

Introduction.

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THESIS

ON

THE PHILOSOPHIC CHARACTER OF ENGLISH XIVTH CENTURY MYSTICISM.

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The XIII-th and XIVth centuries have been named the Golden Age of Mysticism, and it is certain that the mystical temperament seems to have flourished greatly during that period. It was an age of great intellectual activity dominated by such figures as St. Bonaventura and St. Thomas Aquinas, they being preceded by the most lovable of all mystics, St. Francis of Assisi. In Germany, the names of Eckhart, Tauler and Suso stand out, in Holland, Ruysbroeck; in England, Richard Rolle of Hampole, Julian of Norwich, Walter Hilton and that unknown disciple of Dionysius the Areopagite, who has ~~left~~^{left} behind him the "Cloud of Unknowing" and other kindred writings.

The mere fact of this phenomenal development of mysticism, supplemented as it could be by many other names, is bound to hold some importance for philosophy. It is significant that this development of mysticism should take place towards the end of the Middle Ages, a period full of intense and suggestive activity not only in the realm of thought, but in that of art, general culture, and political developments as well. May it not be that, from the point of view of spiritual development, the epoch of the mystics represents the crowning glory of medievalism, an expression on the side of human personality of its highest developments?

It may be maintained that the English mystics, in whom we are specially interested, are important, because they express in their characteristic outlook and their type of life, a body of truth that had been systematised and elaborated by the great doctors and teachers of the Middle Ages. Doubtless, such teaching had been passed through the crucible of their own experience, and had therefore received such intense personal expression that it was transformed.

But even so, the chief contribution of medieval life to modern times can be shown to consist in just this deepening and transvaluation of standards of value. For the modern values that have called for a reconstruction of life were brought into the fore-front of modern thought under the stimulus and discipline of medieval conditions. It is this aspect of English mysticism, so important from an Idealist point of view in philosophy, with which we are mainly concerned, more so than in the details of their teaching or the special forms that experience may have taken.

In so doing we are not guilty of injustice to the personal nature of their experience. For every individual must approach these ultimate truths from his own individual point of view. Since experience is our only adequate criterion of truth, it is also personal and private to each individual. The sole question that can arise from the point of view of the philosopher, is its adequacy as a criterion. And the answer to the problem is, that the more systematized, the more detailed such experience is, then to that extent, it is the more adequate.

We wish therefore again to emphasise, that this thesis is mainly concerned with the philosophic character ~~xxx~~ of English XIVth century mysticism, and not with the personal details of that mysticism. A certain weakness may be detected in this standpoint. For the study of almost any group of mystics would yield similar results. But that is what gives significance to mysticism both for philosophy and theology. In any case, as we shall seek to indicate later, mysticism conforms to certain general types. The mystics are all ^{hived} motivated by the desire for reality. They believe in a deeper spirituality than that revealed to the senses, they believe that it can be known intimately, and that being known, it can enter into the frame and fabric of their lives and transform their personalities. Since Reality is one, coherent and self-consistent, rational through and through, the conformity to type in all genuine mystics is to be expected. Again we may note that all mystics are impressed, more or less, according to their powers of discernment, with that structural unity of Reality discernible

in its appearances.

We shall therefore require a large canvas, since we must seek to determine the conditions that made their experience possible. That again is to be expected in a philosophic study. For the mystical experience presents just this problem to the philosopher, the task of determining as far as possible, the conditions of that experience. And the problems of philosophy are non-isolable. In attempting to answer the question raised by this special subject-matter, the philosopher must answer in such manner as to indicate the bearing of that answer on other aspects of human experience, and with regard to other problems that present themselves. For instance, it is impossible to give an adequate account of the relationship of spiritual values to the mystic experience without reference to theory of knowledge, and that again would involve, if the answer were to be detailed, a philosophic theory of the proposition. We shall therefore deal with our special subject-matter in broad philosophic fashion, having regard to such aspects as are involved in our answer. We are not justified in drawing a hard and fast line between the experience of the mystics, whatever group we study, and that of the average religiously-minded person. The difference between them, in our view, is with respect to a certain depth of 'insight' into the nature of things, together with the resulting effect on character and conduct such insight brings. From him who knows more, more may ~~be~~ well be expected.

We shall find that our study of the conditions of mystical experience, where these are of philosophic importance, will yield insight into the nature of Reality. That is, a metaphysic is involved, and also, we shall further find that the problems centre round Personality, and an ethic is likewise involved, having wide teleological implications. Our main point here, is, that universal spiritual values play a determining part in the ordering of the Universe, and moreover, condition all that is best and deepest in human personality. Our study of values will likewise be found to establish a satisfactory ground for Theism, especially Christian Theism. For the path of values is that which leads us to God.

We have not attempted to correlate our results with the latest developments in physics and biology, but believe that the conclusions we have reached will not be found to conflict with these. Rather indeed, they may be found to supplement and complete both physical and biological theory.

Our study is centred round the four outstanding mystics of XIVth century England. Some reasons may be given for this selection. They represent a sort of first movement of that kind in England, and they set forth a way of life. They are very balanced in outlook, for though they do state their preference for the contemplative life, yet the group is noted by students of mysticism generally for its 'practical temper'. Our view is, that this balance is traceable to the dominant influence of Platonism in England, as it is mediated through the teaching of the great Augustinians and Franciscan doctors and mystics. We shall deal briefly with this in the thesis.

Moreover, the English group of mystics, situated as they were at the close of the Middle Ages and at the dawn of modern times, were fortunately placed. They fell heirs to a rich heritage. Through the teaching of Augustine, Boethius, Bernard and Bonaventura, as well as others, they received the cream of Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy, and also the main body of their theology. They also acquired, through the writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius, in Erigena's Latin translation, a fairly close acquaintance with the teaching of Plotinus as systematised by Proclus. The "Mystical Theology" was translated, presumably by the author of the "Cloud of Unknowing" and had a pre-eminent vogue. The influence of Aristotle came through the doctrines of Aquinas, though not quite so dominant as that of Plato. The Aristotelian influence was much more strongly marked on the Continent. The Platonic tradition as mediated by Augustine remained dominant in English Theology.

They were, of course, deeply influenced by their studies in the Christian scriptures. Rolle was the first to translate the psalter into English. Still other influences are due to the

Franciscan movement. Rolle has been called the 'English Francis'. The passion and zeal of the Franciscans help to mould their outlook on life and nature.

Despite Rolle's protests and reaction, somewhat overstated by Horstman in his edition of Rolle's English Works, scholasticism also played an important part in shaping their outlook, and in giving form to their thought. This influence is seen in the manner in which the English mystics have schematized and catalogued their doctrines. Perhaps it is most marked in the writings of Hilton and those of the author of the "Cloud". Rolle's reaction was really complementary to the scholastic teaching. He breathed life into the scholastic categories by exhibiting in his own experience that vital union with the Ultimate Reality the scholastic sought to describe. The spirit of St. Francis is seen most clearly here. The quality of deep devotion, rich imagination, and zeal for the person of Christ, so characteristic of the Franciscans, must have deeply affected our English mystics.

More generally, the sense of nationality was growing. Norman and Saxon were becoming fused into one nation, and English was well on its way to becoming the language of literature and official business. It is the century of Chaucer. The English Universities of Oxford and Cambridge were rising in prestige. Rolle, himself, studied for a time at Oxford where the Franciscan influence was remarkably strong. He has even been claimed as an alumnus of the Sorbonne. European travel was general, and a close relationship was maintained with the Continent.

Then there was the atmosphere created by the Miracle Plays and by Gothic architecture. Perhaps the national sense of independence is strongly apparent in the new varieties of style of architecture developed in these centuries. It is one of the great achievements of the age. The wonderful decorations of the Gothic cathedrals, with all their suggestive symbolism, express the intense emotional life of the time. In them are symbolised the hopes and fears, the desires and aspirations, the lights and shadows of the soul. This is one way in which the spiritual

values that condition our moral and religious experience, make their appearance. It is the expression in art, of the truth, that such values make their appearance in the general life long prior to their theoretical establishment.

These, then, summarise some of the main influences that are at work in our mystics. All of this is deeply significant from the point of view of our thesis. Rooted and grounded in the cultural, social, artistic and religious life of their time, specially endowed as they may have been, such influences passed into the warp and woof of their mystical experience, and the spiritual values of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, involved in their environment, gained thus a deeper orientation, and a richer significance, and were demonstrated to be the very values that condition the human personality in all its relationships and, at the same time, make manifest the nature and purpose of that Reality which all men seek to attain.

Our thesis falls into four main sections. First of all we shall give a very brief account of Platonism, or rather, those aspects of it that most concern us. Then we shall study in the same restricted manner, such parts of the teaching of Augustine, Bonaventura, and others who have deeply influenced our mystics. We shall also notice the general bearing of the doctrines of Aquinas and the Victorines. The third section deals with such matters in the teaching of the English mystics as have value for a thesis on the philosophic character of their mysticism. The fourth and main section deals with that teaching from the point of view of philosophy, and then ends with a general conclusion.

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The Influence of Platonism.

SECTION I.

- (a) The Influence of Platonism.
- (b) The Influence of Plotinus.
- (c) The Influence of Proclus.
- (d) The Influence of Dionysius the Areopagite.

The Influence of Platonism.

We must now retrace our footsteps and set down at greater length some of the various influences that have moulded the experience of our English mystics. We shall begin with a study of Platonism.

The Christian Church early fell heir to the Platonic philosophy. This was almost inevitable, for the need soon arose for a systematised, well thought out body of Christian doctrine. The implications of Christianity had to be worked out in systematic fashion if Christianity was to maintain itself in the face of determined opposition on the part of pagan thinkers. Wonderfully enough it was the work of pagan philosophers that supplied the Christian theologians with the philosophic structure that was required. For Christian doctrine was to be dominated for the next twelve hundred years and even longer, by the influence of Plato and Plotinus, and then account had to be taken of Aristotle. Moreover, as Miss Underhill points out, this Union of Christianity and Platonism is especially helpful in giving a satisfactory rational basis to mysticism generally. (1). What then are the main characteristics of this philosophy?

Mysticism is, from one point of view, an overwhelming passion for truth; for the mystic can rest only in what is ultimately Real. The need early arose in Plato's mind to secure the principles of scientific knowledge for there is, in this sense, a deep strain of mysticism in his ~~dialogues~~ dialogues, and hence we find this passion for truth. (2).

(1) "Mysticism p.125. see also "Platonism and its Influence" by A.E. Taylor, p.17.

(2) We note, that though Plato quite evidently understands mysticism, he himself was not a mystic but a nationalist and a jurist whose ideal it was to be a statesman. His interest may have been due to the probability that Socrates was a mystic. We find this strain of mysticism in such dialogues as the Symposium, Theatetus, and Phaedo. Other important dialogues are the Meno and especially the Timaeus.

Plato distinguishes between 'thinking' and 'sensing', that is having sensations; these are fundamentally different. But Plato further distinguishes between thought that is scientific, i.e. that involves real knowledge, and opinion or belief. Scientific thinking engages itself with the eternal and immutable aspects of truth; opinion and belief are mainly concerned with matters of fact. Where, however, the grounds or reasons of belief are investigated and made clear, the passage can be made from opinion and belief to scientific knowledge.

Plato maintains that this type of philosophic thought and scientific knowledge is possible. Its object is eternal truth, and since man is endowed with capacities of detachment from what is merely temporal and sensory, the highest type of life is the life of contemplation, and its object is the Eternal and Immutable and Universal. Similarly in the realm of ethics. We may pass from the practical aspects of character and conduct, as these are related to everyday needs, to the contemplation of the 'eternal good'. That is, we can pass to the contemplation of the spiritual values of Truth, Beauty and Goodness. Such scientific knowledge or philosophic knowledge, is the work of the mind itself independent of sense impressions. Where any degree of dependence on sense impressions is involved, then at best, we have beliefs or opinions that are not real knowledge. A deep and clear cut distinction having ontological implications is obviously involved, and it bears on the philosophic character of all mysticism, the distinction between 'being' and 'becoming'. The realm of 'being' is the real world, the world of ultimate reality. It is the realm of Ideals or Values or Forms. The realm of 'becoming' is the realm of facts or of things. The mystic, like the platonic philosopher, desires with all his heart to pass from the world of things to the world of values, and to rest in contemplation of these, finding in union with, and in contemplation of what is eternal, the deepest satisfaction and happiness possible to the soul. Mysticism is thus not simply a

state of feeling, nor is it predominantly emotional; it involves the highest mental activities and the function of the feeling or emotion or love is to reinforce and amplify the powers of thought.

But whilst differing, sense data, and universals of thought, are not to be held as absolutely distinct. Nature herself, of the realm of the senses, partakes in a measure, of the real world. What reality the sensory world possesses is due to this circumstance. It possesses symbolical value, and as such, suggests a further reality which lies behind it, supports it, and gives to it its measure of order and coherence. We may therefore ascend to the contemplation of eternal truth, as by a ladder, from the particulars of the senses to the universals of thought. Plato's influence has on this point been very marked, and is of the utmost importance. It can be traced in the thought of Augustine and Aquinas, and is also found in the writing of Bonaventura, notably in his *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, and through them it has impressed our English group of mystics.

Much more might be said, but we must now pass on to consider the ethics of Plato in their bearing on our subject. The discussion of the foregoing has been necessary in view of ~~which~~ such questions as Plato raises in the *Timaeus*, *Menno*, and *Theatetus*. We have now to consider his ethical theory as we find it in such dialogues as the *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus* and *Republic*. Again, the barest outline must suffice.

Plato again draws the fundamental distinction between temporal and eternal Good. The soul of man, as we have already indicated, is the meeting place of these two orders. He is the child of time, but he is also the child of eternity, and being so he cannot rest or find final satisfaction in what is merely temporal Good.

In the *Symposium* the discussion turns upon ~~the~~ human desire or love. As Professor Taylor points out in ~~the~~^{his} analysis of the *Symposium*, love is "desirous craving". (1)

(1) "Plato, The Man and his Work", pp. 209-234.

Plato there suggests its universality in nature. But this implies two things, as Socrates soon demonstrates. It suggests, in the first place, an 'object' as its correlative, for desire or love is a relative term, and secondly, it implies a judgment of value. The object of love is that which is not yet attained, and the attainment of which is conceived to be necessary to our happiness. The desire for happiness itself is perfectly reasonable and is not to be confused with the idea of agreeable feeling. But this happiness can only be attained if we secure that which we desire. This desired object will be the Good for man. But in order to attain the Good, we must first know what it is. Here is raised the problem discussed in the Meno. Hence arises the need for scientific knowledge, for we cannot rest even in right opinion or belief, but must think out the grounds of these in order that we may be led into knowledge of that which is eternal.

The quest for the Good begins with the knowledge that we desire something that we have not yet got. Eros, or 'desirous craving' will perform certain services for us. It will lead us, if our hearts are set upon the attainment of the highest good, through love of physical beauty to beauty of soul, and thence to science and intellectual beauty, until suddenly the goal will be revealed, and we shall attain the vision of Absolute Beauty. Scientific knowledge is necessary if this 'ascent of the soul' is to be accomplished, for the supreme function of knowledge, as Plato teaches in the Republic, is to command and direct life to the attainment of our abiding and true good. But in the supreme moment of direct apprehension and attainment of The Good, the soul passes beyond science itself, and is possessed of, and possesses, the supreme object of its desire.

Moreover, the vision of the Perfect will have its immediate effect upon our own lives; for thus knowing the Perfect we shall strive to become like it, in order that we may remain in union with it.

The mysticism of the Symposium is developed in the Phaedo where Plato sets out to justify the life of the 'tendance of the soul'. There, as else where he maintains the divinity of the

(1) E. Taylor, p.177.

(1). Plato. ↗

soul, and that the 'imitation of God', is the 'right and reasonable rule of conduct'. His knowledge of mysticism is strongly in evidence. By virtue of ~~his~~^{its} powers of thought, the soul is at least relatively independent of the body, and the life of thought is, as we have indicated, a life of progressive purification so to speak, until it is enabled to concentrate on the great eternal truths. The best life will therefore be the life of contemplation which is not by any means an indolent life, for the soul will only be enriched by unremitting contemplation of the Highest Good. (1). Thus the philosopher's ultimate aim, and surely here we have the counter-part of the christian mystic, will be to enjoy this vision, and as he enjoys it he will allow it to possess him, lift him above, and out of, himself, to the progressive enrichment of his own life. Thus will he attain that final satisfaction or happiness that is at the bottom of our desires.

It is as we have indicated, a life that involves purgation. In the Phaedrus Plato sets forth under the figure of the charioteer and his two steeds, what amounts to a doctrine of purgation. The unruly steed must be disciplined until he is trained to obedience to the will ~~of~~ of the charioteer, so our unruly desires must be disciplined, our 'love' ordered under the stimulous and discipline of an enlightened intelligence, until the whole soul 'tends' to the contemplation of the Highest Good. Then will the soul receive again its wings and may take flight to the realm of ineffable vision. (2).

But even then, Plato teaches, and again he anticipates the teaching of the mystics, the soul does not yet receive the full fruition of its purgation or desires. The Good remains incomprehensible the experience eludes all our powers of expression, and moreover, complete fruition lies beyond the bounds of finite experience.

