wish for a better example of the twofold mystic attitude than is found in John's treatment of the Eucharist. Every person who has ever studied the Gospel has wondered about the omission in it of any reference to the institution of the Lord's Supper. Very much is made of the last meal together in the upper room, and yet there is no mention of what to the synoptists is its chief event. This is perhaps the most amazing omission in the gospel, and the one to which the easy explanation, that it was omitted because it was already well-known, is least adequate. It is almost like writing Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark to write about the last supper and omit the bread and wine.

But the omission is well explained on the hypothesis that the Evangelist wished "to subordinate the outward rite to what was spiritual and essential".<sup>2</sup> With the passing of the first generation of Christians, organization, tradition, rite, were assuming undue proportions in the church. The mystic John, with his interest in immediate communion with the living Christ did not care

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1. Scott, "The Fourth Gospel", pp.122-129.

2. Ibid, p. 123.

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to encourage the superstitious reverence which was growing up for the rite of the Bread and the Cup by retelling the story of its establishment. Instead he substituted the scene of the washing of the feet, with its lesson of love and humility and followed it with the matchless discourse in which the message of present, personal union with the living Christ is preached.

And yet, the sacramental symbolism of the bread and wine is too dear to the mystic's heart to be altogether omitted. He does not wish to encourage a ritualistic use of it, but a truly sacramental one he would not care to see lost. And so in chapter 6 (verses 53-58), the broken body and shed blood appear, the very vehicles of eternal life. Scott suggests that this is a case of the retention and spiritualization of a common belief which perhaps the evangelist would have preferred to discard entirely,<sup>1</sup> but it seems more likely that the eucharistic significance of chapter 6 belongs to John's natural mode of thought. It is the typical mystic reaction which we have been noticing, the inward emphasis causing the soul to cling closer to the outward symbol, through which the inward is reached.

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1. Scott, op.cit. pp.124-5.

(2) The Church.<sup>1</sup>

Toward the Church, also, the attitude of John is that of the mystic. We have already noted how this is pre-eminently the gospel of personal religious experience.<sup>2</sup> And Mr. Purchas, author of "Johannine Problems and Modern Needs" argues with considerable force that there is in this gospel "a very remarkable glorification. . . . of the condition of excommunication from the visible church of God."<sup>3</sup> In 9:34-41, the blind man finds salvation after he has been "cast out", in 10:1-16 the sheep in the fold under the care of the porter who kept the door are less safe than those outside under the care of the Good Shepherd, in 16:1-4 Jesus tells the disciples not to be afraid when they are "cast out" of the synagogues. This evangelist is certainly not an ecclesiast in any external sense.

And yet, in spite of this, Scott points out that he does seem to have had "ecclesiastical aims".<sup>4</sup> He draws sharply the line between the disciples' circle and the world.<sup>5</sup> He lays a special emphasis on the unity of

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1. Scott, op.cit. pp.132-144. Compare also Purchas, "Johannine Problems and Modern Needs", Chapter VI.

2. Ante, pp.42-46.

3. Purchas, op.cit. p.75.

4. Scott, "The Fourth Gospel", Chapter IV.

5. Ante, pp. 112 ff.

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believers (17:21,22,23; 10:16; 11:52). He really constructs the whole allegory of chapter 10, with his eye on the Church, where there were good pastors and bad pastors, hirelings and true under-shepherds, those who had entered by the door and those who had climbed up some other way. He gives the apostles a semi-official position, baptizing in Jesus' stead (4:2), acting as intermediaries between the Greeks and Jesus (12:21-22), again and again designated as Christ's representatives (15:27; 17:18,25; 20:21) and finally commissioned to forgive and retain sins in his name (20:21-23). Most important of all he seems to look upon the Church as the visible body of Christ in the world, carrying on his work, proving to the world the truth of his claims (17:11, 18,23).

This is a characteristically mystic position. His primary interests within, he loves the Church because it represents those interests and stands for a reality greater than itself. On every count, the evangelist has shown himself to be one who looks on things without, with an eye which sees beyond and within.

Conclusion. It is perhaps unnecessary to say more. Nowhere more clearly than in his attitude to

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external things does John show himself to be of the mystic temper. He views the external under the similitude of eternity and in so doing is perhaps closer than usual to the mystics of all time.

## CHAPTER XII.

### UNITIVE LIFE AND ETERNAL LIFE.

"When I shall with my whole self cleave to thee, I shall nowhere have sorrow or labor, and my life shall be a real life, being wholly full of thee."

- St. Augustine.

#### A. The Mystics.<sup>1</sup>

Mysticism is not only a quest and an experience; mysticism is a life. Out of the discipline which we have been studying, out of the experience of union, there issues a life which is called by those who have it "unitive". Before we can call our task completed, we must study the quality of that life.

1. The first thing that we notice about it is that it is something to "have" rather than something to "do". The ordinary Christian thinks of life in terms of action; men are distinguished from men by the things they do. The mystic thinks of life in terms of possession; men are characterized by the presence or absence of a principle within. By this it is not meant that action means nothing to the mystic. But he believes, and truly, that action waits upon the inner life. If the inner life is right, the outer must be so; if the inner life is wrong, the outer cannot be right. It is this doubtless that St. Augustine means when he says,

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1. Compare Underhill, "Mysticism", Part II, Chapter X.

"Love, and do what you like."<sup>1</sup>

This characteristic of the unitive life we may illustrate from the "Spiritual Torrents" of Madame Guyon.

"All that has taken place up to this point", she says, "has been in the individual capacity of the creature; but here the creature is taken out of his own capacity to receive an infinite capacity in God Himself. And as the torrent, when it enters the sea, loses its own being. . . and takes that of the sea. . . so this soul loses the human in order that it may lose itself in the divine, which becomes its being and its subsistence, not essentially but mystically. Then this torrent possesses all the treasures of the sea, and is as glorious as it was formerly poor and miserable."<sup>2</sup>

"O you who are coming out of the sepulchre! you feel within yourselves, a germ of life springing up little by little; you are quite astonished to find a secret strength taking possession of you; your ashes are reanimated; you feel yourselves to be in a new country. The poor soul. . . feels this secret vigor permeating its entire being, and finds that it gradually receives a new life, to lose it no more forever."<sup>3</sup>

"The soul, on leaving the tomb finds itself, without knowing how, clothed with the inclinations of Christ; not by distinct and natural views of Him" (not, that is, by imitation), "but by its natural condition, finding these inclinations just when they are needed, without thinking of them; as a person who possesses a hidden treasure might find it unexpectedly in the time of his need. The soul is surprised when, without having reflected on the mind and disposition of Christ, it finds them naturally implanted within it. . . The soul finds that all these are acting within it, but so easily, that they seem to have become natural to it. Its treasury is in God alone, where it can draw upon it ceaselessly in every time of need, without diminishing it. It is then that it really 'puts on' Jesus Christ; and it is henceforth He who acts, speaks, moves in the soul, the Lord Jesus Christ being its moving principle."<sup>4</sup>

1. Underhill, "Mysticism", p.261.
2. Guyon, "Spiritual Torrents", Part I, Chapter IX.
3. Ibid, Part I, Chapter IX.
4. Ibid.



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"Those who are consummated in the divine union act in God by a principle of infinite strength; and thus their smallest actions are more agreeable to God than the multitude of heroic deeds achieved by others which appear so great in the sight of men."<sup>1</sup>

These illustrations should make abundantly clear the point here made, that the unitive life before it is a way of acting, is a principle within. "Ye should learn", says the Theologia Germanica, "that eternal blessedness lieth in one thing alone. . . And if ever man or the soul is to be made blessed, that one thing alone must be in the soul. Now some might ask, 'But what is that one thing?' I, answer, it is Goodness, . . . and yet neither this good nor that which we can name" (no special virtues)". . . but it is all and above all good things. . . .

"For blessedness lieth not in much and many, but in One and oneness. In one word, blessedness lieth not in any creature, or work of the creatures, but it lieth alone in God and in his works. Therefore I must wait only on God and his work, and leave on one side all creatures with their works, and first of all myself. In like manner all the great works and wonders that God has ever wrought or shall ever work in or through the creatures. . . . so far as these things exist or are done

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1. Guyon, "Spiritual Torrents", Part II, Chapter III.

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outside of me, can never make me blessed, but only in so far as they exist and are done and loved, known, tasted and felt within me."<sup>1</sup>

2. But how are we to define this new life which the mystic possesses within? What is the unitive life?

Miss Underhill in describing it makes much of the word, "transcendence":

"Mysticism, then, offers us the history, as old as civilization, of a race of adventurers who have carried to its term the process of a deliberate and active return to the divine fount of things, have surrendered themselves, indeed, to the life-movement of the universe: hence have lived with an intenser life than other men can ever know. They have transcended the 'sense-world' and lived on high levels the spiritual life. Therefore they are types of all that our latent spiritual consciousness, which shows itself in the 'hunger for the Absolute', can be made to mean to us if we develop it; and have in this respect a unique importance for the race."<sup>2</sup>

We scarcely could do better and might do worse than to follow her in this. For the thing that one feels on reading the lives of the great mystics like St. Theresa or St. Catherine of Siena, St. Francis or George Fox is that here we have men and women who have somehow been filled with a new vitality that enables them to live on higher levels than the rest of us. They look upon life with new eyes, they approach life with new attitudes and values, and they touch life with new power.

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1. "Theologia Germanica", Chapter IX.

2. "Mysticism", p.41 f.

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The unitive life is a transcendental life. It is life lifted by the experience of union with God to a new level and filled with a new vitality - life exalted, enlightened, and empowered.

We add some descriptions in the mystics' own words, of the unitive state:

Ruysbroek - "When we unite ourselves to God by love, then we spiritualize ourselves; but when He Himself draws us in a flight of the spirit, and transforms us in His spirit, then, so to speak, we are fruition. And the spirit of God Himself pushes us out from Himself by His breath, in order that we may love and may do good works; and again He draws us to Himself, in order that we may repose in peace and in fruition. And this is Eternal Life; even as our bodily life subsists in the indrawing and outgoing of our breath."<sup>1</sup>

Ruysbroek - "The most inward man lives his life in these two ways: namely in work and in rest. And in each he is whole and undivided; for he is wholly in God because he rests in fruition, and he is wholly in himself because he loves in activity: and he is perpetually called and urged by God to renew both the rest and the work. . . For God gives in one gift, Himself and His gifts; and the spirit gives, at each introversion, itself and all its works. For by means of the simple irradiation of God and the fruitive tendency and melting away of love, the spirit has been united with God, and is incessantly transported into rest. And through the gifts of Understanding and Savouring Wisdom, it is touched in an active way, and perpetually enlightened and enkindled in love. . . . For this just man has established a true life in the spirit, in rest and in work, which shall endure eternally. . . Thus the man is just; and he goes towards God with fervent love in eternal activity; and he goes in God with fruitive inclination in eternal rest. And he dwells in God, and yet goes forth towards all creatures in universal love, in virtue, and in justice. And this is the supreme

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1. Quoted in Underhill, "Mysticism", p.521.

summit of the inward life."<sup>1</sup>

St. Theresa - "His Majesty can bestow no greater favor on us than to give us a life such as was led by His beloved Son. Therefore. . . I feel certain that these graces" (the blessings of the interior life) "are sent to strengthen our weakness, that we may imitate Him by suffering much. . . Oh, my sisters! how forgetful of her ease, how unmindful of honors, and how far from seeking men's esteem should she be whose soul God thus chooses for His special dwelling-place. For if her mind is fixed on Him, as it ought to be, she must needs forget herself; all her thoughts are bent on how to please him better, and when and how she can show the love she bears Him. This is the aim and end of prayer, my daughters; this is the reason for the spiritual marriage, whose children are always good works. . . Do you know what it is to be truly spiritual? It is for men to make themselves the slaves of God - branded with his mark, which is the cross . . . By its becoming one with the Almighty, by this sovereign union of spirit with spirit, the soul must gather strength, as we know the saints did, to suffer and to die."<sup>2</sup>

Madame Guyon - "But this new life is not like the former one; it is a life in God. It is a perfect life. The soul lives no longer and works no longer of itself, but God lives, acts and operates in it (Galatians 2:20); and this goes on increasing, so that it becomes perfect with God's perfection, rich with God's riches and loving with God's love.