(1) See Theatetus on Contemplation.

(2) A similar thought is found in the Republic where Plato discusses the relations between reason, the spirited element, and appetition.

At best, the good man, will so order his desires, that life here will be but a preparation, long or short as the case may be, in order to fit himself for the ineffable vision, when death comes to set the soul free. The highest life is thus a dying life; the philosopher dies to live. In this way the Platonic doctrine of immortality is bound up with the pursuit and vision of the Good.

Yet, whilst Plato is preoccupied with the Eternal Good as that alone in which happiness can be found, as in the case of the Eternal Forms and their relation to the sense symbols of terrestrial life, he has not forgotten temporal good.

We have already seen that the vision of the Perfect will awaken the philosopher the desire for perfection, and so in the present life he may in some measure partake of the ultimate reality, nor will he forget the goods of body or of fortune, for these too are desirable. Only, having apprehended that 'which is far better', he will not be enslaved by them. The right use of these can also give happiness, but they must, like all the institutions of the State as well, be subordinated to goods of soul, for the manifest end of creation is that men should live good and noble lives, and all other things must subserve this end.

On the other hand, all unhappiness arises from an inner conflict which occurs when some other and lower good is set up as the supreme goal of a man's life. For men choose not that which is evil because it is evil, but because they mistake it for good. Thus, inevitably, there arises a conflict between the passions, 'the indisciplined steed' and the judgment which can rest alone in what is highest. Thus again, philosophic thought is required in order that life may be rightly directed by a certain knowledge of what is our true good. We shall be delivered from evil and foolishness as we are guided by a sound judgment. And as we set our hearts upon Virtue and Wisdom and the Ideal Beauty, so shall our lives be full of true and abiding happiness, and our souls will be truly noble.

Again we notice Plato's insistence that discipline is required. The path of the philosopher or mystic is not an easy one, nor is his life of contemplation an idle life. The unremitting discipline of real hard thought is constantly required, but if maintained, the rewards will be found to be more than a sufficient recompense. Such are the doctrines of Plato, as they bear on our study of the philosophic character of English mysticism. They will continue to influence all that is best in religious thought and practice for many years to come.

The Influence of Plotinus. (205 AD - 270 AD).

Platonism passed into the main body of Western theology through the medium of the great Alexandrian mystic and philosopher, Plotinus. (1). At this well many mystics have drunk deeply, and found spiritual refreshment, for though it may be maintained, as by Whittaker, that the systematic philosophy of Plotinus can be held apart from his mysticism, yet his teaching, as we have it in the *Enneads*, offers a fairly satisfying rational basis and explanation of the experience of the mystics. The quest of Plotinus is essentially that of the mystic. It is the journey from the world of Becoming to the Real World of Being, from the realm of sense-experience through that of thought, to union with the One who is above thought and knowledge. This is the authentic Platonic note.

Plotinus, like Plato, is inspired with zeal for the Eternal and Invisible, and his philosophic system is an attempt to draw such a map as may guide the human personality on its journey through

(1) See "The Influence of Platonism" A.E.T. p.20, also "Christian Mysticism" Dean Inge, lecture 3. and "The Neoplatonists" by T. Whittaker, Intro. p.11, 2nd Edn.

life to its real homeland. His desire, is akin to that of Plato, namely to invoke faith and hope in the Spiritual Reality that gave birth to all creation. Like Plato, he therefore stresses contemplation, in the platonic sense of the term, as the highest activity of the soul. (1). His philosophy, then, is in the nature of a message of hope to mankind, for through contemplation man can achieve union with the supreme Good,

The Plotinian system is a trinity, but a trinity of subordination. The three principles of which it is composed are not persons, nor is it an order in time, but in all its aspects, spiritual and visible, one of logical causation. It furnishes a rational account of Reality as it is experienced, and individual persons are set in definite relationship with the reality thus conceived.

His first principle is the 'One' or Self-Sufficing' or the Good, and the 'One' is the source of all existence, including thought and activity. Its creative power reaches out to and includes matter, the limit of creation, yet the 'One' maintains its own existence separate and distinct. The 'One' is like an overflowing Spring that in so doing, causes the subordinate orders of existence, but yet remains self-contained and self-sufficient. (2)

From the 'One' there descends second in order of being the Divine Mind or Intelligence. In 'Intelligence' the sense of 'otherness' is begotten, the distinction of subject and object. Perfect unity is thus lost. It is nearest in order to the Ineffable 'One' around whom it circles. In it is comprehended the world of Ideals, Forms, or Universals, and also individual existences, that is, it contains and comprehends multiplicity. It too, like the 'One' is related to the third and lowest order of existence, but maintains distinct, its own existence. Intelligence directs itself wholly to the 'One' whom it apprehends by an unerring intuition. (3).

(1). Ennead, III 8. 5.

(2). " III 8.10.

(3). " V. 1. 4.

The third order of Emanation is that of World Soul, which occupies the realm of appearance. The World Soul is produced by Intelligence, and functions in giving form and beauty to matter, while matter itself is degenerate owing to its distance from its origin. Plotinus would seem to teach that matter has thus degenerated into non-existence, the Plotinian conception of evil. (1) This World Soul is the abode of all souls, but certain souls may from a desire to be independent, separate themselves from the World Soul and thus become embodied. As such they are simple, partaking of not-being, and absorbing themselves in pursuits and pleasures and other follies altogether unworthy of their high descent.

Nevertheless, all things, including human souls, and it is the human personality in which Plotinus is really interested, desire to return to the source whence they came, for in union with it is their highest Good and abiding Happiness. For there is an inner witness in the soul of man to his divine origin. He too, is a trinity composed of spirit, soul and body, and at his centre he is identical with his Creator. The One, we remember, though self-sufficient and self-contained, includes and reaches out to the limits of creation. There is therefore a means of communion and union between the soul and the Good. "Since the soul is so exalted a power, so divine, be confident that in virtue of its possession you are close to God. Begin, therefore, with the help of this principle (the Intelligence Principle) to make your way to Him: you have not far to go; there is not much between. Lay hold of that which is more divine than this god-like thing, lay hold of that summit of the soul which borders on the Supreme from which the soul immediately derives, the Intelligence Principle, of which the soul, glorious Principle though we have shown it to be, is but an image". (2)

(1). Ennead, V. 1. 7. IV. 3. 1-9. V. 8. 4.

(2). See Ennead V. 1. 3. (Preller-Ritter extracts given in first vol. Mackenna's trans. p.134).

"Springing from the Intellectual Principle it is intellectual, operating in the sphere of the Divine Reason: it draws its perfection from this superior Principle which is like a cherishing father who has given it existence though not a nature as perfect as his own". (1).

There are inconsistencies in the account Plotinus gives of the descent of the soul into contact with matter. He gives no adequate reason why the soul should descend. At one time he would seem to teach that it is due to an act of self-will, a desire for independence, at another time, he indicates that it is the ordinance of God. For the soul, being divine in origin, seeks to fashion a world after the likeness of its own Creator. But in so doing it falls into sin, sensuous entanglements, and it is thus in danger, unless it return quickly to its divine source, of becoming partially separated from the realm of Being and partaking of non-existence.

But in each soul there is at least an implicit desire to reascend to the source whence it came. The soul cannot be at peace with itself nor can it achieve a lasting satisfaction until it rest in contemplation of the one adequate object of knowledge, the divine 'One'. An inner conflict is thus set up until the soul orders its desires and concentrates all its powers upon its true homeland. There is an inner nucleus which cannot sin; the image of the divine Father which remains to inspire and reinforce every impulse to rise above the level of 'couplement' with matter, and to achieve true freedom. Plotinus therefore teaches how the soul may reascend to God.

Here we find his doctrine of purgation, and also that of the *via negativa* which was so influential in the teaching of subsequent mysticism. This doctrine, as we shall see, is in evidence in our English mystics.

(1) See Ennead III. 8. 9. From R.P. notes 1st vol. p.134.

The first stages of preparation are to be found in the practice of the 'civic' virtues. Self-discipline is necessary. These are the ordinary virtues of the average Greek citizen. They are purgative in their effects, and moreover, teach the soul the Divine principles of rule and measure, but these are only the first steps of the ladder by which we ascend. .

Then comes the next stage in the purgation of the soul, the practice of the "cathartic" virtues. By means of ascetic practices the soul is weaned from objects of sense and mundane desires and ambitions. All love of life and fear of death is to be purged away, and when these practices have completed their work, the soul is purged, and a stage of positive virtue is reached. Plotinus himself, as Porphyry tells us, practised asceticism assiduously.

But just as the natural world is only a symbol or a shadow of the super-sensible world so is all action but a shadow of contemplation, and having purged itself, the soul must now turn in upon itself and give itself to the contemplative life. For contemplation is as far above action as the heavens are higher than the earth. (1) This is the true life of the soul. Thus is it brought into immediate contact with reality, and enters upon the first stages of blessedness.

At the same time, Plotinus is not unaware or neglectful of the duties of everyday life. He, himself, was a man of sound commonsense, and, as Porphyry tells us, undertook the education and supervision of the property of young lads over whom he was appointed guardian. But it is only the plain call of duty that will induce the contemplative sage to take part in worldly affairs. For this is his true life, the life of contemplation.

In this way, then, contact with Mind is attained. We have noticed how this thought is worked out by Plato, and we need ^{not} enlarge on it here. But even at this stage perfect blessedness is not yet achieved; ecstasy is necessary. Here we touch upon the doctrine of the Via Negativa. The One is absolute unity. There is in the Super-Essence no shadow of duality, far less of multiplicity. As the later mystics teach, the soul must 'nought' itself until it rises above and beyond ^{all} even thought and knowledge, and is lost or rather absorbed in a cloud of 'unknowing'. Perfect union with the Divine Source of all being is then attained. It was recorded of Plotinus that he attained this stage four times at least. Undoubtedly, the full consummation of union may only be secured when the soul is delivered by death from the body, but even in this life, for brief intervals, it is possible. In ecstasy the vision of the Good flashes in upon the soul and enchants it.

"The soul restored to likeness goes to its like and holds of the Supreme all that the soul can hold....that which is before all things that are, over and apart from all the universe of Existence. This is not to say that in this plunging into the Divine the soul reaches nothingness: it is when it is evil that it sinks towards nothingness: by this way, this that leads to the Good, it finds itself: when it is the Divine it is truly itself, no longer a thing among things. It abandons Being to become 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." (1).

(1) Ennead VI, 9.11. see Mackenna, Vol 1, pp 157-8.

In this manner Plotinus seeks to account for man's inability to find any lasting satisfaction in finite things, nor can he see infinite things any satisfactory explanation of themselves. He is therefore cast back on to the conception of a Divine Author of all Existence who has left the imprints on finite things of his own Uncreated Wisdom. The order and harmony and beauties of nature, alike with the inner witness within the human soul, are symbols, that rightly read by an understanding mind, will lead the soul back to God. Imperfections in his theory undoubtedly exist, but even so, his teaching has been influential in later ages in helping the human mind to come to an understanding of its own nature and its high destiny, nor is his influence as yet on the wane. Our own English XIVth century mystics have felt the inspiration of his teaching in shaping their own outlook and in giving direction to their deepest inspirations.

We must now continue to trace the influence of Plotinus as we find it in Proclus and Dionysius. A very brief survey must suffice, for Proclus is little more than the outstanding systematizer of the Neoplatonic school, and in Dionysius we have the teaching of Proclus together with the somewhat superficial edition of Christian doctrines. None the less, the Dionysian writings were one means of bringing the English mystics into contact with Neoplatonic doctrines, and thus they merit our ~~at~~ attention.

We do not forget the Augustine, the most influential figure among those who have influenced all subsequent mystics, was the older contemporary of Proclus and prior in time to Dionysius, but for the sake of continuity we shall first deal with the two latter.

The Influence of Proclus. (410 AD - 485 AD).

The genius of Proclus is dissimilar to that of Plotinus whose follower he claims to be. Much of his work was to comment on the teaching of Plato, but his writings are largely infused, as Whittaker points out, with Neoplatonic doctrines. Plotinus was of intuitive genius, whilst that of Proclus was discursive. We are not surprised in view of this that his works are distinguished by a logical finish that marks them off from those of his predecessors. Proclus was the last of the great Neoplatonists. His work was founded upon by the Christian theologians, and his doctrine of the *via negativa* influenced later mystics.

Whilst accepting the general structure of the metaphysical system of Plotinus, Proclus carried much further the method of finding triads at every stage of emanation. The effect of this is seen in the Dionysian writings, especially in such works as *The Celestial Hierarchy*, and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. In works such as these are to be found the foundations of medieval angelology.

The progression of emanation is from simplicity, which is most nearly perfect, to multiplicity which is less so. Yet the principle of simplicity or of unity is involved even in multiplicity. "Every multitude participates in a manner in the One". There is a twofold movement in creation, one away from the creative source, and the other towards it. The principal or primal cause of all being is the Good, and towards the Good everything aspires. To attain union with the Good is to divest oneself of multiplicity, and all participation in multiplicity, and to return to the One.

As in Plotinus, so in Proclus, the activity of the One extends as far as matter which also has its existence from the One.

An interesting development found in the teaching of Proclus is his attempt to place the cause of plurality in the universe at a higher stage than the Plotinian Intelligence. The One acts through many points of origin, these Proclus names the divine henads, or the gods, and from these start many minds, each of which is the principle

of further differences. The providential order of the world directly descends from the divine henads.

The One remains unknowable, but since all things desire to return to their source, they can do so by passing through these intermediate stages, that is by divesting themselves of multiplicity and proceeding from the particular to the general. We can here readily recognise Plato's teaching on the nature of scientific knowledge. This is Proclus' reasoned defence of the via negativa. Since the One is 'Simple', the soul must strive after simplicity, "sinking into the Divine Ground", "forsaking the manifold for the One", and so on. It was this aspect of his doctrine that profoundly influenced Dionysius, to whose writings we now turn.

The Influence of Dionysius the Areopagite. (475 AD? - 525 AD?)

Dionysius wrote towards the end of the fifth century: his real name is unknown: it is supposed that he was a Syrian monk, and of his works, four survive. These are, "Concerning the Celestial Hierarchy", "Concerning the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy", "Concerning the Divine Names", and "Concerning the Mystical Theology". Of these, the two latter are the most important.

His writings, as we have already remarked, are a superficially Christianised version of the teachings of Proclus, but in the Middle Ages, and until their authenticity was challenged by the Humanists of the ~~15th~~^{16th} century, they were accepted as the work of a disciple of the apostle Paul, and thought to contain an account of mystical revelations made to him. John Scotus Erigena furnished a Latin version of these works, and they became accessible to the West in the IXth century.

Dionysius, like the great Neoplatonists, attempts to set down a theory of Being. It is the Neoplatonic theory of the Transcendent One, and an account of creation by emanations from that

One. The word 'hierarchy' expresses very well his metaphysical scheme. God is identified with the One of the Neoplatonists. He is transcendent over all qualities, is above thought and knowledge, and as such can only be said to exist. This thought underlies the treatise on the Divine Names, and the Mystical Theology. (1). The One is the Origin and end of all things, and the universal condition of 'Being' is to participate in the One. But Dionysius also teaches, there is no object that does not, in some way partake of the One, for it is the Unity that embraces all things (2).

We cannot, therefore, know God, as He is; He is utterly transcendent. But, on the other hand, we partake at least, partially of His Being, only so do we ourselves exist. God has, however, given to all beings the power of striving to share in His Being, and at the same time to persist in their own individuality. For Dionysius does not teach that union with God, which is the ultimate goal of all who desire the perfect happiness, means the annihilation of the self, but rather its transformation into something infinitely richer and better. God is a unity that comprehends, and does not abolish, individual differences. (3).

Thus Dionysius tempts to escape pantheism. Creation is an Emanation from the One, and it mirrors its first cause in various degrees. The perfect love and goodness of God is extended to what is most remote in His universe, and to all who strive towards the source of their being, God gives a divine likeness. "And 'tis the power of the Divine Similitude that turneth all created things to their cause". (4). In this connection the function of the Angelic Hierarchy is to purify, illumine and render perfect, the creature. God is the cause of all things: He sustains them, loves them, and works in them that they might return unto Himself.

(1). Dionysius the Areopagite, trans. Roit, ("Mystical Theology" Ch.1, pp.193-4.)

(2). " " " " " ("The Divine Names", ch. XIII, par.2,

(3). " " " " " ch. IV. para.8.

(4). " " " " " ch. IX. para.6.

All this being so, how are we to account for evil?

Dionysius discusses this problem at some length. His conclusion is that nothing is inherently bad. All that 'is' is good, since so far as things have existence they partake of the One or Good. Again we find here the Neoplatonic doctrine of a sinless Nucleus in the soul. Evil is ultimately non-existence. A totally evil thing could not exist.

Dionysius is now able to deal with the question of the relation of partial being and Absolute Being. His teaching is that all things are good, but he divides them, with apparent perversity, into Existent and Non-existent. He means that all things have two aspects to their being. On the one hand, they partake of the Super-Essence. In relation to it, they are eternally good, even before their creation. But, on the other hand, in themselves, their created essence, they were wholly non-existent before their temporal creation, and after it are partially non-existent, and so far are tainted with evil.

"Evil is then a lack, a deficiency, a weakness, a disproportion, an error, purposeless, unlovely, lifeless, unwise, unreasonable, imperfect, unreal, and never in itself possessed of any existence whatever". (1).

The problem is to make good the deficiency, and to restore the harmony between the soul and God. Dionysius teaches, that by exercise of its highest faculties, that aspect of the personality that partakes of the Divine Essence, the soul may apprehend the 'Divine Images' directly, and by disciplining and concentrating the lower powers the soul may make use of symbols that will assist the whole man to rise to God. The method of his pilgrimage back to God is to be a concentration of all his spiritual powers, and here we meet again the via negativa.

(1). The Divine Names, IV. 32.

By this concentration the individual will draw himself away from all outward things into the centre of his being, thus gradually becoming unified and simplified, like the first created angels, until he rests in God.

Of all the titles of God, the One is that in which alone man can rest. It is therefore towards this that all his thought and speculation will tend.

In "The Mystical Theology" Dionysius carries us further into these Divine mysteries. Complete union can only be accomplished by a process leading to ecstasy. Even self-hood must be cast aside; true being can only be achieved by losing oneself in the Super-Essence. Then a momentary glimpse may be attained. Nothing can describe this ineffable experience. The soul is lost in a 'Cloud of Unknowing', is hidden and enwrapped by the 'Divine Darkness', and ever the experience, or rather the reality experienced transcends all our power of apprehension, far less expression. But, even so, the soul is enraptured, because it has attained its deepest desire and realised its highest good. Life for it will now be different, and the soul itself wonderfully enriched.

Such, in barest outline, are the teachings of this remarkable man. They had a tremendous vogue, and in England where some part of his works were translated by the unknown author of the 'Cloud of Unknowing' his doctrines ran through the country, "like wild deer". There is in them a tremendous passion for truth and reality, a deep conviction that the full fruition of the human personality lies in the attainment of the fullest possible reception into the soul of that Reality which for Dionysius is summed up in God. And his thought is so intensely reinforced by his emotions that he is compelled to express himself in strange outlandish terms. One can scarcely doubt, borrowed though his metaphysics may have been, that his mystical experience at least was real, and in a coherent systematized experience alone do we have any adequate criterion of truth. The message of Dionysius found its way into

Many receptive hearts, among which were those of our English mystics. Like those who inspired him, he teaches that contemplation is the highest activity of the human soul, and union with the 'Undeclared Light' its highest destiny.

SECTION II.

- (a) The Influence of St. Augustine, (354 AD - 430 AD).
 - (b) The Influence of St. Bonaventura.(1221 AD - 1274 AD),
 - (c) The Influence of St. Bernard, (1091 AD - 1153 AD).
 - (d) The Influence of The Victorines,
 - (e) The Influence of St. Thomas Aquinas. (1226 AD - 1274AD)
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The Influence of St. Augustine.

We must now retrace our steps somewhat, for as we have already pointed out, Augustine precedes in order of time both Proclus and Dionysius. He is the greatest figure of ~~the~~^{medieval} times and his influence still remains with us. We can hardly hope, in view of his many-sidedness and voluminous writings, to do anything like full justice to his influence. But since his is the predominant influence on the English mystics of the XIVth century, the attempt must be made to set down the main lines of his doctrines so far as these are involved.

Although it is hardly correct to describe Augustine as a mystic, yet many of his sentences and words are truly mystical in character. There is his work as a theological statesman whose supreme task was 'the construction of an imperial system', a Catholic church, as the mysterious instrument of grace in the world, yet, the mystic in him clung to the belief that his true homeland was 'yonder', that his spiritual home was God, that there was a way for a man to rest and enter into union with the One.

Perhaps the most characteristic of his many writings is his Confessions where Augustine gives us the story of his life down to his baptism, and his interpretation of it. There is to be found in the 'Confessions' much of the self-depreciatory spirit of the saint, but this may be corrected by a study of his earlier works, such as the "Soliloquies". The picture given us in the Soliloquies is that of a seriously minded young man of good character who is moved by a passion for truth. They were written shortly after his conversion; the 'Confessions' are at least twelve years later.

Augustine tells us of the early influences that helped to shape his outlook, and in retrospect, he realises that all the while God has been seeking and guiding him, until in abandoning himself to God as the only adequate object of knowledge, and the Highest Good, he found satisfaction and bliss.

Born of a Christian mother and a pagan father, Augustine was not baptised, but was "sealed with the mark of Christ's cross and

seasoned with his salt" and received instruction in the Christian faith. (1). Yet he did not become a Christian until much later. In the course of his secular studies he came upon a volume of Cicero's Hortensius, and this awakened within him a desire for wisdom, and a love for philosophy, a debt which Augustine never really forgot. (2). His studies in the Christian scriptures he tells us were disappointing after reading the Hortensius, and moreover he desired to vindicate the claims of reason as independent of authority.

Then he turned for a time to Manichaeism, a formidable rival to Christianity at that time, and for nine years remained more or less attached to it. Studies in Aristotle, however, enlightened him to the inadequacies of the Manichaean mythology, and Augustine then became a sceptic, a very natural phase. Yet he never really believed that in the mere search for truth men could find happiness. His own highest happiness was to know truth itself. (3). Augustine from this period busied himself with questions regarding the relations of reason, faith, and authority. But a still deeper influence was exercised on him by his studies of the Neoplatonic philosophy. Its influence is very marked in many of his writings; it is obvious in the Soliloquies and other early dialogues, and is also evident in the Confessions.

In Milan he had encountered Ambrose, and the personality of the great Christian teacher had powerfully influenced him. Still, doubts remained with him of the spiritual conception of God, and His relationship to the world. The Idealistic system of the Neoplatonists made an immediate appeal to him. It directed all his thoughts upwards to the Supreme One, taught him that reason must be guided by revelation, that evil was nothing but separation

- (1). Confessions. I. para.17. Ed. by Gibb and Montgomery.
 (2). " III. 7. also VIII. 16.
 (3). Soliloquies. Bk.I. sect. 3, "I seek what I may know, not what I may believe. For it may, indeed, be said that we believe all that we know, but not that we know everything we believe". also sect. 6.

from God, that the world of sense had only a symbolic value, that the main aim of a man's life, if he desired to attain his highest Good, was to mount up to God, the ^{sole} ~~soul~~ reality, that this could be furthered by ascetic practices of self-discipline and self-restraint, that by intense contemplation the ineffable Vision would be revealed, and that in ecstasy the ~~soul~~ could be united to God.

Such teaching profoundly satisfied the mind of Augustine. Indeed, he tells us later how he was helped by his studying of the Neoplatonic doctrines, and acknowledged that by their means he was delivered from materialism. He lost his scepticism for ever. (1).

Yet, though his intellectual difficulties had been solved, moral difficulties remained, and Neoplatonism failed to meet the deeper need. "Upon these, I believe, Thou therefore willedst that I should fall, before I studied Thy scriptures, that it might be imprinted on my memory, how I was affected by them, and that afterwards I might discern and distinguish between those who saw whither they were to go, yet saw not the way, and the way that leadeth not to behold only, but to dwell in the beatific country". (2).

Augustine turned therefore to the study of scripture, especially the Pauline epistles, and submitted himself to the authority of the church. (3). He then learned that redemption was attained by means of the Incarnate God, that through Him lay the way to the Truth. he so anxiously sought. (4). But the Christ was where the church is, hence the necessity for acknowledging the authority of the church, and believing what the church believes. Augustine therefore became a Catholic Christian. He now acknowledged that "Fides praecedit intellectum", and that "Auctoritas praecedit rationem". Yet he never forgot that faith implies reason, and its object requires the apprehension of reason for its full exercise. We shall return to this point again.

(1). Confessions. VII. 16. 23.

(2). " VII. 26. 3.

(3). " VII. 27.

(4). " VIII. 29. also 'The City of God' Bk.XI.

But though he had come to acknowledge the truth as revealed in scripture, by the church, and through the Incarnate God, he was not at peace with himself or with God. In his Confessions he tells of the need that arose in his own soul, the need with which the mystic's quest begins, the need to resolve an inner conflict. He had indeed, found 'the pearl of great price', but still hesitated to sell all that he had; the law in his members warred against the law of God in the inner man. The final stages are vividly recorded in the Confessions, in the description of the famous Garden scene. (1). Debating the issues with himself, in tears, he heard the voice of a child saying "take and read, take and read", and on taking up the epistle to the Romans, which he had been perusing, he read the words, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh". The light shone; he broke irrevocably with the past, renounced all sinful lusts, and set himself henceforth to devote his life to God. (2). He now possessed the truth for which he had so long searched, the truth as assured by the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, through scripture, and by the authority of the church.

This record of his spiritual pilgrimage as we have it in the Confessions, together with the earlier dialogues could scarcely fail, setting forth, as some of them do, Christianity as a personal way of life, to influence subsequent thinkers, and in particular, the mystics. (3). We may now turn to the consideration of the main trend of his doctrines so far as these affect our thesis.

As we have already noticed, the church early came to recognise the necessity for a reasoned defence of the Christian faith. The Patristic philosophy was thus wholly concerned with apologetics and dogmatics. That is, a two fold task was involved. The Patristic philosophers on the one hand, attempted to set up a defence of the christian faith as against the Greek philosophers. Augustine expanded this line of treatment in his great work, The City of God. On the other hand, they attempted to formulate definitely and precisely, the doctrines involved by Christian teaching, and the

(1). Confessions. Bk. VIII. 23-28.

(2). " IX. 1.

(3). Contra Academicos: De Beata Vita: De Ordine: Soliloquia.

dogmas upon which it rests. The problems discussed involved questions concerning the nature and function of reason, and its relation to faith. The church was forced to propound its chief dogmas as mysteries that transcend our powers of human understanding. As we have seen, Augustine was for a time hindered, by his attempt to found entirely upon reason, from accepting the authority of the scriptures and of the church. There were three central dogmas, These were, the Cosmological dogma of Creation out of Nothing, the Theological dogma of the Trinity and the Incarnation, and the Religious dogma that Salvation is only possible through Divine Grace. This third dogma was most difficult to solve even from a mystical point of view. It raised problems of an ethical and religious nature. It was central in all the most influential philosophies of the time. We have already dealt with it from the stand-point of Plato and Plotinus. It can be traced in Stoicism and Epicureanism. It raised the question which is central in our study of the English mystics, along with others of their predecessors, ~~and~~ ^{as} to the path whereby man might hope to pass to true blessedness. It first received adequate treatment from Augustine, and in the ~~name~~ ^{main} both in Catholic and Protestant churches his teaching is still the official doctrine. We shall therefore deal with the teaching of Augustine from this central stand-point.

Augustine, throughout, is strongly influenced by the platonic teaching. There runs through his works his deep desire to know truth, for in the knowledge of the truth alone can he find rest and satisfaction. (1). The truth that he seeks is comprehended after the manner of Plato, that is, as involving the deep Ontological distinction to which we have already referred. He, like Plato, makes a sharp distinction between the sensuous and the ~~supra-sensuous~~, between what is transitory and what is eternal, between the earthly Babylon, and Jerusalem, the heavenly city. Thus he arrives at the point of view that God is the only independent and complete reality, and as such, the sole adequate object of knowledge. This is the

(1). City of God. Bk. V.

keynote of the Soliloquies, and it is central to the Confessions as well. The things of sense must be abandoned. (1). No other object is self-subsistent or self-explanatory; in so far as it possesses 'being' at all it is as it partakes of God. God is 'the true and perfect life, in whom and by whom and through whom those live who do truly and perfectly live'. Since truth is reality that has come, as it were, to a consciousness of its own meaning in and through the individual mind, it follows that only God can be fully known. Other objects and beings partaking as they do of non-being, i.e. of unreality, cannot be fully known, nor can that which is creaturely, hope fully to apprehend God. An adequate and full knowledge of God is forever impossible to the creature, and in the last resort, can only be possible to God Himself. This brings us to a discussion of Augustine's position on the limitations of reason, and the necessity for faith and authority, and also to his conception of Divine Grace.

Again we have the Platonic influence revealed in Augustine's contrast between the evil and the good. He works it out in his Confessions as involved in his own personal experience. So-called nature is fallen nature, and it is therefore distorted and corrupted. It is thus difficult for man, removed to a distance from God by his ^{SIMPUL} ~~simplicity~~ to apprehend God. Man, certainly, was created in the image of God, for "He created for him a soul endowed with reason and intelligence, so that he might excell all the creatures of the earth", but because of his sin he has lost God. (2) His salvation will lie in achieving union with God, and in a more adequate knowledge of Him.

How is he to come to this knowledge; by what means is it to be achieved? Augustine's answer is that of the mystic. Salvation, in the acquisition of knowledge of God, and restoration of

(1). Soliloquies. Bk. I. para. 24. also sect. II. para. 7.

(2). City of God, Bk. XII. para. 23.

communion with Him, is due to the working of Divine Grace, and it acts through the present agency of the Holy Spirit. In other words, God in His love, is pleased to reveal Himself and His purposes. If knowledge is to be possible, Divine revelation is required.

Augustine teaches that God manifests Himself in nature. (1).

It is a symbolic system that will carry the reflective mind beyond itself to the contemplation and consideration of Him who is its Author. We thus symbolise God in natural beauty, in light, and other natural phenomena. God has also revealed himself through the scriptures which Augustine came to accept as infallible. (2). The Christian doctrines as taught in scripture will subject the mind to God, and the passions to the mind. (3). The church's authority must also be accepted, as she is the custodian of the scriptures and of doctrine.

But above all, God has revealed Himself through Christ. In the City of God, Augustine teaches, that through the mediator ~~as~~ Christ, we attain knowledge of God, for Christ is God, thus in every way, by nature, through scripture and the church, through the mediator, Jesus Christ, the human soul is assisted back to knowledge of God.

But Augustine teaches, that reason alone cannot sustain the journey back. Faith is necessary, not in the sense that it contradicts reason, for Augustine never held this, but in the sense that it transcends reason, and embraces love as well, since it is a wider term than reason. The main function of reason, from this point of view, is to reinforce and confirm faith. For the teachings of scripture must be accepted. How this worked out in Augustine's own experience we have already seen in the account given in his conversion. When faith is exercised, and authority accepted, and love is directed upon God, God Himself illumines the intellect and enables us to discover and apprehend Himself. (4).

(1). City of God, Bk. IV. para. 33.

(2), Confessions, XI. 2.

(3) *City of God*,
Bk. IX para 5

(4) *Confessions*, VIII. 1.

This position is worked out very fully in the Soliloquies.

Augustine teaches that reason is to the mind what sight is to the eyes. The task, therefore, of the soul is three-fold. It possesses eyes fit for use, it must look, and it must see. It is fit to accomplish this only if free from all earthly taint and all desire of mortal things. Faith alone is equal to this task. Hope, too, is necessary, and love, for we must love the promised light. Without faith, hope, and love, we cannot see God.

"The gaze of the soul is Reason; but since it does not follow that every one who looks, sees, that right and perfect looking, which is followed by seeing, is called virtue, for virtue is rectified and perfected Reason. But that very act of looking, even though the eyes be sound, cannot turn them toward the light unless three things persist: Faith, by which the soul believes that that toward which the gaze has been directed, is such, that to gaze upon it will cause blessedness: Hope, by which, the eyes being rightly fixed, the soul expects the vision to follow: and Love, which is the soul's longing to see and enjoy it. Such looking is followed by the vision of God Himself, who is the goal of the soul's gaze, not because it could not continue to look, but because there is nothing beyond this on which it can fix its gaze. This is truly perfected Reason - Virtue - attaining its proper end, on which the happy life follows". (1).

God is thus, in Augustine's view, accessible to the Intelligence, yet, illumination is required; as in the case of earthly objects, for perfect vision the sun is required, so in the heavenly vision, the illumination of God is necessary. (2). The supernatural light comes from God Himself.

(1). Solil. Bk. I. sect. VI.

(2). " Bk. I. " VIII. also City of God,
Bk. X. para. 2.

In other words, the power which directs and illumines the soul stimulating him into ever deeper knowledge and insight, lies beyond the individual in the greater Reality to which he belongs, in which, and through which, he has his being. The objective reality thus acting upon him and through him, progressively reveals to him its inexhaustible wealth of meaning and value, and, as we shall see, constantly impels him to develop and pursue ideals that are in harmony with, and give expression to, itself.

As Augustine further teaches, we must see to it that we are in a sound condition for our first stumbling steps. His teaching here has also left its impression ~~upon~~^{upon} our English mystics. We must get rid of our lower desires. If the pearl of great price is to be ours, then we must sell all that we have. All sensuous entanglements, all unworthy desires, all things that hinder us from seeing the light, must be driven out of our lives. Our love must be ordered, and every desire subordinated to the desire for wisdom. (1). Augustine thus embraces asceticism as the true mode of life, and teaches insistently that humility is the root of all virtue. This is the Platonic ascent of the soul from the transient things of sense to the contemplation of the Eternal, or rather it is the mystic 'noughting' of the soul; on its inward side, it is 'dying to live'.