"The soul sees now that whatever it owned formerly had been in its own possession; now it no longer possesses but is possessed; it only takes a new life in order to lose it in God, or rather it only lives with the life of God; and as He is the principle of life, the soul can want nothing."<sup>3</sup>

St. Catherine of Siena - (God said) "Sweetest daughter, the time to come of thy earthly pilgrimage" (the time of the unitive life) "will be full of such wondrous new gifts from Me that it will cause stupor and incredulity in the hearts of the ignorant and carnal. . . . For I will pour such abundance of grace into thy soul that it will overflow wondrously even in thy body,

1. "Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage", Part II, Chapter LXV.
2. "Interior Castle", Seventh Mansions, Chapter IV.
3. "Spiritual Torrents", Part I, Chapter IX.

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which will thereby acquire an all unwonted mode of life. Thy heart will be so mightily inflamed towards the salvation of thy neighbors that, forgetting thine own sex, thou wilt utterly change thy former way of conversation, nor wilt thou any more shun the company of men and women; nay, for the salvation of their souls thou wilt expose thyself to every labor according to thy power. At these things many will be scandalized, and by them shalt thou be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. But be not thou disturbed, nor fear at all; for I shall be ever with thee and shall deliver thy soul from deceitful tongues and from the mouth of them that lie. So execute manfully whatever the Holy Spirit instructs thee, because through thee I will deliver many souls from the jaws of Hell."<sup>1</sup>

The unitive life is a life of a wholly new quality, and by its value, at the last, the value of the entire process must be judged.

3. But we have still not answered the question with which this chapter opened. We have said that the unitive life is an inward possession before it is a way of acting, and that it is a life lifted by the experience of union with God to a new level and filled with a new vitality, life exalted, enlightened and empowered. But, granting all that, what is the quality of the mystic life? Does it not have a peculiar flavor that distinguishes it from the life that is the result of other types of piety?

For answer let us turn to St. Catherine of Genoa.

"When", she says in one of her dialogues, "the lovingkindness of God calls a soul from the world, He finds it full of vices and sins; and first He gives it

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1. "Life" by E.G. Gardner, p.91.

an instinct for virtue, and then urges it to perfection, and then by infused grace leads it to true self-naughting, and at last to true transformation. And this noteworthy order serves God to lead the soul along the Way; But when the soul is naughted and transformed, then of herself she neither works, nor speaks, nor wills, nor feels, nor hears, nor understands, neither has she of herself the feeling of outward or inward, where she may move. And in all things it is God Who rules and guides her without the mediation of any creature.

"And the state of this soul is then a feeling of such utter peace and tranquillity that it seems to her that her heart and her bodily being and all both within and without is immersed in an ocean of utmost peace; from whence she shall never come forth for anything that can befall her in this life. And she stays immovable, imperturbable, impassible. So much so, that it seems to her in her human and her spiritual nature, both within and without, she can feel no other thing than sweetest peace. And she is so full of peace that though she press her flesh, her nerves, her bones, no other thing comes forth from them than peace.

"Then says she all day for joy such rhymes as these, making them according to her manner: -

'Dost thou wish that I should show  
All God's Being thou mayst know?

Peace is not found of those who do not with Him go.'<sup>1</sup>

In all mystic literature, I know of no passage more self-revealing than this, and in it are found at least three ingredients that give to the mystic life its peculiar flavor.

(1) In the first place, the unitive life is a life that has been entirely surrendered to God and is wholly led by Him. "When the soul is naughted and transformed", says St. Catherine, "then of herself she neither works, nor speaks, nor wills nor feels, nor hears, nor

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1. "Vita e Dottrina" cap. xviii. Quoted in Underhill's "Mysticism", pp. 528-529.

understands. . . In all things it is God Who rules and guides her without the mediation of any creature."

Open the pages of mystic literature anywhere and you are almost certain to find references to self-surrender and the Divine leadership.

St.Catherine of Siena - "Whilst my soul beheld all these things, the eternal Bridegroom, whom I thought fully to possess, said to her, 'Seest thou of what great glory they are deprived, and with what grievous torments they are punished, who offend me? Return, then, and make known to them their error, their danger, and their loss.' And for that my soul shrank with horror from this return, the Lord added: 'The salvation of many souls demands thy return, nor shalt thou any more keep that way of life which thou hast hitherto kept, nor shalt thou henceforth have thy cell for habitation; nay, thou shalt have to go forth from thine own city for the welfare of souls. I shall be always with thee, and shall guide thee and bring thee back. . . I shall give thee speech and wisdom which none will be able to withstand. I shall lead thee before pontiffs and rulers of the Churches. . . in order that, as is my wont, by means of the weak I may confound. . the strong."<sup>1</sup>

St.Theresa - "Henceforth it is. . another and a new life. Hitherto my life was my own; my life since I began to explain these methods of prayer is the life which God lived in me". . . . "I felt that I was wholly changed. I could do nothing but put myself in the hands of God: He knew what was expedient for me; let Him do with me according to His will in all things."<sup>2</sup>

Brother Lawrence - "Ever since that time I walk before God simply, in faith, with humility and with love; and I apply myself diligently to do nothing and think nothing which may displease Him. I hope that when I have done what I can, he will do with me what He pleases. As for what passes in me at present, I cannot express it. I have no pain or difficulty about my state, because I have no will but that of God, which I endeavor to accomplish in all things, and to which I am so resigned that

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1. "Life" by E.G.Gardner, p.83.

2. "Vida", Chapter XXIII and XXVII. Compare the story of the founding of the monastery of St.Joseph in Chapter XXXII ff.

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I would not take up a straw from the ground against His order, or from any other motive but purely that of love to Him."<sup>1</sup>

Whatever we may think about the possibility of thus entirely shifting the responsibility for our decisions from ourselves to God, and of the chances for self-deception in such a philosophy, it is certain that this characteristic of the mystics is one of the most winning things about them. The mystic is so sure that he is not adrift and that the power that guides him is not blind! If less naive students look with some incredulity upon his simple faith, it is not certain, at least that their doubt is any more rational than his trust.

(2) Secondly, the unitive life is characterized by a most profound peace. I should have put this first, had not St. Catherine put it second. For more than any word in our language the word "peace" seems to carry with it the flavor of the mystic life. "Wouldest thou that I should show thee what thing God is?" says St. Catherine in another place. "Peace; that peace which no man finds who departs from Him."<sup>2</sup>

There are several reasons for this peace. One is

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1. "Practice of the Presence of God" - Second letter. Compare also such Quaker classics as the Journals of George Fox and John Woolman.

2. Quoted in Underhill, "Mystics of the Church", p.166.



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the mystic withdrawal from the world, which makes it possible for him in a measure to close his eyes to life's hard realities. But with the life of a St. Francis or a St. Theresa before one, with the agonized prayers of St. Catherine of Siena for a sinful world<sup>1</sup> in one's ears, with the knowledge that St. Catherine of Genoa, from whom we quote, knew the world's suffering as few know it,<sup>2</sup> with the altruism of even a minor mystic like the Blessed Angela in one's mind,<sup>3</sup> it is impossible to cite that as a major reason for the mystic's peace.

A far more important reason for it is the mystic's "self-naughting", just discussed. In great part, it is the peace of resignation, even of indifference.

"A true lover of God", says the *Theologia Germanica*, "loveth him . . . in having and in not having, in sweetness and bitterness, in good or evil report, and the like, for he seeketh alone the honor of God, and not his own, either in spiritual or natural things. And therefore he standeth alike unshaken in all things, at all seasons."<sup>4</sup>

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1. See "Dialogo"

2. Compare "Mystics of the Church", p.163.

3. Compare "Meaning and Value of Mysticism", p.146:  
"There came upon me", she says, "such a fulness of charity and with so great a joy did I understand that power, will, and justice of God, that not only was I satisfied concerning the questions I had asked, but likewise concerning all creatures. . . for I felt I was called to save them one and all."

4. "Theologia Germanica", Chapter X.

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"True peace and rest lie not in outward things; for if it were so, the Evil Spirit also would have peace when things go according to his will. . . . Christ meant that inward peace which can break through all assaults and crosses of oppression, suffering, misery, humiliation, and what more there may be of the like, so that a man may be joyful and patient therein, like the beloved disciples and followers of Christ."<sup>1</sup>

But even this does not get to the root of the matter. At the last, the mystic peace is the result of the mystic vision, and here we reach the heights of the religious life again. The mystic's soul is not cast down, because it has seen goodness at the heart of things and the whole world environed by God.

"And I smiled to think God's greatness,  
flowed around our incompleteness,  
Round our restlessness, his rest."<sup>2</sup>

We have already quoted in another connection, the passage from St. John of the Cross which best gives expression to that mystic insight ("In this silence and tranquillity, and in this knowledge of the divine light, the soul discerns a marvellous arrangement and disposition of God's wisdom", etc.)<sup>3</sup> Ruysbroek has, however, combined the two chief reasons for the mystic's peace in a famous passage of "The Book of Supreme Truth", which we quote instead:

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1. "Theologia Germanica", Chapter XII.

2. Mrs. Browning, "Rime of the Duchess May".

3. Ante, p.267.

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"And because they have abandoned themselves to God in doing, in leaving undone, and in suffering, they have steadfast peace and inward joy, consolation and savour, of which the world cannot partake, neither any dissembler, nor the man who seeks and means himself more than the glory of God.

"Moreover, those same inward and enlightened men have before them in their inward seeing whenever they will, the Love of God as something drawing or urging them into the Unity; for they see and feel that the Father with the Son through the Holy Ghost, embrace Each Other and all the chosen, and draw themselves back with eternal love into the unity of Their Nature."<sup>1</sup>

Abandonment of the self to God and the conviction, born of the mystic vision, that there are love and harmony at the heart of the universe - these form the true secret of the mystic peace.

(3) Alongside this peace, moreover, there goes a deep and abiding joy. Miss Underhill has made it unnecessary for us to do more than refer to her pages<sup>2</sup> in this connection. For she has showed quite conclusively that it is but a one-sided picture of the mystics which lays all the emphasis on "mystic ill-health" and the struggles of the purgative way. St. Catherine of Genoa came from her devotions "joyous and rosy-faced", St. Catherine of Siena, though constantly suffering "was always jocund and of a happy spirit", Dante, initiated into Paradise, "sees the whole universe laugh with de-

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1. Ruysbroek, "Book of Supreme Truth", Chapter XI.

2. See "Mysticism", pp.523-530.

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light as it glorifies God", Richard Rolle writes of the mystics that "themselves they feel gladdened with the merriest love and in joyful song wonderfully melted", St. Francis "loved above all other birds a certain little bird which is called the lark", and broke forth constantly in "French-like rejoicings", while St. Theresa "did not disdain to make rustic hymns and carols for her daughters' use," . . . "and was herself heard, as she swept the convent corridor to sing a little ditty about. . . her own mystical experiences." Surely the mystics are not always the austere and forbidding figures that we are sometimes led to believe.

We quote two passages which illustrate the mystic's joy in a way calculated to express something of its spontaneous and abounding character. They are from St. Theresa, greatest of the Spaniards, and her great disciple, St. John of the Cross.

St. Theresa - "At that moment" (when she took the habit) "because I was entering on that state, I was filled with a joy so great that it has never failed me to this day; and God converted the aridity of my soul into the greatest tenderness. Everything in religion was a delight unto me; and it is true that now and then I used to sweep the house during those hours of the day which I had formerly spent on my amusements and my dress; and calling to mind that I was delivered from such follies, I was filled with a new joy that surprised me, nor could I understand whence it came."<sup>1</sup>

St. John of the Cross - "God sometimes bestows an exceeding great grace upon advanced souls, when the Holy Spirit inebriates them with the sweet, luscious, and strong wine of love. This love communicates to the soul such a strong, abundant inebriation when God visits it, that it pours forth with great effect and force acts

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1. "Vida", Chapter IV.

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of rapturous praise, love and worship, with a marvellous longing to labor and suffer for him."<sup>1</sup>

(4) This is the unitive life, a life surrendered and guided, peaceful, joyous. There is, however, one other characteristic which remains to be mentioned. I call it "fruitive activity", borrowing the adjective from Ruysbroek.