Augustine had set out to do two things, he wanted to know the truth, the path to the ultimate Reality, and he sought to realise his true self. In the vision of God he found the only, and adequate, object of knowledge, and in union with God he found that true and perfect life in whom and by whom and through whom those live who do truly and perfectly live. This for him is the blessed life, to partake of the supreme Good; this is the end of the City of God "that, for the sake of which other things are to be desired, while it is to be desired for its own sake". Again, "He shall be the end of our desires who shall be seen without end, loved without cloy, praised without weariness". (2).

(1). Solil. Bk. I. sect.10.

(2), City of God, Bk.XXII. para. 30.

Thus Augustine came to teach that salvation is not found in the self, but in that which, by its indwelling power, delivers the self from itself, that Goodness, Happiness, and Wisdom, is a free gift, that it comes, not by merit, but by ~~earned~~ grace.

We shall now turn to the consideration of the teaching of Bonaventura in whom the Augustinian tradition culminated, and who exercises a very direct influence on the English mystics of the XIVth century. Again we shall confine ourselves to such aspects of his teaching as bear directly upon our subject.

The influence of St. Bonaventura.

Bonaventura was born at Bagnorea near Viterbo in the year 1221. In him Franciscan zeal and fervour is linked with a deep appreciation of the teachings of Augustine which he received from his teacher Alexander of Hales, under whom he studied in the University of Paris. Having graduated in the year 1248 he became the occupant of the chair reserved for the Franciscans in that university. Later, Aquinas and Bonaventura were contemporaries, and he died on the 15th of July, 1274 (1). His doctrines have profoundly influenced Rolle and the other English mystics of the XIV th century.

Gilson points out that in the doctrines of Bonaventura one thoroughly defined end is continually kept in view, that is, the love of God. The study of theology will lead us to acknowledge this aim, philosophy too, ought to help us to realise our end. In his well known mystical treatise 'Itinerarium Mentis in Deum' we are given in concise form the developed doctrines of Bonaventura.

We shall therefore confine ourselves to this document, whilst we acknowledge in passing, the interest and value of such Treatises as the Breviloquium and the Reductione Artium Ad Theologium.

In the Itinerarium, Bonaventura sets forth the illuminated way of the soul's journey from Egypt to Canaan, from sin, and inward discord to righteousness and the harmony of joyful union with the everlasting reality.

The true progress of life is thus a journey of the soul towards God, and blessedness in union with Him. This journey has as its object, according to Bonaventura, the recovery of that contemplation of God, and communion with him, that mankind enjoyed before the Fall.

The consequences of the Fall were the blinding of the human mind and spirit with ignorance, and the concupiscence that troubles the flesh. Hence veils were interposed between the soul and God, and

(1) La Philosophie ou moyen Age. Gilson. Ch. IV.

man became unable to discern the Divine Face. Man has thus lost his highest happiness, for as Bonaventura teaches, "Since blessedness is none other than the enjoyment of the highest good, and since the highest good is above us, no man can be rendered blessed unless he rises above himself, not in body, but in heart." (1)

To recover that enjoyment, Divine Grace is necessary, for "We cannot be raised above ourselves unless through a superior virtue which raises us up." (2) Divine aid is necessary; the way must be illumined; but the aid and the illumination are forthcoming if we really seek from our hearts to return to God.

Blinded by ignorance and sin, reason of itself will not avail to help us. We cannot return to our first unblemished wisdom in which the contemplation of eternal Truth and Goodness was enjoyed.

The Divine object is too high, too far removed for reason to attain. The evil consequences of the fall must first be dealt with before our means of knowledge are adequate to our need. There is first the need for Purification. This is obtained through prayer, whereby reforming grace begins its work upon us, justice will continue the work of purification, and finally, knowledge will illumine our minds to the nature of the steps whereby we may ascend to God. (3)

Since knowledge by means of reason, owing to our sinful condition, is sure to fail us, we must have recourse to another type of knowledge, that which comes by faith. Our knowledge will still be imperfect, but none the less, certain. Faith will enable us to apprehend, if dimly, an object too high for us to apprehend otherwise, and more, will carry with it a depth of conviction and assurance unequalled by any other means of knowing. As Augustine teaches, so also Bonaventura states, love is likewise necessary, for it is through love for the supreme object that the act of faith is made.

For Bonaventura, as for Augustine, faith precedes ratiocination, although, having come to a definite belief through our love for the supreme object, we shall do well to secure the same by working out the reasons for our belief.

(1) Itinerarium . Cap.1. par.1. (2) ibid. Cap.1. par.7.

Thus philosophy and theology, though differing in their methods, are seened to be complementary to one another. Each in its own way will lead us to God. Philosophy is born, as Gilson points out, of a need of the heart which wishes more freely to enjoy the object of its faith. (1) The end is given by faith, but as yet, having only started on our pilgrimage, though we truly adhere to God through faith and love, our hold is uncertain, and our adherence unsteady, because clear knowledge is not yet attained and hence perfect love and joy are not yet realised.

Now, the foundation of a will that is rightly directed, and of a knowledge that is clear and adequate, is the work of Grace. Here Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, will come to our aid, if we approach him in humility and with prayerful reverence. "He is made to us, of the will of God, "wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption" since he is the virtue of God and the wisdom of God, is full of love and truth; he made love and truth; he infused the grace, to wit, the love, which, since it is of a pure heart and a good conscience and an unfⁱⁿfolded faith, harmonises the whole soul. He taught thoroughly the knowledge of Truth in accordance with the triple mode of theology, viz., symbolic, peculiar and mystic, so that through symbolic theology we make right use of the things that can be perceived by the senses, through peculiar theology we make a right use of things that can be understood, through mystic theology we are carried to super-mental excesses". (2) God is thus the source of our illumination in our pilgrimage; the path is illuminated from beginning to end.

Through the light we receive by faith in, and love of, the revealed Word, we are awakened alike to the suggestiveness of natural things, and to the truths of holy scripture, and by means of these are ~~led~~^{led} on to our Divine goal. In all these things Christ himself is our teacher and master. Thus the illuminated way is open to us and our veiled and darkened sense of the universe is again rendered intelligible.

(1) Phil. au Moyen age. Ch. IV.

(2) Itin. Cap. 1. Para 7.

For Bonaventura, as for the Platonists, and for Augustine, the one supreme and sufficient Reality, the adequate object of all our knowing, is the transcendent God. (1) All else depends on him: all other truths are but reflections or representations of him. The universe, therefore, is a ladder whereby we may ascend to Him, and all its objects are symbols and representations of him, and these to the illuminated mind, convey countless suggestions inviting us to return to him. The way of salvation is to tread this path, to climb this ladder, starting with the things of sense, and ending with ineffable union with God Himself.

In this ascension from the transient to the eternal and immutable, from the sign to the significance, from what is created to the Creator, there are three principal stages. The first stage concerns things 'outside ourselves'; the second stage concerns things 'within ourselves'; and the third stage things that are 'above' us. Each stage involves two steps. There are therefore six steps in the ladder by means of which we ascend to God by the aid of Divine Light.

Corresponding to these six steps there are six powers of the spirit whereby we may rise from the lowest to the highest. These are, sense, imagination, reason, intellect, understanding, and 'the crown of the mind'.

A. The first stage.

The whole world of sense is a mirror through which we may pass to God who is its artificer (2). By contemplating the harmony, beauty and order, and not only the essence, virtue and beneficence of things sensed, the mind is carried to the understanding of the boundless power, wisdom and goodness of God the Creator (3). "And so if a man's mind is not lit up by the splendours of things and creatures, he is blind; if he is not awakened by clamour so mighty he is deaf; if he does not praise God for all these works, he is dumb; if he does not pay heed to the first beginning because of these signs so great, he is a fool." (4)

(1) Itin. Cap 5. Para 1 & 3. (2) ibid Cap. 2 para. 9.

(3) Ibid Cap. 1. Paras. 9, 10 & 11. (4) ibid Cap. 1 para. 15.

But further, turning to the second step in the ladder of ascent, Bonaventura points out, not merely do things and living creatures presented to the senses, refer us back to their Creator, but God is himself directly present in them. (1) Each object betrays the real presence of the Creator to a heart that is purified by Divine Grace. There are aspects of the universe that are endowed with the power of generation, there are likewise spiritual substances, 'heavenly spirits', 'intelligences, that have the right of rule, to whom administration of the universe is attributed, and this they receive from God by the 'instreaming of virtue'. By means of sense we perceive that all sensible things are subject to these moving powers. "Through the five senses we are led to the knowledge of the motions of the spirit, as if through effect to the knowledge of cause." (2). The pleasure that results to the observer in apprehending the things of sense is due to the proportion, beauty and order of sensible things. All these things are signs in which we can observe our God, who is everywhere through the first generation of himself. (3) "God therefore is also the spring of true pleasure, and we are led in search of that very pleasure as a consequence of all pleasure" (4), and the pleasure which we enjoy in contemplation of nature is therefore a step on the ladder to the eternal God. (5)

This then is the first stage on our ascent, the realisation, by our minds, under the enlightenment granted by the eternal Word, that natural things suggest God. They are the shadows cast by a reality greater than themselves. As a frond of seaweed suggests the ocean, as light suggests the sun so does the order, beauty and multitudinous variety of nature suggest God. It possesses a sacramental significance for our minds, and rightly understood will lead us on our way to the reality that lies behind it and sustains it.

Put otherwise, the world offers evidence of coherence and structure that makes a fundamental appeal to our powers of apprehension and appreciation. Further, it is not self-explanatory, but refers us back to the fundamental Unity that lies behind it, to its efficient, final, and Divine Cause. Here as in Plato, Plotinus and again in

(1) Itin. Cap 2. Para. 1. (2) Ibid Cap 2. Para 2 & 3.
 (3) Ibid " 2. " 7. (4) " " 2. " 8.
 (5) " " 2. " 11.

Augustine, we have the deep ontological distinction between the real world of immutable forms and the changing world of sense appearances, yet the latter possesses for our powers of apprehension symbolic significance that will lead us to reflect on the super-natural order that is symbolically revealed. It is the medieval mode of accounting for the transcendence and immanence of God in the universe.

B. The second stage.

Bonaventura, however, hastens on to the consideration of the second stage in our ascent to God. He hardly stays to elaborate the various modes in which the sense-world reveals God to our minds so he passes to a higher stage of illumination, and seeks for God in the human soul. Here we discover, not faint traces or vestiges, but the very image of the Divine Trinity. We have now left the porch and seek to see God in the interior part of the Tabernacle (1).

The Trinity is reflected in the threefold power of mind itself, that is, in love, understanding and memory. Each of these possesses three modes of operation. Thus the mind appears in a triple manner as the image of God. Just as natural beauty is conditioned by the super-natural Beauty, so Bonaventura would argue, the native powers of the mind are likewise conditioned by the super-natural Love, Understanding and Memory of God. Consideration of the powers of memory will lead us to reflect on eternity, for its function is to deal with things past, present and future; understanding will lead us to the consideration of Truth since its function is to deal with the understanding of [?]ends, propositions, and inferences, and we are thereby led from consideration of particular things to that which is most general, and love, or elective virtue proceeds to the consideration of the highest goodness in accordance with its own operations(2).

The full resolution of ends leads the soul to God.

"But all these sciences have certain and infallible rules like lights and rays descending from eternal law into our mind, and on that account our mind irradiated and filled with so great splendours, unless it be blind, can be led through its own self to the contemplation of that eternal light which constrains the wise to admiration, and on

(1) Itin. Cap 3. Para 1.

(2) *ibid.* Cap. 3. Para 4.

the other hand leads the foolish, who do not believe, into perturbation in order that they may understand. So that that prophetic utterance may be fulfilled, namely, when Thou dost shine in wondrous wise from the eternal mountains all the fools are disturbed in heart".(1)

Thus according to Bonaventura, the mind is definitely joined to Eternal Truth, for it can only understand in adequate measure, what is relative and particular, and recognise these as such, in the light of what is universal and absolute. The greater is seen everywhere to condition and elucidate the lesser; to the enlightened understanding the universals are everywhere revealed. Thus, as Augustine himself had taught, 'our changing and uncertain spirit' is in need of the help of God who is the necessary truth, it is in and through God we apprehend the truth.

None the less, we know God more directly by thus entering into our own minds, for according to Bonaventura, the knowledge of our own minds and their working is a more direct, more immediate type of knowledge than is knowledge of exterior things apprehended by means of the senses.

Thus if the evidence of God's existence appear to be lacking, it can only be that we have not reflected deeply enough, and that fleshly concupiscence and ignorance due to sinfulness have veiled the truth from us.(2)

But intellectual illumination is not sufficient, there must be moral illumination as well, and without it there can be no real intellectual illumination. We cannot without it sufficiently appreciate the truths revealed to the understanding. (3) Here we arrive at the fourth step of the ladder, and thus to a higher type of illumination and a nearer approach to our goal.

(1) Itin. Cap 3 Para 7.

(2) The Philosophy of Bonaventura. E. Gilson. "The human intellect" pages 346 FF.

(3) Itin. Cap 4 Para 1.

(4) The philosophy of Bonaventura. E. Gilson. Chap. 13 "The moral illumination."

More than ever is Divine help and illumination required here, for "the mind is easily distracted by cares, and does not enter into itself through memory; clouded by phantasms it does not return to itself through intelligence; led astray by concupiscence it by no means returns to itself through desire of sweetness within and spiritual joy. Lying completely among these sensible things it cannot reenter into itself as into the image of God." (1)

Since man has fallen he must lie until someone aids him to rise, and the soul is not perfectly raised as yet by the things revealed in sense experience to a view of itself and of eternal truth in itself, "unless truth when the human form was assumed in Christ should become a ladder for itself, thus repairing the former ladder which had been broken in Adam." (2) Christ, therefore, is the sole door by which we can enter within ourselves in order to be delighted in the Lord within ourselves. (3) We draw near this door in faith, hope and love with regard to Christ, for Christ is the mediator between God and man. He alone can lead us into enjoyment of truth.

This is done when our mind is invested with the chief theological virtues; their effect is to purify, illumine, and perfect our souls so that the image of God is again reformed within us. Then the mind will become like to the Supernal Jerusalem, and further, will be disposed to these "mental excesses", whereby complete union may be attained. Through devotion, love, and exultation in the highest things, the will shall be drawn towards these things as by a law of spiritual gravitation, and the love of Christ infused in our hearts by the Holy Ghost will lead us into knowledge of these things. This illumination of the virtues is effected in a manner similar to that of the eternal truths, and are made to tend towards the same end. The ray of Divine light penetrates the soul and leads it back to its origin.

(1) Itin. Cap 4. Para. 1.

(2), ibid. Cap. 4. Para 2.

(3) ibid. Cap 4. Para. 2.

Put otherwise, the moral virtues, like intellectual truths, are conditioned by universal spiritual values. Man is not self-contained as regards virtue any more than he is self-contained as regards knowledge. Revelation is everywhere required. What is necessary is, that in virtue, as in knowledge, there must be the initial desire to apprehend and acquire. In the case of virtue the soul must be prepared and purified; the will must be rightly directed, the desired must be cleansed. This is the work of Divine Grace as made manifest in Christ. Given the desire for goodness, the spirit of God made manifest in spiritual values, especially as these are revealed in the character and conduct of Jesus Christ, will do the rest, and as these values deepen character and direct conduct illumination becomes greater, and the mind is on the way to union and ecstasy.

C. The third stage.

We may now turn to the consideration of the last stage and the final steps in the way to God. Here we turn to the contemplation of God Himself, or to that which is "above us". The two steps are to contemplate the being of God, and the goodness of God. In this third stage we have entered with the High Priest into the Holy of Holies wherein we may contemplate these eternal and invisible things.

As Gilson points out, Bonaventura incorporates the ontological argument of St. Anselm. (1) Since the presence of God is the condition of knowing Him, so the idea of God implies His existence.

We may not be possessed of a clear conception of His essence, but we may know indubitably that He exists. "To Be" is the first name of God, and the soul must set itself to the contemplation of the Purest Being. Here is the everlasting reality on which the soul is set; in contemplation of Him will consist our highest blessedness. We have now forsaken shadows, tokens, symbols, and rest in the reality itself. (2)

1) Phil. Au moyen age. Chap 4.

2) Itin. Cap 5. Para 4.

But we must also set ourselves to the contemplation of the Goodness of God. Through the vision of eternal Being we come to know other things, so likewise through contemplation of the Good do we understand its emanations and manifestations. God is the chief foundation of both. For the Trinity as Bonaventura points out, diffuses itself throughout all creation.(1) These two aspects of the supreme Godhead can be contemplated in the Incarnate Word.