It is customary to think of the mystic as a contemplative only, and to set up an antagonism between the contemplative and the active lives. But the quotations which have already been made in this chapter are certainly sufficient to stamp this as a false judgment. "The spirit of God Himself pushes us out from Himself", says Ruysbroek, "in order that we may love and may do good works".<sup>2</sup> "This is the aim and end of prayer", says St. Theresa, "this is the reason for the spiritual marriage, whose children are always good works".<sup>3</sup> "The salvation of many souls demands thy return", says the Divine Voice to St. Catherine of Siena, "nor shalt thou any more keep that way of life which thou hast hitherto kept, nor shalt thou henceforth have thy cell for habitation; nay, thou shalt have to go forth from

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1. Canticle xxv. 8. Quoted in Butler, "Western Mysticism", p.321.

2. Supra, p.422.

3. Supra, p.423.

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thine own city for the welfare of souls".<sup>1</sup> The difference between the mystics and the rest of us is not that they are given up to contemplative and we to active lives, for they also are active in their time.

And yet there is a difference between their activity and ours, and it seems to lie in the fact that their activity is "fruitive", the fruition, that is, of a union which first has taken place within. "In the fourth degree of love the soul brings forth its children".<sup>2</sup> Never, I think, has the difference between the two kinds of activity been better expressed than by St. Bernard:

"If, then, you are wise, you will show yourself rather as a reservoir than as a canal. For a canal spreads abroad water as it receives it, but a reservoir waits until it is filled before overflowing, and thus communicates, without loss to itself, its superabundant water. . . In the Church at the present day we have many canals, few reservoirs."<sup>3</sup>

There could be nothing clearer than this. In those hours and days of contemplation when we become impatient for the mystics to "do something", they are waiting to be filled. In their good time, their lives overflow in fruitfulness and wherever they set their

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1. Supra, p.426.

2. Underhill, "Mysticism", p.516.

3. Canticle xviii. 2, 3. Quoted by Butler, "Western Mysticism", p.249. Compare ante, p.30.

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feet, new life springs up behind them. "The man who is sent down by God from these heights", says Ruysbroek, "into the world is full of truth and rich in all virtues. . . . He possesses a rich and a generous ground, which is set in the richness of God: and therefore he must always spend himself on those who have need of him; for the living fount of the Holy Ghost, which is his wealth, can never be spent. And he is a living and willing instrument of God, with which God works whatsoever He wills and howsoever He wills; and these works he reckons not as his own but gives all the glory to God. And so he remains ready and willing to do in the virtues all that God commands, and strong and courageous in suffering and enduring all that God allows to befall him. And by this he possesses a universal life, for he is ready alike for contemplation and for action, and he is perfect in both of them. And none can have this universal life, save the God-seeing man."<sup>1</sup>

So we take leave of the mystics. Theirs is an arduous way, theirs is perhaps in some respects a mistaken discipline, but few have lived better than they the spiritual life.

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1. "Sparkling Stone", Chapter XIV.

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### B. The Fourth Gospel.

As we have more than once pointed out,<sup>1</sup> the goal to which the Fourth Evangelist directs his readers is, also, a new kind of life. We have finally to ask whether John's conception of eternal life is similar to the mystic conception which we have been studying.<sup>2</sup>

1. We may move rapidly over the first point, since it has already been discussed.<sup>3</sup> In the thought of the Fourth Evangelist, as in the thought of the mystics, life is a principle to be possessed within, rather than a way of acting.

We have pointed out how for the Synoptists, life is a future, blessed condition which will be the reward of right action here and now. It is entered through a narrow gate (Matthew 7:14), it is to be sought even at the expense of offending hand or eye (Matthew 18:8-9; Mark 9:43,45), it is the reward of such things as keeping the commandments (Matthew 19:16,17; Mark 10:17; Luke 18:18) or "the law" (Luke 10:25-28), leaving houses, brethren, etc. for Jesus' sake (Matthew 19:29; Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30), or doing good to "one of the least of these"

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1. Compare ante, pp.53ff., 204, 331 ff.

2. Compare Scott, "The Fourth Gospel", Chapter VIII.

3. Ante, pp.54-57.



(Matthew 25:31-46). It is "a gift bestowed from without," and presumably, "the life of moral activity projected into the future".<sup>1</sup>

But the thought of the Fourth Evangelist moves in a very different atmosphere. His eyes are not on the life without, but on the life within, to him eternal life is a principle to be implanted, a seed or germ which will undoubtedly spring up and bear good fruit, but which is to be identified not so much with the fruit itself as with the inner principle.

At the beginning of the prologue there is presented a divine life-principle, the Word in whom was life, the life which was the light of men. That life was in a sense the common heritage of every man (1:9) but in a particular way it entered into those who "received" it in its revealed form. "As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God. . . which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (1:12,13). Into those hospitable souls, the divine life entered, and they were born from above (3:3).

This is the theme of the entire gospel. "As the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son

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1. Scott, "The Fourth Gospel", pp.238-239.

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also to have life in himself" (5:26) and the Son giveth life to whom he will (5:21). "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (3:16) and this book is written that its readers may believe, and believing may have life in his name (20:31). We have pointed out sufficiently that this gospel is very little concerned about the individual things that people do.<sup>1</sup> But it is deeply and earnestly determined that this inner principle they shall not fail to have.

2. Our more immediate concern in this chapter, however, is to discover in what terms eternal life is spoken of in the gospel, and what is the quality of the life that the Johannine Christian lives. Let us consider the language which is used by this evangelist to describe the possessor of eternal life.

(1) 3:16 - "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life."

10:27-28 - "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish and no one shall snatch them out of my hand."

The possessor of eternal life, in the first place, has that within him which is indestructible, a "medicine of immortality", which raises him above the

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1. Ante, pp.161 ff.

fate of all things temporal and places him within the immediate care of God.

(2) (3:36)- "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

By implication, the possessor of eternal life is the recipient of just the opposite of the wrath of God, the dweller, that is, in the light of his countenance, the familiar friend, permitted to see his face. (Compare 5:24)

(3) (4:14)- "Whoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water, springing up into eternal life."