There we have made manifest for all flesh the Eternal Being and Goodness of God. (2)

In the consideration of these things the highest perfection of the mind will be found to consist, and again, in Christ, we are made to realise how wonderfully exalted our humanity may also be. Here is the illumination of the whole personality. All that now remains having taken this sixth step is to await "the day of quiet" wherein, through ecstasy, union with God may be attained.(3)

But this highest and last stage is beyond description and exceeds the powers of the understanding. The world of sensible things and the mind itself must be transcended; in the transit to union with God, Christ Himself is the way and the gate, the ladder by which we attain to God. (4)

Bonaventura is here very much influenced by the Mystical Theology of Dionysius. (5) "But in the crossing if it is to be perfect it is necessary that all operations of the understanding should be left behind, and the crown of love completely transferred and transformed into God. But this is mystic and most secret, a thing which no one knows but him who accepts it, nor anyone accepts unless he desires it, nor desires unless the fire of the Holy Spirit inflames him heartily, whom Christ sent to earth, and on that account the apostle says that the mystic wisdom has been revealed through the Holy Spirit.(6)

(1) Itin. Cap. 6. Paras. 1 & 2. (2) Ibid. 6. para. 7.

(3) Ibid. 6 para 7. (4) " Cap 7, paras. 1 & 4.

(5) Cap. 7, para 5. (6) Cap. 7, para 4.

We shall conclude with another quotation which sums up the whole matter, "but if you ask the reason for these things question grace, not doctrine, desire, not understanding, the groan of prayer, not the zeal of reading, the bridegroom not the Master, God, not man, darkness, not brightness, not light but fire that completely inflames and transfers to God with excessive zeal and most burning affections He who loves this death can see God because it is indubitably true, "no man shall see Me and live". Let us die therefore and enter into darkness; let us impose silence upon cares, concupiscences and phantasms. Let us cross with the crucified Christ to the Father, that when the Father has been shown to us we may say with Philip "He is sufficient for us", let us hear with Paul, "My Grace is sufficient for Thee".(1)

So we end where we began. Bonaventura is all the while concerned with that love of God which issues in the transformation of the soul that loves in return, into the Divine likeness. Again, it means, 'Dying to live,' but in self-negation of this type alone is true and full personality possible. These doctrines sank very deeply into the mind of Richard Rolle, and as we shall see coloured even his modes of expression, and their influence is also very apparent in the writings of the other English mystics of the XIV-th century.

(1) Itin. Cap 7, Para 6.

The influence of St. Bernard.

Again we must retrace our footsteps somewhat in order to consider briefly the great influence exercised on our group of mystics among many others, by Bernard of Clairvaux. He wrote and taught during the first half of the XII th century. His theology, like that of Bonaventura, is derived from Augustine, but the importance of his work lies less in the speculative aspects of his teaching than in the stimulus he gave to the more romantic side of mysticism as developed in his Sermons in the Canticles and in his poems. His influence, together with that of Richard of St. Victor, dominated mystical literature for over two hundred years.

St. Bernard's mystical teaching is chiefly found in three of his works. These are the treatises on 'Consideration', that on, 'The loving of God', and his 'Sermons in the Canticles'.

The emphasis in these works lies on the love of God. The cause of loving God is God Himself, and we are exhorted to love Him without measure. In this way the soul may for brief moments, though rarely, in this life, be so united to God in love as to become God-like. (1) Perfect holiness and knowledge of spiritual things are achieved not by theological study or any of the outward means of grace, but by devout contemplation.

"Consideration," Bernard teaches, is one of the creatures of heaven, and it has for its object deeper insight into heavenly things. It is the power of application of the mind to the search for ^{TRUTH} ~~proof~~. It prepares the way for contemplation, which differs from Consideration, in the sense that the latter leads the soul to an unerring intuition of the truth. (2)

(1) De diligendo Deo. Chap 10. pages 27-28.

(2) De Consideratione Book 2, chap. 2.

Bernard, however, uses the two terms as if they were synonymous.

There are three groups of things to which Consideration ought to be applied. These are 'things beneath', 'things around' and, 'things above'. The third group is that which calls for contemplation. The aid of the senses is not required, for the things of God by means of Consideration are immediately perceived. (1) There are three types of Consideration. One is Economical, in which systematic use of the senses and of sensible things is exercised in our daily lives so that we may win the favour of God; the second is Estimative, in which everything is analysed and weighed in order that God may be found; the third is Speculative, in which the mind retires within itself and detaches itself from human affairs in order that the soul may contemplate God. (2) Thus, the highest operation of the soul, is to contemplate God and to rest in Him. Man's highest quest is to seek for God and in Him to find the greatest happiness, and in that quest our hearts must lead the way. For God is the best object of desire, though even our highest attainment may never comprehend Him, for however high our thought may soar, God is still beyond, yet He is never sought in vain. (3) This theme is elaborated in 'De Diligendo Deo' and in 'Sermons in the Canticles', where Bernard deals with the love of God. The quest for God begins in a sense of need, the need for happiness and a lasting satisfaction. There are various 'goods', but Bernard teaches that 'Goods' of the soul are highest. In order to enjoy them and to attain them the soul must thirst for Divine wisdom, so that the mind being reinforced and stimulated by strong desire, may have opened to it new perceptions and intuitions that will enable it to transcend all outward things and to discern spiritual realities.

(1) De Consid. bk. 5. Chap. 1. page 130.

(2) *ibid.* Bk. 5, Chap. 2.

(3) *ibid.* Bk. 5 Chap. 11.

(4) De Diligendo Deo, Ch. 2.

in this way alone, so Bernard teaches, can the spirit of man be united to God. "Of all the feelings, affections, and movements of the soul, love alone is the only one by which the reasonable creature is able to respond to its Creator, and even in some sort to repay, though not upon equal terms the goodness which it has received from Him."(1)

Corrupted by sin and self-will the soul loses its resemblance to the Divine Creator, yet by ~~tuning~~ turning to the Incarnate Word, by conversion, it will be reformed by Him and made conformable to Him.

This is accomplished by a marriage between the soul and Christ.(2)

The one thing necessary is that God should be loved. He requires that as Lord, he shall be feared, as Father, honoured, but as Bridegroom loved.

But there are degrees of love, and it behoves the soul to love in the highest degree. In the first place, man loves himself for his own sake, then love of self may expand into love of one's neighbour, then God may be loved because of benefits received, that is, because of His goodness, but the fourth and highest degree is to love God because He is good. (3) This last degree is mystical love, and love of self is lost in love of God. The fourth degree of love is rare, and it leads to ecstatic union with God himself, but Bernard teaches it can never really be finally accomplished in this life. (4) In the moments of ecstasy peace and rest are attained.

It is death to things present being divested not only of desires for, but ~~for~~ also of the haunting ideas and images of, things corporeal and inferior, it, the soul, may enter into pure relations with those in which is the image and likeness of purity.(5)

(1) Sermons in Canticles. 83 para. 4. (2) Bernard may refer to the Church as the Bride, yet it is the individual soul that he exhorts.

(3) De Diligendo Deo Chap. 8. (4) *ibid.* Chap. 10 page 27.

(5) Sermons in Canticles. 52 para. 5.

Thus, "God is sought, not by movement of the feet, but by the desires of the heart; and when a soul has been so happy as to find Him, that sacred desire is not extinguished, but on the contrary, is increased." (1)

Thus is the human will changed from evil to good, and life is renewed, the change being made manifest in outward behaviour.

In these ways, Bernard sets forth the manner in which the human soul can experience transcendent reality. Strong believer as he was in the authority of the church, and in the efficacy of the sacraments, he remained convinced of this possibility of direct and intimate relationship with God. Such experiences moreover, as we have indicated, are to be marked by practical effects, though contemplation again is the highest spiritual condition. Throughout his works there is a marked devotion to the person of Christ, and in all these various aspects he has left a deep impression on succeeding ages.

(1) Sermons in Canticles. 84 para. 1.

The influence of the Victorines.

Another main line of influence is that which came through the teaching of Hugh of St. Victor (1097-1141) and his pupil and contemporary, Richard (ob.c.1173) both of whom taught in the Abbey of St. Victor in Paris. The influence of Richard, a Scot, was probably the more profound. Hugh, a Saxon, though his writings contain a vein of mysticism, was really a scholastic philosopher. By him mysticism was given a place as a recognised department of theology. (1)

The scholastic passion for classification and allegory is evident in all their works. Their main importance lies in the fact that through their works, especially those of Richard, the Plotinian-Dionysian type of mysticism was transmitted to the medieval world, and this had its effect on English mysticism.

Translation of various works of Richard, such as, "Benjamin Major" + "Benjamin Minor", are often met with in English XIII th and XIV th century manuscripts. (2)

Hugh teaches that the philosopher is a lover of wisdom, but the love of wisdom is the illumination of the understanding mind by the Pure Wisdom. The human mind is recalled to Wisdom's self in order that its study of the Divine Wisdom, and its friendship with the pure Divine Mind, may be consummated. In the process the soul is impressed with the character of Pure Wisdom, and is led back to the strength and purity of her true nature. From this Divine illumination is born the truth of thoughts and speculations, and also holy and pure morality.

There are three types of spiritual speculation. First, cogitation takes place when the image of some thing is suddenly presented to the mind. Then follows meditation, or the reconsideration of such a thought. Here takes place a struggle between

(1) Mysticism, Evelyn Underhill, appendix page 547.

(2) *ibid.* " " 547 - 8.



ignorance and knowledge. Lastly, there is contemplation resulting in possession of what meditation seeks. The mind is then strengthened by a fire of love, and soon all the darkness vanishes and the soul is spread out to the contemplation of truth.

We are brought into knowledge of God in five ways. It is involved, as we learn, in the creation of the world. We discover it in the nature of the soul, then from the knowledge of Divine speech; from contemplation, lastly, from joy of ecstatic vision.

The last mode of knowledge of God is the supreme type of contemplation, and is only possible to the few. Such as are illuminated by the splendour of Divine Life hate sin, cast the world aside, and are utterly united to God.

The most perfect contemplation is a brief act in which the soul experiences within itself the fruit of eternal life, but it must then turn again to the active life in order to help and succour others.

From this brief account of Hugh's doctrines we can readily see how much he has influenced Bonaventura, and we shall again discover his doctrines in the writings of our English mystics.

Richard of St. Victor.

Richard completed the work of Hugh in building up the system of mystical theology. In his writings mystical activity is definitely related to mental activity. By reason we can contemplate visible and comprehensible things and thence the mind of the contemplative ascends in orderly manner to the beholding of invisible things beyond the reach of reason. There are three stages in this mystical life of apprehension; first, there is the dilation of the mind which comes to realise its own capacity for a wider and more wonderful span of experience; then the mind is uplifted to things above itself through prayer; finally it is translated into another sphere of reality. This is the essence of ecstasy. (1)

(1) Mysticism, E. Underhill. pages 442, 452, and 504.

Self knowledge is an important part of the purification that is necessary. The soul is like a mirror that reflects the invisible things of God, and only by purity of heart can the mirror be made clear. These two things, purity and self knowledge are indispensable conditions for the mystical experience.

In his mystical treatises on the Four degrees of love, Richard applies the symbolism of marriage to the ascent of the soul. The first stage is compared to the betrothal, and this is nourished by meditation in which the soul "thirsts for the Beloved". The second degree is the marriage, and it is expressed in the deep intercourse of the "prayer of quiet". The third degree involves a complete surrender or self-merging in which "the soul no longer thirsts for God but into God." Here the soul enters into the Unitive Way. The final degree is a Divine creativeness, the "transforming union" in which "the soul brings forth its children".

This is the real object of all that has gone before. Richard has worked out very fully the implications of his symbolism, and gives us a key to the understanding of the lives of the great mystics.

Mysticism is more than the mere enjoyment of God, it involves spiritual fruits as a consequence. (1)

These, then, are the doctrines that have deeply influenced our XIV-th century English mystics. Before we turn to the study of their teachings we shall glance at the teaching of Aquinas in whose works the influence of Aristotle is strongly in evidence.

(1) Mysticism. E. Underhill. pages 165, 166.

The influence of Aquinas.

Although the Platonic influence has been dominant in the writings of the mystics with whom we have dealt, with perhaps the possible exception of the Victorines, in the XIIth century the influence of Aristotle was beginning to make itself felt. It becomes influential in the thought of Aquinas, the contemporary and friend of Bonaventura in the University of Paris. And even although the Platonic tradition remained dominant in England, especially at Oxford where Rolle for a time studied, yet the prestige of Aquinas, and the influence of his teaching, were not without some effect. In order to do justice to the English mystics we must therefore briefly consider his doctrines in so far as they bear on our theme. (1). For English mysticism has a philosophic background, as has all mysticism, and we must consider the various doctrines that have influenced their outlook, and moulded their experience.

In the XIIth and XIIIth centuries the most important works of Aristotle became available to the Christian philosophers and theological doctors. The task set for philosophy was that of harmonising the new knowledge with the fundamental beliefs of the Christian church, or put otherwise, to show that the two views of the universe, and man's relationship to it, were complementary to each other. These two views were, from the Aristotelian point of view, the product of natural reason; from the Christian viewpoint, the product of revelation. Study of Aristotle led Aquinas to the position that the limitations of natural reason proved the necessity of revelation.

Revealed truth must be accepted without question, yet reason is called upon to apply itself to, and to test, such truth. These two can never contradict one another. "It is not to be supposed" as

(1) Books consulted, 'Aristotle' W.D.Ross. 'Reactions Between Dogma and Philosophy' Wicksteed, espec. Lecture II.

Wicksteed points out, " that God would actually put a garrison in our minds to defend them from the access of truth necessary to our salvation".

But Aquinas goes further. The supreme doctrines of the church, though not irrational, are supra-rational, and therefore altogether inaccessible to our human reason. Thus the mind must be supernaturally illumined before such doctrines can be comprehended. For man's highest Good is one that will bring comprehensive satisfaction to his intellectual nature. For even his emotional nature is higher than the appetites of the brutes because of its association with intelligence, which gives it the conscious recognition of goodness, beauty and truth, and all desirable things. It is therefore in the life of the intelligence that we must find the specific human life, and in its exercise seek for specific human happiness. (1).

Aquinas now raises the question as to whether knowledge or love is the higher faculty. Love is positive, since it implies some object or other that is desired because it is as yet absent or unpossessed. In the possession of that object the mind will be filled with joy. There are various types of love, but love of God as the 'supreme and unqualified Good' is a purely intellectual appetite, and in His realised presence, in our possession of Him, is to be found our highest Bliss. We may only possess Him by 'knowing' Him, and it is only through our intelligence that He can be known.

Now, Aquinas accepts the doctrine of the 'Fall', and therefore of original sin. Aquinas argues, as does Bonaventura, though not to the same extent, that the result has been to weaken, though not to destroy the efficacy of our natural powers. The will and the intellect have remained good though less efficacious for the achievement of their appointed ends.

Aquinas argues that there are two kinds of truth, two types of goodness, and two kinds of powers by which they are attained. From this point of view Reason must address itself to two main tasks. One is to show that, though inaccessible to reason and even incomprehensible, Christian doctrines and their implications do not contradict

(1) Reactions Between Dogma and Philosophy. Lecture II p.122.

reason. The second is, that it must dwell upon these, to detect as best it can, the connection between truth of the natural domain, and the supernatural realities embodied by the Christian doctrines. Our natural powers, intellectual and moral, enable us to attain natural truth and natural goodness, and to that extent they make possible and obligatory the prescriptions of natural religion. Thus reason leads us to a knowledge of God, and our highest natural impulses constrain us to a love of Him. The stimulus and inspiration of physical nature and of social life, both alike, lead us to this end by eliciting our better and higher natural powers and capacities.

But besides nature there is Supernature. God transcends nature and all our powers of apprehension. Therefore it is only through those revelations and effects which God has Himself initiated that we in any degree share in this Supernature, and attain to larger apprehension of truth and goodness than that disclosed by our natural powers.

In the natural sphere God reveals Himself, though dimly it may be, outwardly through nature, and inwardly by His endowment of us with powers and impulses necessary for the appropriation to ourselves of that which nature supplies. In the sphere of Supernature God reveals Himself to us by miracles of which He is the origin, by the demand for a type of Blessedness implicit in our human nature, which acts as an indication of its possibility, but which is only possible in the manner which revelation itself discloses. Above all, He reveals Himself to us outwardly through the Person of Jesus Christ and the historical happenings associated with the Incarnation, and inwardly, through the work of the Holy Spirit, that is the work of Grace, whereby He so illumines and intensifies our natural powers, that not only do they recover some measure of their original strength, but they also acquire a supernatural intensity appropriate to the Supernatural truths they are called upon to disclose. (1).

Again we must emphasise the necessity for Faith and love. Divine Grace will do all that is required, but faith and love are necessary, for man must cooperate with God if he desires to attain the Vision and to achieve mystic union with God, so realising his highest happiness.

(1) *ibid* pp 140 ff.

The union achieved, the soul is in ecstasy, for the natural powers and capacities are so enlarged, intensified and deepened, that the great Idea of God and all that it implies, fills the whole mind and monopolises the field of consciousness to the exclusion of all else.

These then are the main points of the teaching of Aquinas so far as his doctrines bear upon our subject; they could hardly fail to capture the imagination, stimulate the mind and reinforce the emotions and will of our English mystics.

SECTION III.

- (a) General Considerations.
- (b) English XIVth Century Mysticism.
- (c) Richard Rolle of Hampole.
- (d) The Cloud of Unknowing.
- (e) Walter Hilton.
- (f) Julian of Norwich.

General considerations.

We are now able to come to a closer consideration of the development of mysticism in XIVth century England. Hitherto we have been considering some of the doctrines that, in our view, were influential in giving form and coherence to their experience, and in stimulating their thought. The English mystics were strong upholders of the traditional principles of the church, and as we have indicated, in the formulation of the church's doctrines Greek philosophy played no mean part. Our English mystics were strongly attached to, and influenced by, the church. Independent though they perhaps were in certain aspects of their teaching, yet they are always submissive to the authority of the church, and indeed, as we shall have occasion to see shortly, without the inspiration of the church's doctrines and ceremonies, it is questionable if their experience would have been at all possible. Any study of a group of mystics, such as our four English mystics, not merely must take account of their doctrine alone, but in common justice must make allowance for all Christian antiquity as well.

Some more general considerations may be put forward in order to account for the development in England of mysticism of the type found in the works of Rolle and the others. Commencing about the middle of the XIth century, a period of wakening had been taking place in Europe. This later became known as the Renaissance. We need not consider its general characteristics; they are sufficiently well known. But in two respects, at least, it influenced our XIVth century writers. In the first place, they became heirs to a highly developed and thoroughly well organised system of knowledge and culture. With some of its aspects we have already dealt. There is, therefore, nothing benighted or childish about the mystics view of life. They were rooted and grounded in the cultural, artistic and social life of the time. In the second place, the young peoples of the North, who for six centuries had felt the influence of the church, were only now becoming articulate as the effect of her civilization. This self-expression is seen in the development of Gothic architecture with all its rich and suggestive symbolism; on the mental side, it is seen in the

the development of what is known as scholasticism, and in the third place, it is seen in the development in Germany, as well as in France and England, of mysticism.

Moreover, as we have pointed out, contact was maintained with the continent, partly because of national interests there, partly because of relations with the Holy See, and European travel was general.⁽¹⁾ The horizon of our English mystics, mentally as well as geographically, was sufficiently wide. They entered into the Christian culture of Western Europe, and possibly through the teaching of the Anglo-Norman monks, they became acquainted with the works of Augustine, Gregory, Bernard and Bonaventura, Aquinas and the Victorines. Doubtless they were acquainted with many of the books written by these great church Doctors and Fathers.

As we might expect, they were also immersed in the religious life of their time. That hardly requires to be said. The English mystics were profound students of the Christian scriptures, and their works are impressed by its language and imagery.

The religious and emotional atmosphere of the times, troublous though in some respects they may have been, was favourable to the development of mysticism. There was the influence of Scholasticism, that blending of philosophy and theology with its subtle analyses and distinctions, its contending schools of thought. That exercised the minds of all men of culture, and its teaching, doubtless, percolated down into the minds of the laymasses by way of sermons, expositions, exhortations and homilies. In one sense, Rolle's writings, as Horstman remarks, may represent on the part of the mystical temperament, a reaction to the logical subtleties of Scholasticism, though in another sense, the two types of outlook are complementary to one another. ⁽²⁾ In any case, Scholasticism left its impression upon the works of the mystics, even upon one such as Julian of Norwich, who often uses scholastic conceptions.

~~It is also marked in the manner in~~ It is also marked in the manner in which the mystics catalogue and schematise their doctrines, though on the whole, scholasticism is anti-mystical in spirit.

1). cf. Prologue to the Canterbury Tales. Chaucer.

2). Richard Rolle of Hampole. E.E.T. Socy. Vol. II. Intro.

The religious atmosphere was fostered and spread by the presentation of Miracle Plays, of which four cycles still survive in literature. This general background was maintained and deepened by the spread of Gothic ~~architecture~~^{architecture}, and the 'illuminations' of the later Middle Ages. Still deeper was the influence exercised by the orders of friars, the Cistercians and Franciscans, whose zeal took the form of an intense devotion to the Person of Christ, and also to the details of his earthly life. This stream of religious feeling found expression in a cultus of the 'Holy Name of Jesus'. It exercised a deep influence on popular devotion. The works of Rolle, Julian and Hilton especially are permeated by this devotional attitude. It is one of the pivots on which their mystical experience turns. It is marked by a quality of deep imagination and profound devotion that is common to all the mystics of the time. Despite then, the wars, social and political upheavals, of the period, it is evident that many influences were at work stimulating and developing the religious attitude of the people generally, and it is not surprising that in such sensitive minds as that of Rolle and the others, they developed a mystical type of experience which found expression in such writings we we have now to examine.

Before turning to these works it will be as well to indicate again the scope and limitations of the task we have set ourselves. We are not engaged primarily on a study of the 'mysticism' of the XIVth century, and consequently shall not indulge here in an exhaustive or detailed account of the mystic writings. That work has been sufficiently well advanced by others who have taken it as a special field of study. We are only concerned to indicate its general character as it appears in the four writers whom we have to consider, and their work, after making allowance for individual traits, sufficiently indicates certain things they hold in common as mystics. It is with that we are concerned. It is also unnecessary to pursue the theme as it reappears in their various writings. Rolle repeats himself again and again in his various shorter treatises, and it involves needless repetition in a thesis such as this to pursue him through his various documents. We shall therefore confine

ourselves to the more general aspects of their teaching. Our first task, then, is to set down the characteristics of English XIVth century mysticism, and then proceed to the more important task so far as our thesis is concerned, that is, to deal with the philosophic character of English XIVth century mysticism, and to indicate its bearing. Our terms will be philosophical, rather than mystical. This section of the thesis will undertake the attempt to answer the question which immediately arises from the philosophical point of view, that is, 'what are the conditions, philosophically considered, that make such experience as this, possible'? The answer to this question, doubtless, will be found to be similar in nature if the question were applied to almost any group of Christian mystics. But that is just what might be expected, for truth like Reality, is a unity. It cannot therefore contradict itself. Where contradictions exist the truth is yet to be established.

Our interest in the English mystics, particularly, lies in the fact that they appear as a sort of first movement of that kind in England. The long neglect of their doctrines probably accounts for the fact that only within recent years has philosophy attempted to study in all their bearings, the relation of spiritual values to facts, and more especially, to the development of the human personality. In view of the growing influence of 'Secularism', or alternatively 'Naturalism', in the civilised community of which we are a part, it is all the more needful that we should apply all the criteria of which we are in possession, to the study of the nature of Reality. The experience of the English mystics of the XIVth century furnishes criteria with which philosophy must deal. It is the more interesting that at this time philosophy should do so, when scientific thinkers such as Professor Eddington, and Professor J. S. Haldane, indicate their belief in the limitations of physical science, and at the same time, in a mystical religious background of the Universe that is indicated by the deeper impulses and aspirations of the religious consciousness. (1).

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- (1). 'The Nature of the Physical World'. A. S. Eddington, Cam. Uni. Press.
 (2). 'The Sciences and Philosophy'. J. S. Haldane, H. & S. 1929.

That that background is, in part at least, revealed in the experience of our mystics, is a sufficient reason for this present study. For experience is still our only adequate criterion of truth. That they have systematised their experience in their writings, and set it down in terms indicating a large amount of agreement among themselves, as well as with most other mystics, is an indication that as a criterion it is to that extent more adequate as a test of truth, and thus of Reality. To a consideration of their doctrines we shall now turn.

He wrote both in Latin and English, in prose and in verse. Of the Latin prose treatises we shall consider two, for they supplement one another, namely, 'Incendium amoris' and 'Inconsuetudine vite'. (2). There are concepts in English that we shall consider in the detailed study of Rolle, such as 'The Work of Perfect English XIVth Century Mysticism.

In view of the foregoing we recognise, that in dealing with the writings of the English mystics we must distinguish between the religious attitude and its philosophic context. It is with the latter that we are mainly concerned. Nor should we be misled by the fact that the mystics are more concerned with a certain type of practice than with speculative doctrines. As Miss Allen points out in her volume of Rolle, (1), he has little kinship even with mystics that emphasise knowledge, being intensely personal, and sometimes, as in the Melum and the Fire of Love (Incendium Amoris) subjective, in his attitude. We shall therefore have to make allowance, and it is legitimate to do so, for the omnipresence of the 'idea' even if it is not explicitly stated. Bearing this in mind, then, we shall not concern ourselves with the details of their writings save as these bear directly on the main lines of our thesis.

Another reason for following the procedure indicated in the previous paragraphs is that the four writers, whose works we are to consider, are somewhat different in mental outlook from one another.

(1). "Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle". Hope Emily Allen, Ox. Uni. Press, 1927.

(2). I have used Miss Turner's edition of the 'Incendium Amoris', though based on Missyn's translation, which contains many verbal inaccuracies, yet, the 'matter' is there, and that is sufficient for our purpose.

They may be taken as representing distinct types of spirituality. Richard Rolle for example exhibits many of the characteristics of St. Francis. (1). He is intensely individualistic; is unconventional in outlook, is subject to alternating moods of penitence and joy, sometimes full of song, sometimes in the depth of despair. Like St. Francis, he is a renegade, a Troubadour of God, a poet. His inward spiritual experiences are the Fire of Love, Ineffable Sweetness and Song. With Chaucer, Rolle is of the springtime of English Literature. He wrote both in Latin and English, in prose and in verse. Of the Latin prose treatises we shall consider two, for they supplement one another, namely, 'Incendium Amoris' and 'Emendatione Vitae'. (2). There are others in English that we shall consider in our more detailed study of Rolle, such as 'The Form of Perfect Living', and 'Ego Dormio'. He owes most to St. Bernard and Bonaventura, and he is also influenced by the work of Richard of St. Victor and Aquinas. Perhaps the Augustinian tradition which culminated in Bonaventura is most influential.

When we turn to the 'Cloud of Unknowing' there is a change of atmosphere. The author is unknown. In the treatise itself and kindred writings, presumably by the same hand, such as 'The Epistle of Privy Counsel' and 'Dionise Hid Divinity', the classical mysticism of Plato, Plotinus and Dionysius the Areopagite, are abundantly evident, though signs of a somewhat different outlook are not wanting. The Cloud assigns a large place to the will in mystical contemplation, and the vision is not 'attained' by independent human effort, it is 'given'. Activities of the intelligence are not alone invoked, but the whole personality is involved. Less of a collection of practical teachings than the works of Rolle, it is a theological document that exhibits gifts of a high spiritual order.

(1). See Miss Underhill's introduction to "The Fire of Love" and "Amending of Life", ed. F.M.M. Comper, Methuen, 2nd impression, 1920.

(2). I have used Miss Comper's edition of the "Fire of Love" and the "Amending of Life". Though based on Misyn's translation, which contains many verbal inaccuracies, yet, the 'matter' is there, and that is sufficient for our purpose.

Walter Hilton is a writer of different temperament. His writings suggest a gentler less aloof personality than does the Cloud. The "Scale of Perfection" exhibits a definite structure which is the outcome of careful consideration. The Cloud is a somewhat disconnected series of suggestions on a special state of prayer, whilst the Scale of Perfection is an attempt to embrace the whole extent of the spiritual life and its duties. It discusses the acquisition of virtues by way of mortification, and the infusion of virtues by the action of God. Hilton alone of our four mystics wrote such a fully systematised treatise for the special purpose of giving instruction on the mystic way.

Perhaps the influence of scholasticism is seen in Hilton's methodical and reasonable analysis of the contemplative life. But at the ~~same~~ ^{same} time his deeper debt is to the teachings of Augustine, Gregory, Bernard and Bonaventura, and Aquinas as well.

Julian of Norwich, again, in her book, 'Revelations of Divine Love' exhibits characteristics different from the others. It shadows forth a very loving, and lovable, personality. She writes much of the goodness of God, and is deeply interested in moral questions. She is interested in the problem of evil as well as the problems of predestination. There are scholastic influences at work, and certain Neoplatonic conceptions, such as her acceptance of the doctrine of a sinless core of personality, are evident. She differs from the others in being subject to certain morbid conditions of body, combined with a claim to have heard locutions, and seen visions, and experienced other supernatural manifestations. At the same time, her writings evince not only virtue and sanity and orthodox faith, but also a wide charity, depth of thought, and considerable culture as well.

Whilst we bear in mind these differences of temperament and outlook, it is also true that the works of these four writers to a very considerable extent supplement and complete each other. Hilton, the most systematic of the four, gives us the very heart of the doctrine common to each. There are affinities between his work and those of Rolle. It is thought that Hilton borrowed largely from Rolle, whilst Julian of Norwich's Revelations appear to be influenced by the

writings of Hilton. We must bear in mind that she wrote the Revelations some years after the mystical experiences had been undergone, and they contain her reflections upon these. Hilton, too, incorporates the leading ~~ideas~~^{ideas} of the Cloud in his treatise, and at the same time he is careful to guard against what seems to be too individualistic in the works of Rolle. We shall draw largely therefore upon Hilton's work. We shall now turn to the works themselves.

Richard Rolle of Hampthorpe.

Rolle's mysticism may be easily summed up; it consists in a definite relationship of the soul with God, or, with God as He is revealed in Jesus Christ, which results in the transformation and transmutation of the mystic's inner life. It is the possession of an eternal Good that brings with it a lasting satisfaction, an inward harmony and peace, and ecstatic joy. It is not mainly knowledge, it is rather a type of life, the perfect life of contemplation, in which the participant experiences things celestial. Having concentrated all the affections and desires upon the Highest, there is given to the individual a mingling of super-natural elements and special sensuous graces, in Rolle's experience 'calor', 'canor', and 'dulcor', or 'heat', 'song' and 'sweetness', that bear inward witness to the depth and reality of the experience. These special graces were for Rolle the tokens of his attainment of the Ultimate Reality. He describes the circumstances in which he received them in his autobiographical latin treatise *Incendium Amoris*. (1). This is the theme around which his mystical works are written. We may now trace the various stages in somewhat greater detail.

(1). *Incendium Amoris*. Ch. XV.

The first necessity is the conversion or turning of the soul from the things of sense, and the concentration of the affections upon our Lord. "Tarry thou not to our Lord to be turned, nor put it off from day to day; for oft times the cruelty of death ravishes the wretched, and the bitterness of pains suddenly devours them that now irk to be turned". (1). "What is turning to God but turning from the world and from sin; from the fiend and from the flesh? What is turning from God but turning from unchangeable good to changeable good; to the liking beauty of creatures; to the works of the fiend; to the lust of the flesh and the world? Not with going of the feet are we turned to God, but with the change of our desires and manners".

(2). earth and heaven. The first duty therefore, of those who

Similarly in the Fire of Love, "Lord God, have mercy on me! My youth was fond; my childhood vain; my young age unclean. But now Lord Jesus my heart is enflamed with thy holy love and my reins are changed; and my soul also will not now touch for bitterness what before was my food: and my affections now are such that I hate nothing but sin I love nothing but God: nothing I trust but Him: nothing heavies me but sin: nothing gladdens me but Christ". (3). Here we have a moral motive at the very beginning of the mystic's quest for God, there is the implication of an ideal of holiness and purity that conditions the moral and spiritual life, and becomes the basis of a deeper discernment between what is good and what is evil.

The theme is developed at length in the 'Incendium Amoris' and the English Treatise, the 'Form of perfect Living', and to a less degree in the Ego dormio. All three teach that there must be this changing of the desires and affections, if the quest is to be consummated in union. There is the still deeper implication of an inward conflict in the lives of individuals, a certain disquiet that arises from the struggle between a desire for a final satisfaction or happiness one that is secure, in which we can rest, and the attempt to fulfil that desire in lower things.

(1) & (2). *Emendatione Vitae*. Ch. I. F.M.H. Comper's Edition.

(3). The Fire of Love, Ch. XII. " " "

This is Rolle's conception of true greatness. "Therefore our love be pure and perfect, whatever our heart loves it is God". (1).

"In each sinful man and woman who are bound in deadly sin there are three wretchednesses, which will bring them to the pains of hell. The first is the default of spiritual strength. So weak are they in themselves that they cannot withstand the temptings of the devil, nor can they direct their wills to discern the love of God, or to enjoy it. The second is the strength of fleshly desires: for they have neither will nor might to stand, they fall in lusts and worldly ~~desires~~ ^{desires}, and thinking them sweet they dwell on them until the end of their lives. The third wretchedness is the changing of a lasting good for a passing delight, that is to say they exchange endless joy for a passing delight". (1). As a result Rolle adds they lose both earth and heaven. The first duty therefore, of those who would attain the deepest satisfaction and the highest good, is to order their desires and to concentrate wholly upon God.

Rolle gives his reasons for extolling the love of God as our highest good in the 'Fire of Love'. "Man's soul is the taker of God only; anything less than God cannot fulfil it; wherefore earthly lovers are never fulfilled". (2). For Rolle, and it is the fundamental proposition of all mysticism, God alone can give to the soul the satisfaction and the harmony that it needs, Thus Rolle sets all his desires upon God. In the Love of God man finds his greatest happiness. When the soul is set on God, and earnestly aspires to Him, there results a harmony ^{of} relationship which ends in the transformation of the lover into the likeness of that which is loved. Thus, if a man be true to himself, he will set his love upon the worthiest object of love. This is Rolle's central doctrine, and we find it in the Form of Perfect Living, and in the Ego Dormio, and it lies behind the counsels and disciplines he sets down in the Amending of Life. There is more that a reminiscence of Augustine and Bernard in sentences such as these. "Therefore for love I long: because whom I love with all my mind I desire to see in His fairness". (3). "From the great Fire of Love so great beauty of virtue grows in souls that a righteous man would rather choose to suffer all pain than once grieve God". (4).