The possessor of eternal life is like one who has an upspringing well within him. He need become thirsty no more, but is eternally satisfied, his life will not become arid but will be continually fresh and blooming, and more than that (Compare 7:38) his life will be a center of refreshment and vitality in the midst of weary and disheartened humanity. To one who is familiar with a hot and desert country, no figure could better carry the idea of abounding vitality, freshness and spontaneity than the figure of a well of living water.

Essentially the same idea is contained in the wine-figure of chapter two. The life of the Christian is vital and sparkling in contrast to the more tasteless

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water of the older dispensation.

(4) 5:24 - "He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life."

The possessor of eternal life has passed away from death. This is not so tautologous as it sounds, nor is it a mere repetition of (1) above. For to have passed out of death into life means more than to have reached a plane where physical death cannot hinder. It means to have passed out of death in the sense of flatness, staleness, unprofitableness of living, the kind of living death that always overtakes people when they cease to be in contact with the eternal springs of vitality. He that has eternal life, has passed out of a condition where loss of zest, elasticity, joy in living, creative power has overtaken him, to a condition where all those things have come back, never to vanish more.

That is the whole point of the Lazarus story. It is not that Christ does away with physical death - that is merely a picture. But Christ touches our disheartened, useless, treadmill lives, and like an electric shock galvanizes them into new power. (Compare 5:25; 11:25-26).

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(5) 6:35 (Compare verse 48) - "Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

This is the figure of satisfaction. The possessor of eternal life has no hunger for that which he possesses is completely satisfying. Every desire is quieted, every emptiness filled, every incompleteness perfected. But it is not only the figure of satisfaction, it is the figure of empowerment as well. For food gives strength, and he who has eaten the living bread is strong for any tasks.

(6) 6:56 - "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in Him."

The parallelism between this and verse 54 shows that it, too, refers to the possessor of eternal life. He is in a position of the closest union and fellowship with the Divine.

(7) 8:12 - "I am the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

1:4 - "The life was the light of men."

The possessor of eternal life has a light within which guides him and enables him to see more clearly than others. He is in danger neither of stumbling nor of losing his way, because he has this inner source of illumination.

(8) 10:10 - "I came that they may have life, and that they may have it abundantly."

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The word "abundantly" ( περισσόν ) adds another touch to our portrait of the possessor of eternal life. That which he possesses, he possesses overflowing, in richness and fulness without stint.

(9) 17:3 - "This is life, eternal, that they should know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ."

The possessor of eternal life is the possessor of a higher knowledge. He knows the Divine realm as others do not, and the God who lives in it, and his knowledge gives the flavor to his life.

These are the things which the gospel says about eternal life, and when we have summed them up, we are impressed with one thing, that they are the things the mystics say about the unitive life. Those ideas of satisfaction, perfection, filling, of fellowship, exaltation, vitality, of knowledge, enlightenment, spontaneity, abundance, those are the ideas which come to the mystics when they try to describe their life. The very figures of light, water, wine, and so forth, are familiar to us in the writings of Theresa, Bernard and Fox. We could take over without change our definition of the unitive life, "life lifted to a new level by union with God and filled with a new vitality - life exalted, enlightened, and empowered", and use it for

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eternal life. There can be little doubt that John and the mystics are speaking of the same thing. They are operating within the same order of religious experience.

3. But we have still not reached the most important part of our inquiry. Though it be proved that both the Fourth Evangelist and the mystics are operating within the same order of religious experience, we have yet to ask whether the Johannine type of piety results in life of a quality similar to the quality of the mystic life.

The place to look for an answer to that question is primarily in chapters 14-17. Just as surely as the Beatitudes represent the synoptic picture of the ideal man, the discourse in the upper room presents the Johannine picture, and a study of it will show us in how far the Johannine and the mystic ideals for living are similar.

(1) "Let not your heart be troubled", the section begins, "believe in God, believe also in me." (14:1)

The first characteristic of the Johannine ideal life is that it is to be untroubled. Absence will not trouble it (14:28) nor persecution (15:18), nor perplexity (16:13). In the midst of all that might cause it to be afraid, it will have peace (14:27).

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But what is the source of that peace?

I cannot find that in any sense it is the result of turning from the disturbing things of life. The Johannine mysticism is in no sense the mysticism of the cloister. Nor is it in any large degree the peace of resignation. We shall see that this gospel does emphasize surrender, but less, I think, than the typical mystics does it lay itself open to the charge of apathy. In 15:10, this reason for peace is hinted at:

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."

In some degree, this suggests that the sense of doing God's will is a contributing factor toward peace.

But for the most part the Johannine peace goes back to what we pointed out as the highest source of mystic peace, the possession of a higher standpoint than other men, and the presence of a divine companion. Just as Jesus moves through this gospel on a higher plane than that of ordinary life, possessed of a peace and poise that are scarcely ever taken away (4:32; 8:20, 59; 11:6,42; 18:4-9)<sup>1</sup> and the reason was that he was not alone, but he and the Father that sent him (8:16 et. al.), so it is true of the ideal disciple.

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1. Ante, p.396 ff.



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The ideal disciple will not be troubled, for he is in direct communion with the Master who knows all things and who never leaves his disciples alone. "I will not leave you desolate; I come unto you (14:18). With eyes that see what the world cannot see (14:19), with the sense of being in the Father and he in them (14:20 et.al.), the Christian's life will be environed by peace. In the midst of the world's persecutions (15:18-21; 16:2-3) the peace of the early Christians must have been a conspicuous quality in their lives. In no small measure it was due to the type of experience described in John's Gospel.

It is from this angle, as we have already suggested,<sup>1</sup> that the story of the storm on the lake (6:16-21) should be approached. It is a symbol of the Christian's peace:

"And when evening came, his disciples went down unto the sea; and they entered into a boat, and were going over the sea unto Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. And the sea was rising by reason of a great wind that blew. When therefore they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they behold Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the boat, and they were afraid. But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid. They were willing therefore to receive him into the boat, and straightway the boat was at the land whither they were going."

(2) The ideal Christian can be untroubled, then, because he has a Master whom he can trust. He knows him and therefore knows the way into truth; he has seen the Father.

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1. Ante, p.363.

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"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father" (14:12).