(1). The Form of Perfect Living, Horstman, Vol.I. pp. 3 & 4. also Ego Dormio, Ibid, p.50. "For whilst thy heart is held in love to any earthly things thou mayest not be perfectly coupled with God".
(2) Fire of Love...
(3) ...
(4) ...

to each other, man and woman who are bound in earthly sin there
 are weaknesses, which will bring them to the pains of hell.
 as to the nature of spiritual strength. So weak are they in
 even that they cannot withstand the temptings of the devil, nor
 direct their wills to discern the love of God, or to enjoy
 the reward in the strength of lively faith: for they have
 will not arise to stand, they fall in lusts and worldly
 pleasures, and thinking them sweet they dwell on them until the end
 arrives. The joyful weakness is the changing of a lasting
 in a passing delight, that is to say they exchange endless joy
 for a passing delight. As a result of this they lose
 earth and heaven. The first duty therefore, of those who
 attain the highest satisfaction and the highest good, is to
 their desires and to concentrate wholly upon God.
 He gives his reasons for exalting the love of God as our
 good in the 'line of love'. "Man's soul is the labor of God
 anything less than God cannot fulfill it. Therefore earthly
 are never fulfilled." (1). For holiness, and it is the
 exact proportion of all qualities, God alone can give to the
 satisfaction and the harmony that it needs. Thus holiness
 is God's gift. In the love of God man finds his greatest
 joy. When the soul is set on God, and earnestly desires to Him,
 receives a heavenly relationship which ends in the transformation
 of love into the likeness of that which is loved. Thus, it is
 true to himself, he will set his love upon the world
 of love. This is holiness's central desire, and we find it
 form of perfect living, and to the God himself, and it is the
 the source and origin of all things in the ascending of life.
 to note that a resemblance of spiritual and inward in nature
 these. Therefore for love I long: because when I love with

(3) *Writings Ascetic* & *R. Kille*. H. E. Allen. d.w.

This is Rolle's conception of true greatness. "Therefore if our love be pure and perfect, whatever our heart loves it is God". (1). God, then, is the highest Good than men can set their hearts upon. In Him they will find a lasting satisfaction and happiness.

In order to train the desires to this all-embracing love of God which results in celestial joy to the lover, stern discipline involving ascetic practices is necessary. There is a strong element of asceticism in the writings of the XIVth century mystics. The world and its lusts must be forsaken; Rolle advises retirement into solitude. It was only in solitude that he could sufficiently concentrate his will and affections upon God. In the Emendatione he stresses the need for embracing poverty, and much practice in prayer, reading, and meditation. Solitude is necessary, for even in prayer, as he teaches in the Ego Dormio, it is easy to let your thoughts wander, and if that happens the prayer will be of no avail. The soul must be wholly turned from the world and the things of the world. (2).

A further point distinctive of Rolle's mysticism, is that divinity is synonymous with Jesus. In the Form of Living, he tells us, as indeed he does in the Fire and the Ego Dormio, and again in his latin treatise commenting on the Canticles (3) devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus is a necessary condition of mystic union and ecstatic contemplation of which, for Rolle, possession of the 'Canor' is the distinctive mark. The object of this devotion is to induce contemplation or intuitive knowledge, combined with mystic union.

There are three degrees of love that lead progressively to the attainment of the supernatural life and its spiritual tokens. Having purged the desires by various forms of discipline and ascetic practices, such as we find in the Emendatione and scattered through various other treatises, the life is now unifying itself around the Person of Jesus Christ. The root virtues of humility and love have been established, and the sin of selfish pride or self love has been expunged. The will and imagination are now cleansed, and by meditation and reading, thought has been rendered contrite.

(1). Fire, Bk.I. ch.19.

(2). See *Judica me Deus*. (Writings ascribed to Richard Rolle by H.E. Allen, ch.V. also Fire, (Comper) *Ed.* 1916)

(3) *Writings of Richard Rolle*

Persecutions, such as he mentions in the *Melum*, and hints at in the *Incendium*, and temptations that have been sternly dealt with and overcome, have all contributed to that death of self esteem which hinders the mystic from pursuing his quest. The character has gradually and with pain, been remoulded on a different set of conceptions than those which lay formerly at its foundation. Then 'the heavenly door' is opened, and the 'Face' is seen. In other words, spiritual reality is suddenly revealed. (1)

The three degrees by which the soul ascends to the love of Christ are that which is called 'Unovercomable', or in the FORM of PERFECT LIVING insuperable, "Thy love is insuperable when nothing that is contrary to God's love can overcome it." (2) That is when no other desire is strong enough to overcome it. (3) The second degree of love, Rolle terms Inseparable or Undeparted.

"Inseparable is thy love: when all thy heart, and thy thought, and thy might, is so wholly, so entirely, and so perfectly fastened, set, and established in Jesus Christ that thy thought comes never away from Him, never is departed from Him." (4) "Forsooth it suffers Him not to pass from the mind a minute And most this name Jesu he in so mickle worships and loves that it continually nests in his mind." (5)

The third degree is highest and most difficult to attain. It is termed Singular. "Singular love is, when all comfort and solace is so closed out of the heart, but of Jesus Christ only.

Other joy lists if not. For the sweetness of Him in this degree is so comforting and lasting in His love, so burning and gladdening, that He or she, that is in this degree, may as well feel the fire of love ^{burning} ~~bounding~~ in their souls, as Thou mayest feel thy finger burn, if thou put it in the fire." (6)

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- (1) Fire of Love. Bk. 1, Chap. 15. page 70.
 (2) Form of Perfect Living. Chap. 8. Horstman Vol. 1, page 31.
 (3) Emendatione Chap. 11, page 230. F.M.M. Comper.
 (4) The Form of Perfect Living. Horstman, Chap. 8, page 31.
 (5) Emendatione Chap. 11, pages 230 & 231.
 (6) Form of Perfect Living, Horstman, Chap. 8, page 32.
 See also Ego dormio, Horstman. Vol 1, pages 52 to 58.

Then the soul is filled with the ineffable vision and is ravished by love until it is full of sweetness and song. This is Rolle's doctrine of contemplation, its marks are these spiritual experiences, sensuous^{ly} felt, 'canor,' 'calor,' 'dulcor,' but the mark distinctive of mystical union in contemplation is that of 'canor'.

The third or thighest degree of love is not to be easily acquired. It is the gift of God's grace, and he bestows it on whom he will. (1) But once attained, "then is Jesus all thy desire, all thy delight, all thy joy, all thy solace, all thy comfort, so that of Him evermore shall be thy song, and in Him all thy rest." (2)

In other words, the passion for the ultimate reality is satisfied in fullness of knowledge. By means of mystic contemplation, through purgation, the soul is entered and possessed by the Holy Spirit of God, the mental capacities are enhanced, the purified desires are satisfied, union and harmony are attained. The whole soul is filled with the vision. The result is an inward joy and happiness, that in Rolle, a natural poet, it must find expression in song. The exultant song of God's love is the very soul of Rolle's contemplation (3)

Certain definite results follow. The heart is wholly set on heavenly things; the soul has been served with the satisfaction of its deepest need, the attainment of The Highest Good. The whole personality, in all its aspects of thought, feeling and will, has been transformed. Rolle's mysticism, like all true mysticism, is not merely a type of emotional theism, even although passionate feeling seems to predominate in his writings. Allowance must be made for his warm, poetic and emotional nature. An intensely

(2) ~~Ego Dormio, Rossetman, Horstman, Vol. 1, page 15.~~

(3) In the Fire of Love, Chap. 15, Rolle gives a detailed analysis of his ecstasy. The three lation works, "Liber de Amore Dei, Contra Amatores Mundi," Incendium Amoris, Emendatione Vitae go explicitly into the details of Rolle's mysticism. See Writings ascribed to Richard Rolle, H. E. Allen, Chap. 7, See also English works, Ego Dormio, The commandment, and The Form of Perfect Living.

① Ego Dormio - p 58, (Amstman Vol. 1)

② " p 59 " "

active inner life is obviously implied. Rolle's insistence on the need for solitude illustrates this truth. The will is strenuously involved, and profound thought is likewise required.

If Rolle writes much about love, we must bear in mind that the whole function of feeling is to reinforce thought and action, and thus the higher the object of the love, the more passionate its expression, then the more intense will be the resulting thought and conduct. Love is an emotion, but it is more, it is a sentiment, as Shand points out in his Foundations of Character, and it embraces all the qualities of the mental life. As such it is the great reconciling principle between will and intelligence.

Again, the soul is set free from the power of evil desires. The Fire of Love as Rolle teaches is a cleansing fire, and it burns out all evil and unworthy desires. Other goods, goods of body, and even of fortune, fall into their proper perspective and are judged at their true worth. The mystic who has thus attained, is in possession of a complete standard of values. How it served Rolle is seen in his sane attitude in recommending a studied moderation in the practice of mortification and of fasting, and even in his preference for the sitting posture whilst engaged in meditation and contemplation.

Further, while it is true that Rolle never hides his preference for the contemplative life as against the active life, for "Truly, God that is the Beholder of the heart, rewards the will more than the deed. The deed truly hangs on the will, not the will on the deed," (1) possessed by the ideal, it suffices him, and all other contemplatives, yet, he is saved from one-sidedness by his sane practical sense. He sought to let the love of God in him, be seen in the ordinary relationships of life. He felt compelled to preach, to gather disciples, to write to those who were willing to follow him in the illuminated way to God, to 'stir others to love'. His love for God is seen in his love for his

(1) Fire. Bk. 1, Chap. 21.

neighbours, and his deep oft-stated desire that these living in deadly sin should turn themselves to God.

Rolle's mysticism is thus seen to be essentially a certain kind of life, a certain moulding of the personality in a definite direction

It involved self-transcendence into the very life and Being of God, but in its highest reaches, in the consummation of the process little or nothing is owed to the individual himself. As Rolle has stated, what is needful on the part of the individual, is a definite ordering and purging of the desires; Divine Grace will accomplish the rest. In this way, man can reach to eternal truth, can contemplate and enjoy the ineffable vision of the ultimate reality, can be transformed into its likeness, for in the process the soul is endowed with the heavenly virtues, the adornments of the spiritual marriage, and whilst subject here to the limitations of a terrestrial life, yet his conversation is in heaven, he is the citizen of the celestial city. Such in brief outline are the doctrines of Richard Rolle, hermit of Hampole. We shall find that they are duplicated and supplemented in the writings of the other three English mystics of his century.

Cloud of Unknowing, and Epistle of Privy Counsel.

These two books and their kindred writings exhibit the influence of Neoplatonic conceptions as seen through the temperament of Dionysius the Areopagite. There are hints of Augustine and Richard of St. Victor, yet the teaching of Dionysius, especially that of 'The Mystical Theology' is predominant. Through the work of this unknown author the conception of the via negativa, so predominant in the Dionysian writings, came into the English stream of mystical thought. We shall concern ourselves with the two most important works of this author, and as in the case of Rolle, give a brief resumé of his teaching. These works are The Cloud of Unknowing, and a short treatise, The Epistle of Privy Counsel.

Like Rolle, the author of these works teaches that mysticism is a life, it is the growth of the soul towards God, and the result is a transformed and perfected personality, one that exhibits likeness to Christ. (1) But since God is transcendent, far beyond our powers of comprehension, we may only reach Him, not by the ordinary processes of thought, but by pursuing the Via Negativa. This conception runs through the whole of these works. "And look that nothing remain in thy working mind but a naked intent stretching unto God, not clothed in any special thought of God in Himself, how He is in Himself, or in any of His works, but only that He is as He is, Let Him be so, I pray thee and make Him on no otherwise. Seek no further in Him by subtlety of wit; but that belief be thy ground (2.)

All our concepts fall short in our attempt to describe God as He is in Himself, what we have therefore to do is to confess our ignorance and seek to attain Him through perfect love, thus concentrating the will and desires upon Him. We may by this means attain Him, " for the high and nearest way thither is run by desires, and not by paces of the feet." (3) The quest of the mystic then, according to the author of *The Cloud*, is the journey of the soul to God who is transcendent and incomprehensible. It results in a perfected life, one that is endowed with heavenly virtues. Since God is so far above thought and knowledge we must put behind us all the powers and processes of the discursive reason. The intellectual process must be simplified. (4) Above all we must love Him, for, "By love he can be gotten and holden, but by thought never." In the *Epistle of Privy Counsel* we are taught that the imagination is to be held in check, the reason, busied with meditation, must be silenced, the soul is to rest content in the simple apprehension of God's Being. That is, the soul and God are to be reduced to the simplest conceptions of unity, that unity may be attained.

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- (1) *Cloud of Unknowing*. Chap. 16, (*The Orchard Books*, No. 4)
 (2) *Epistle of Privy Counsel*, Chaps. 1 & 4, " " " "
 (3) *Cloud of Unknowing*, Chap. 60, page 145. " " " "
 (4) *Epistle of Privy Counsel*, Chap. 4, " " " "

This is the essence of contemplation for this author.

Like Rolle he insists on the preliminary purgation of the soul, not only from sin, but by a progressive abstraction from the things of sense. There must first be this desire for a definite change of the direction of character. (1) But the quickest and best way to get rid of sin and all unworthiness is to turn to contemplation. (2). All such obstacles must be removed.

There are two aspects of this process and progress towards God. The first or negative part is the work assigned to the individual himself. The will being distracted by many things, is purified by their removal, so that nothing remains but the 'naked intent stretching out towards God'. All that is here required, but it is central to this author's doctrine, is that the will should be continually exercised in love towards Him. All its impulses, acts, or 'stirrings' must be concentrated in this one direction. "A good will is the substance of all perfection." (3).

But the most important part of this exercise of the will, that is of the individual's effort, the one great condition of his success, is to set out on the negative way, until nothing is left but a will motivated by love for God, and the attainment of the ineffable vision.

There are three main stages in the progress of the soul. These are discussed in some detail. (4). In the active life the soul is busied with external works, such as works of mercy and charity, then it passes to the first stage of contemplation, when it concentrates its thoughts on the Passion and Name of Christ, and the various attributes of God. But in the highest stage these things must be set aside, and God is to be contemplated in His own Essence. (6)

(1) Cloud, Chs. x, xi, xii.

(2) " " xvi.

(3) " " xlix.

(4) " " viii, xviii, xvii, xxi, xxviii.

(5) " " xlvi, xxxv. & Epistle of Privy Counsel, Ch. ix.

(6) Epistle of Privy Counsel, Ch. vi. & Cloud, xvii.

As Rolle teaches concerning the third and highest degree of love, so the author of the Cloud teaches with regard to the third stage, human effort here is of no avail. We cannot pass to the third and highest stage, that of attainment or union, but by the Grace and Gift of God. The positive aspects of contemplation depend upon God. "And if thou ask me by what means thou shalt come to this work, I beseech Almighty God of His great Grace and His great Courtesy to teach thee Himself. For truly I do well to let thee know that I cannot tell thee. And that is no wonder. Because it is the work of only God; specially wrought in whatever soul He liketh, without any merit of the same soul. (1). That is, even in the mystic way, there is no bridge from the soul to God. By purgation, meditation and prayer, through submission to the doctrines of the church, in the practice and acquisition of virtue, he may draw near, but attainment of union and harmony are the gifts of God's grace. "And yet He giveth not this Grace, nor worketh this work, in a soul that is unable thereto." (2)

Man has his part to play; it consists in a stern process of purgation of the will, the reason, the imagination. It involves what has been termed an act, or rather it is a process, involving self-simplification, and a concentration of the will upon the highest things. Consummation of this work, which ends in a transformation of the personality, rests with God. But the vision being attained, even though it means entering into the Dark Cloud of Unknowing, involving the humiliating confession of our own ignorance and inability to comprehend the things of Almighty God, the soul is immeasurably enriched. "Whoso had this work, it should governe them full seemly, as well in body as in soul: and make them full attractive with each man or woman that looketh upon them. Insomuch, that the worst-favoured man or woman that liveth in this life, if they might come by grace to work in this work, their favour should suddenly and graciously be changed, so that each good man that saw them should be fain and joyful to have them in company, and full much they should think that they were pleased in spirit and helped by grace unto God in their presence (3)

1) Cloud ch. xxxiv. Epistle of P. Counsel. ch. v. xxiii

2) " " "

3) " " Liv.

The effects are experienced in the interior life, and are borne witness to in outward conduct. Asceticism, as we have noticed, plays its part, but again, like Rolle, our author is not one-sided. Body as well as soul is to benefit. It is the whole personality that is transformed by the mystic grace of contemplation, and the resultant participation in a supernatural life.

Walter Hilton.