The second<sup>1</sup> major characteristic of the ideal disciple is that his life is characterized by great "works". This precise word (εργα) is not used again for the things the disciples will do, but the idea that much will be accomplished in the world through the agency of the disciples is frequent.

"Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do" (14:13, Compare 15:16).

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (15:8).

"I appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit" (15:16).

"As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world" (17:18).

Quite plainly there are abundant tasks which the ideal disciple is expected to perform.

But when we turn to ask the quality of this activity, it is quite apparent that it is of the mystic "fruitive" type. It is activity that springs from an inner source (only "he that believeth on me" - 14:12 - can do the great works) and the inner source is the presence of a divine connection ("Because I go unto the Father" - *ibid.*) The Johannine disciple is a great "active" but he is an active who has first waited to be

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1. See Westcott, "Commentary", Volume II, p.173 for division at this point.

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filled.

This characteristic of Johannine activity is, of course, particularly emphasized by the allegory of the fruit-bearing vine.

"I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it that it may bear more fruit. . . I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit, for apart from me, ye can do nothing. . . If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit, and so shall ye be my disciples"(15:1-8).

Here the heart of the mystic speaks its true message. Every life is known by the fruit it bears, but the fruit must be truly the product of the life within. Tying fruit onto dead branches does not make the branches any less dead. Our good works must be the natural outgrowth of lives that draw their sustenance from the unseen. "The branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye except ye abide in me." (15:4).

(3) Peace, then, and fruitive activity are the first characteristics of the Johannine ideal disciple. The passage goes on to develop these themes for a time (Compare 14:16,23,26; 15:9 for conditions of peace, 14:15,21,23,24; 15:7,10 for references to works) and

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then in 15:11 we come to another outstanding characteristic of the possessor of eternal life.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full".

The Johannine ideal disciple is a person whose life is full of joy.

Once again it is necessary to ask, what is the source of the Johannine joy, for on the answer to that question depends our right to consider that it belongs to the same order as mystic joy. "These things have I spoken unto you", says Jesus, "that my joy may be in you and your joy may be made full" - the joy of the Johannine disciple arises from the things he hears the Master say to him. "Ye therefore now have sorrow, but I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice" (16:22) - the joy of the Johannine Christian arises from his consciousness of the presence of Jesus.

"Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be made full (16:24) - the joy of the possessor of eternal life arises from the congruity between his prayers and their fulfilment.

But in every case these are reasons that the mystic might well give for his joy.

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a. The first two may well be treated together, the sense of the Master's presence and the things he hears Him say. This is the most obvious cause of any joy of the mystic type. First and foremost, any mystic's joy arises from the fact of his contact with the Divine, and the exhilaration and enlightenment that springs from that contact.

b. The joy that is the result of congruity between prayer and fulfilment is also in a sense mystic, because the only guarantee of such congruity is the absolutely surrendered life. Only as it is Christ in us who asks can we be certain that what we ask we shall receive. Here again there is nothing of that quietism to which the mystic ideal of surrender sometimes tends, but there can be little doubt of the essentially mystic quality of the conception.

c. Another point of similarity between this joy and the mystic joy is found in the fact that both come through pain:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for the joy that a man is born into the world." (16:20-21).

The Johannine joy is not only a joy that comes

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after sorrow (16:20), but a joy that comes through it (16:21),<sup>1</sup> Through labor there has been born in the disciple a new life which is always conscious of the immediate presence of the Divine.

In the quality of his joy, then, as in the quality of his activity, the Johannine ideal disciple is true to mystic type.

(4) Finally, the ideal disciple's life is marked by a close companionship with the Divine.

"No longer do I call you servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth, but I have called you friends" - 15:15.

The sense of intimacy with the Divine, of knowing the secrets of the Eternal, of being essentially one with the Divine will, that is an essential mark of the "eternal" as of the "unitive" life. Ruysbroek follows the Fourth Evangelist almost exactly when he writes, "And that same Father says to each soul in His infinite lovingkindness, 'Thou art Mine and I am thine: I am thine and thou art Mine, for I have chosen thee from all eternity.'"<sup>2</sup> (Compare John 15:16).

And so the Johannine Christian, like the mystic, has the sense of being continually guided and kept.

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1. Westcott, "Commentary", Volume II, p.230.

2. Underhill, "Mysticism", p.521.

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"Whither I go", says Jesus, "ye know the way. . . I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (14:4,6). "Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all truth" (16:13). "I pray not that thou shouldst take them from the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil" (17:15).

The best illustration of this aspect of eternal life, however, is not in the section of the gospel under consideration, but in the life of the Johannine Jesus himself. From beginning to end, his life is represented as a divinely guided life, all of whose springs are in the Unseen. Some of the passages illustrative of this follow:

3:34 - "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God."

5:19 - "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing: for what things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner."

5:30 - "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is righteous; because I seek not mine own will but the will of him that sent me."

5:43 - "I am come in my Father's name."

7:16 - "My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me."

7:28 - "I come not of myself, but he that sent me is true."

8:16 - "I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me."

8:38 - "I speak the things which I have seen with my Father."

8:42 - "Neither have I come of myself, but he sent me."

10:18 - "This commandment I received from my Father."

10:30 - "I and the Father are one."

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10:38 - "The Father is in me and I in the Father."  
 11:42 - "I knew that thou hearest me always."  
 12:49,50 - "I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak, And I know that his commandment is life eternal; the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak."

Here couched almost in mystical language is the conviction of moment by moment divine leadership. What Jesus says, what he does, what he is are all the result of the indwelling of the Father in him.

Finally, in the Johannine conception of "the hour" this conviction takes on an almost fatalistic tone. The  $\omega\rho\alpha$  in 2:4, the  $\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\omicron\varsigma$  in 7:6,8 probably do not mean the "hour" or "time" of Jesus' death.<sup>1</sup> They mean the hour or time for doing any particular thing. All Jesus' life was marked out for him, and he was living according to His Father's will. For others, who were not living the unitive life, the time was always ready (7:6). He had to wait upon His Father's word (7:8 Compare 11:6-10).

So for the life of Jesus. And if 17:22-23 means anything it means that the unity of Jesus with his Father, is the model for the unity of the disciples with

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1. Compare Westcott on the former passage, "Commentary", Volume I, p.82. It will be observed that I do not agree with Westcott's distinction between  $\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\omicron\varsigma$  and  $\omega\rho\alpha$ , "Commentary", Volume I, p.263. There is no distinction between "human events" and the "divine plan" in this gospel.



him.<sup>1</sup> As his life was surrendered and guided, so likewise must be theirs.

Conclusion. We have found all four characteristics of the mystic unitive life in the Johannine picture of those who are the possessors of life eternal. Only in the fact that eternal life has nothing of the cloister about it have we felt a difference between it and what the mystics describe as their experience.

Once again, then, we are strengthened in our conviction that in reading the Fourth Gospel we are reading the work of a man whose religion moved on the level which is commonly called mystic. Less subject than the later mystics to what we are bound to call perversions, we cannot but think that he would have been at home in the company of the mystic saints of the Church.

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1. Ante, p.330 f.

## E P I L O G U E.

In the foreword to this thesis we suggested that the task which we had undertaken, that of comparing the Fourth Gospel with the work of those mystics whom we were bold enough to call "typical", was only a segment of the work that needed to be done. There was need for a study of the sources of the Johannine mysticism, on the one hand, and need for a study of those influences which caused later mysticism to move away from the Johannine model on the other.

Now that the thesis is completed we feel more strongly than ever the need for such studies.

But we have tried in what we have done to stick closely to the immediate task. We wanted to discover whether and in what respects it is legitimate to speak of the Fourth Evangelist as a mystic at all. This question we hope has been answered. The Fourth Evangelist, in practically every major matter, has been found in close agreement with the essentials of mysticism. In his emphasis on love, his belief in a God within, his call to communion with a present Christ, his symbolic method, his view of history, his doctrine of

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union, and the quality of the life which results from it, he shows plainly his mystic affinities. In his doctrine of sin, his use of the contemplative method, his claims to knowledge, and the brooding ecstatic character of his consciousness, he is less like the mystics of the "main stream" but demonstrably similar. We have no hesitation, therefore, in setting him down as a mystic, within the meaning of the definition that we gave.

On the other hand, we have not failed to notice, that from those minor tendencies, which we may call the "accidents" of mysticism, tendencies to quietism, to eroticism, to pious egotism and selfishness, to pantheism, to agnosticism, to self-torture and exaggerated introspection, to the encouragement of abnormal psychic phenomena and the inducement of illusory experiences, to lack of reverence, and neglect of history, from all these, the Fourth Evangelist is almost entirely free. Occasionally we have seen him looking a moment in one or other of these directions, and then as quickly looking away again. If these must be included in the definition of mysticism, then the Fourth Evangelist is more than a mystic.

We prefer to say, however, that these "accidents"

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are not an essential part of mysticism. In John's Gospel we study mysticism at its highest, firmly rooted in the life and character of the historic Jesus. Whatever false leads were given to the later mysticism by pseudo-Dionysianism, by monasticism, and by other influences which played mightily upon the medieval church, have here been avoided. It is probably a mistake to speak of John as the "father" of Christian mysticism. It may not be far wrong to speak of him as the classic example of what Christian mysticism is at its best.

And Christian mysticism at its best is perhaps more needed by the world today than any other thing. We have grown shallow in these later years, superficial and hurried. We have been dazzled by the claims of rationalism, hoodwinked by the philosophy of mechanism, and chained to the chariot wheels of the external. Nothing could do more for us than a return to the Johannine emphasis on the things of the spirit, to the Christ within and the life eternal.

There are signs abundant in our time that we are on the verge of just such a movement as that. Dangers lie in that direction, to be sure, but that way also lies power. If the past has belonged to Paul and the

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present to the synoptists, may we not hope that the immediate future will belong to the Fourth Evangelist?

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I would not take up a straw from the ground against His order, or from any other motive but purely that of love to Him."<sup>1</sup>

Whatever we may think about the possibility of thus entirely shifting the responsibility for our decisions from ourselves to God, and of the chances for self-deception in such a philosophy, it is certain that this characteristic of the mystics is one of the most winning things about them. The mystic is so sure that he is not adrift and that the power that guides him is not blind! If less naive students look with some incredulity upon his simple faith, it is not certain, at least that their doubt is any more rational than his trust.

(2) Secondly, the unitive life is characterized by a most profound peace. I should have put this first, had not St. Catherine put it second. For more than any word in our language the word "peace" seems to carry with it the flavor of the mystic life. "Wouldest thou that I should show thee what thing God is?" says St. Catherine in another place. "Peace; that peace which no man finds who departs from Him."<sup>2</sup>

There are several reasons for this peace. One is

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1. "Practice of the Presence of God" - Second letter. Compare also such Quaker classics as the Journals of George Fox and John Woolman.

2. Quoted in Underhill, "Mystics of the Church", p.166.



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the mystic withdrawal from the world, which makes it possible for him in a measure to close his eyes to life's hard realities. But with the life of a St. Francis or a St. Theresa before one, with the agonized prayers of St. Catherine of Siena for a sinful world<sup>1</sup> in one's ears, with the knowledge that St. Catherine of Genoa, from whom we quote, knew the world's suffering as few know it,<sup>2</sup> with the altruism of even a minor mystic like the Blessed Angela in one's mind,<sup>3</sup> it is impossible to cite that as a major reason for the mystic's peace.

A far more important reason for it is the mystic's "self-naughting", just discussed. In great part, it is the peace of resignation, even of indifference.

"A true lover of God", says the *Theologia Germanica*, "loveth him . . . in having and in not having, in sweetness and bitterness, in good or evil report, and the like, for he seeketh alone the honor of God, and not his own, either in spiritual or natural things. And therefore he standeth alike unshaken in all things, at all seasons."<sup>4</sup>

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1. See "Dialogo!"

2. Compare "Mystics of the Church", p.163.

3. Compare "Meaning and Value of Mysticism", p.146: "There came upon me", she says, "such a fulness of charity and with so great a joy did I understand that power, will, and justice of God, that not only was I satisfied concerning the questions I had asked, but likewise concerning all creatures. . . for I felt I was called to save them one and all."

4. "Theologia Germanica", Chapter X.