In the Scale of Perfection, Hilton's most important work, we have a fully systematized treatment of the mystic way. Like the other English mystics, he is interested in expounding the principles by which a perfect life may be attained. He is convinced, that given good-will on the part of individuals, it is possible to all who truly desire and seek it. In his writings we have the core of the mystical doctrines expounded by Rolle and the author of the Cloud. Hilton is influenced by Gregory, Augustine, Bonaventura and the other Augustinian writers of the previous century, and also by Anselm and Aquinas.

The question that Hilton sets himself to answer in this systematic fashion is, "How is the human soul led to perfection, and by what means?" Or put otherwise, 'How may the human personality attain union with God?' Like the other three English mystics, Hilton answers, that union is only attained when the whole soul is moved by love. There is more than one path to God. We may engage in the active life, and by fulfilling the commandments, performing works of mercy and other good works, such as the church enjoins upon us, so be saved. (1) But to choose the way of contemplation is to choose the better part. There is more merit in contemplation than there is in action; its object is to enjoy the vision of Divine Truth.

In the first few chapters of Book I of the Scale, Hilton deals with the characteristics of contemplation. It is essentially a knowledge and vision of God that is experienced by the soul which is wholly concentrated upon Him.

Perfection, ch. ii p.3. Orchard Books No. 13.

(1) Scale of

But there are differences in degree of contemplation, and Hilton works these out very carefully. The first is intellectual in type. It "lieth in knowing of God and ghostly things gotten by reason, by teaching of man, and by study in Holy Writ, without ghostly affection and inward savour felt by the special gift of the Holy Ghost". (1) Yet, as he adds, this is but the shadow of true contemplation, though as far as it goes, it is good.

The second is what may be termed emotional contemplation. "It lieth principally in affection without light of understanding of Ghostly things: and this is commonly of simple and unlettered men which give themselves wholly to devotion" (2) It too, is good, but there is a better, the third and highest degree. In it both cognition and feeling are involved; the whole personality is engaged.(3) Tranquility both of body and of soul are necessary, together with cleanness of conscience, if it is to be enjoyed. There must have been, and here, we have a strong reminiscence of Rolle, much meditation upon the name of Jesus, so that the affections have been clustered around it. In this degree there is perfect knowledge and loving of God; and the soul is conformed to the likeness of Jesus, and is filled with a burning love and joy. For brief periods this may be experienced on earth, but only in its fullness in heaven. (4) There is a true inwardness and spiritual depth in this third type of contemplation that is lacking in the others. The Understanding is illumined, and the whole body is filled with light and wisdom and heavenly joy. It is not attained by human effort, but of God's will. " This part of contemplation God giveth where He will, to learned and to lewd, to men and to women, to those occupied in p[re]lacy, and to solitary also. But it is special and not common, and though a man which all his life is active have the gift of it by a special grace, nevertheless the fulness of it may no man have unless he be solitary, and in life, contemplative." (5)

(1) Scale Ch iv.
 (2) " " v, vi., vii.
 (3) " " viii.
 (4) " " viii.
 (5) " " ix.

These gifts, therefore, according to Hilton, though possible to all, are granted most to solitaries and contemplatives. The first two degrees, though not perfect contemplation, are helpful in enabling the soul to reach the third stage. Hilton is very careful to distinguish this third stage from any other forms of mental or spiritual activity. He devotes chapters to showing that it differs from pious fervour, which, excellent in itself, will hinder the work of true contemplation. (1) Nor is it a function of meditation or work of the imagination, (2) nor should it be confused with certain types of sensible phenomena which at times accompany it. (3) And, as we have seen, it is not a work of intellect alone. It involves supernatural Grace and union with Super-Nature. In that alone it finds its true characteristic. Here, perhaps, the influence of Aquinas is very marked.

But as Rolle and the author of the Cloud teach, so also Hilton points out, if we are to achieve the Supernatural vision of God, then we must be prepared in soul to receive it. The first stage is that of purgation. There are two sides to the experience. Man must co-operate with God if the consummation is to be possible at all. Again we have a strain of asceticism. He stresses the need for solitude; in order to secure the necessary tranquility of body and mind all worldly occupations and pre-occupations must be set aside. We must choose with Mary the better part. A 'stable intention' that is to say, 'an whole will, and a desire only to please God' is needful; certain ascetic practices, exercised with discretion, will dispose the soul to the highest type of contemplation. (4) Thus will the heart be cleansed from sin, and a positive degree of virtue be acquired; the soul will be disposed into Jesus Christ, the goodness and grace of His Godhead will be made the more readily manifest, and the whole mind will be led on to the highest degree of contemplation. (5).

(1) Scale, Bk I. Ch. lxxv, Bk. II, Ch. xxix.

(2) " " " v, xxv.

(3) " " " x, xi.

(4) " " " xxi.

(5) " " " xxiv, xxv.

The acquisition of a positive degree of virtue is the most important of the works that prepare the way for contemplation. In this Hilton is in agreement with Plotinus, 'for only the clean in heart will see God' (1) Hilton deals with this at great length. (2) The gist of his teaching is that not merely must passions and unworthy desires be suppressed, but other worthier passions and desires must take their place. The vices must be purged out and replaced by the opposing virtues. These latter must become part of the very fabric of the Personality. The Bride must be fittingly adorned when she meets the Bridegroom. If we are to attain that fullness of life we desire in union with God, then these are the essential conditions.

Hilton is mainly concerned with this preparation for union. The various stages in the progressive purification and enrichment of the Personality are the rungs of the ladder by means of which we are to ascend to God. He sets himself, therefore, to teach us how best to accomplish the transformation of Personality that will result in our conformity to the Image of God. Since the deepest desire of the soul is to escape from itself, to be lifted out of itself, and raised above itself, we must study the means whereby this is accomplished. The desire itself is an indication of the possibility of its fulfilment, for it is true to our deepest moral and religious intuitions and aspirations. It is the more true as we reflect, as Hilton teaches, on the truth that we were created in the Likeness of God. Through sin we have fallen, but the desire to win back the Divine Likeness and intimate communion that we have thus lost, still exercises us.

Hilton's answer is that the way of salvation lies in a tendance of the soul to Christ. (3). The most wicked will find salvation here. We must concentrate every desire and affection upon Him and His Name. (4). The Image of our Lord has been lost, and we must seek it until we possess it again. Since the common root

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- (1) Scale, Bk. I, Ch. xv. Bk. II. Chs. xxxvi-xxxix.
 (2) " " " " xl- xliii.
 (3) " " " " xliv.
 (4) " " " " xliv-li.

of all sin is an inordinate love of self, all our energies must be bent on destroying it. Until it be destroyed we shall never escape from ourselves, or be lifted above ourselves.

We begin the work of reforming the soul into its Divine Likeness every time we seek after Christ. (1) During this process we shall of necessity endure much pain and sorrow. But if we do so we shall pass through the Dark Night of the Soul into the Brightness of Divine Light. The inner conflict can only be resolved by the utter destruction of the Root of Pride and self-love. But it is just here, as Hilton teaches, when we have reached the requisite frame of mind, that God comes to our aid. Again we are taught, the work of reformation of the soul cannot be accomplished of ourselves. Our part has been played, now Divine Action replaces our effort: the Grace of God begins to work in our souls. The recognition of our inability will beget in us the requisite humility that will most enable God to perform His Divine Will upon us.

There are two stages in this process whereby self-love is destroyed, and the Image of God renewed within us. These Hilton names 'Reform in Faith' and Reform in Feeling'. The latter stage is higher than the first. (2) Reform in faith is the method that may be used by beginners. It is not the perfect method. It consists in the destruction of self-love by the growth of charity and by engaging in such practices as are enjoined by the Christian church. (3).

But the higher method is that which consists in destroying the roots of sin by replacing them with the Image of Christ Himself. By pursuing this method we shall, as Hilton teaches, attain the highest summits of the Supernatural life, though full consummation is only final in heaven. In the first stage, reformation in Faith, the struggle is active and external. From this point of view we may say, that the more meritorious an action is, the less is it an action of a human will, though from the side of the individual, the actions of a more nearly perfect soul, are more intensely willed than the

(1) Scale, Bk. I. Chs. lii., liii, liv.

(2) " " II " v.

(3) " " " " vi-xii.

somewhat selfish and concentrated acts of one that is imperfect.

Reformation in faith is seen to be the attempts of a soul aided by grace to conform to what it believes, but does not see. Reformation in feeling is far deeper. It is accomplished when the soul is totally possessed by God who then works in and upon it, not only through and by it. We are prepared for this higher stage when pride is replaced by humility, and self love, by the love of God. As self sinks more and more into the background, so Christ more and more takes possession of the soul until He is at last its Master and Lord. (1)

Our desires after God and the things of God are in this way stimulated and enhanced, until all else is lost sight of and sinks into oblivion. Then does the soul pass through its Dark Night, and reaches the dawn of a more glorious day. (2) The renunciation of all that pertains not to God becomes more and more complete, and to that extent the goal draws ever nearer. Suffering and dereliction, as we see, are involved, for everything else that is dear to us must be abandoned, the emptying of the self must be complete, but here Divine Aid is the more present as we are made to realise our own weakness and helplessness, and gradually the final rungs of the ladder are climbed, and the goal is reached. (3)

The whole spirit is then filled with love for God; our mental faculties are expanded; the soul is filled with a fire of love, sometimes accompanied, as in the case of Rolle and Julian, by sensible phenomena, and the last remnants of sin are destroyed. The gifts of the spirit to the soul that has thus attained are Wisdom and Understanding, and the gift of contemplation of the Supernatural Truth, Beauty and Goodness. The whole personality is full of light, (4) and in this ineffable union, is clothed with all heavenly virtues.

Such is the ladder we must climb if the soul is to be reformed into the likeness of its Maker.

(1) Scale, Bk. 11. xxxv. and xxxvi.

(2) " " 11. xxlv.

(3) " " 11. xxxli - xlvi.

(4) " " 11. xl.

Julian of Norwich.

Julian's mysticism can be summed up in a phrase, it is, 'The love of God', and her highest happiness is to be found in devotion to Jesus Christ, He is Her heaven. Those two thoughts run throughout her entire work and express her innermost experience.

She wrote down the record of her revelations, not only because of her experience of union with God, but because they also involved certain communications on spiritual matters. This communication took three forms; She saw visions, heard words spoken, and in the third place, there was a 'formless enlightenment'. All this took place on a single day, but she meditated deeply on these matters for over twenty years. The result is a very beautiful little book.

"And fro the time that it was shewed, I desired oiten times to wit in what was our Lord's meaning; and fifteen year after and more I was answered in ghostly understanding, saying thus; What? wouldst Thou wit thy Lord's meaning in this thing? Wit it well; love was his meaning. Who sheweth it thee? love. Wherefore sheweth he it thee? For love. Hold thee therein, thou shalt wit more in the same. But thou shalt never wit therein other without end." " Thus was I learned that love is our Lord's meaning. And I saw full surely in this and in all, that our God made us, he loved us; which love was never slacked, ne never shall.

And in this love He hath done all his works: and in this love he hath made all thing profitable to us; and in this love our life is everlasting; in our making we had beginning: but the love wherein he made us was in him fro without beginning. In which love we have our beginning. (1) And all this shall we see in God without end.

Julian finds God everywhere. (2) She possesses the Neoplatonic sense of the all pervading presence of God, and because she finds God everywhere, she finds good everywhere. In Julian the spirit of medieval christianity receives full expression. Nurtured by, and deeply loving her church, taught in the Catholic doctrines of God Incarnate and crucified for love of sinful creatures, she feels the pulse of Divine Love beating in nature and manifesting itself through the varied experiences and relationships of life.

(1) *Revelation of Divine Love*. d. Lxxxv. *Reign Paul*. 2^o impression. || (2) d. 4. p 15 (ibid)

She has therefore a deep conception of nature as well as of her own special relationship ^{to} of the spiritual world. Her love for God and our Lord, as Tyrell points out in his introduction to the Revelations, may well have been awakened by those doctrines of the church. But thus awakened it sought more. She could not rest in mere knowledge about such things, she desired to experience union with God Himself, to attain to Him, to be possessed ~~and~~ entirely by Him. This desire, she teaches, was reinforced by representations and visions and symbols of that deeper trans-subjective reality she ardently sought, and she could not be at ease, or find happiness in less. "For this is the cause which we be not all in ease of heart and soule: for we seek here rest in this thing that is so little, where no rest is in: and we know not our God that is all mightie, all wise and all good, for He is verie rest. God will be known, and Him liketh that we rest us in Him.

For all that is beneath Him sufficeth not us. And this is the cause why no soule is in rest till it is naughted of all things that are made: when she is wilfullie naughted for love to have Him that is all, then she is able to receive ghostlie rest." (1)

This was result of her first group of visions in which Julian saw the sufferings of our Lord on the cross, and occasionally heard words. Her realisation of these sufferings is vividly set down in her book. She thus came to realise the depth of God's love and as we have noticed, it called forth a deep response in her own heart.

The one thing needful is that we should first come to a knowledge of our sinful condition, and how much we require to have restored in us that Divine Image in which we were created, (2) and then to set all our desires upon God. Realising this we must seek him urgently for "the continual seeking of the soul pleaseth God much; for it may do no more than to seek, suffer and trust." (3)

(1) Revelations of Divine Love. Chaps. 5 and 26.
 (2) " " " " Chap. 10, page 29.
 (3) " " " " " 10.

And when we find Him, the soul is filled with joy. By these three means, Julian teaches, all souls come to heaven that shall be saved.

Julian has much to say about sin, and more generally about the problem of evil, although she does not solve it for us. Her ultimate belief is in the goodness of God and all that is. How then are we to account for sin. "Methought, if sin had not been, we should all have been clean and like to our Lord as he had made us. And thus in my folly often I wondered why, by the great foreseeing wisdom of God, the beginning of sin was not letted, for then methought, all should have been well. (1)

She then examines the metaphysical aspect of sin. It is nothing real or positive, "But I saw not sin; for I believe it had no manner of substance, nor no part of being, nor could it be known but by the pain that it is the cause of. But she was assured by Jesus, "it is true, that sin is cause of all this pain; but all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well. (2)

Sin is the greatest harm that ever befell mankind, but here the grace and goodness of God are seen to the best effect, in that, the occasion of Adam's sin is taken by God in order to bring about a greater good. (3) This is accomplished in the incarnation and passion of Jesus Christ, "And thus Christ is our way, us surely leading in His laws, and Christ in his body mightily beareth us up into heaven." (4)

The Neoplatonic strain comes out in the strange doctrine that there is a supreme point in the soul that never sins, there is a goodly will that never gave its assent, and through this goodly will we shall be at last united to God, though the redemption of man by Christ is needed. All this is in line with her teaching that the human soul has a natural affinity to God.

(1) Revelations, Chap. 27.

(2) Revelations Chap. 17.

(3) " " 40.

(4) " " 55.

She also teaches a triple origin to faith. "Our faith cometh of the natural love of the soul, and of the clear light of reason and of the steadfast mind which we have of God in our first making."

Faith is thus an activity of the whole personality, and when it is rendered perfect the indwelling presence of God is not confined to the soul alone, but also to the bodily senses as well.

For Julian, as for Rolle and the others, the mystic way involves purgation, a cleansing from sin, a certain directing of the desires upon God, wherein we are assisted by the inward working of God's own spirit, and it ends in the transformation of the personality into the likeness of the Divine Trinity. "For all is good but sin, and naught is evil but sin, and when we give our intent to love and meekness, but the works of mercy and grace, we be made all fair and clean." (1)

God's love for His creatures is behind all His efforts on their behalf. All that is required is our response. Prayer allied with a sublime trust in the goodness of God will bring us near to Him, making it possible for that grace and mercy to work in us. Then "suddenly is the soul oned to God when she is truly peaced in herself; when we find in ourselves no contrariousness in letting."

Throughout the whole process Julian discerns the love of God, a love that seeks us out, in many and wonderful ways beckons to us, awakens in us by the workings of His spirit, the desire to respond, and as we discipline our desires, purges and renews us until in complete harmony of our lives with the will and purposes of God, peace and a lasting happiness is attained. There may be ecstatic moments when the soul is pervaded and elevated by His felt presence, when it is united to God and possessed by Him, but the mystics, and Julian among them, are cogniscent of the fact that such moments in this life are rare, that the experience is of brief duration, and moreover is enjoyed only by the few who attain to the highest degree of contemplation. This, therefore, can hardly be

(1) Revelations, Chaps. 40 & 49.

the goal at which they aim. The true aim, is that of complete concord of the whole personality with God's holy will, and the outcome of the mystic union in its deeper sense is a harmony of the soul, its enrichment in every divine virtue, and the complete discipline of all its desires. The effects of this union are widespread. So we find our English mystics seeking complete harmony not only with God and within themselves, but with their fellow creatures, with nature and the varied events of life.

Section II.

The Philosophic Character of English 17th Century Mysticism.

- A. General.
- B. Development of a teleological point of view.
- C. The mystic's experience of values.
- D. Intuition and contemplation.
- E. The nature and function of reason.
- F. The nature of the will.
- G. Immortality.
- H. General conclusion.

General.

We may now summarize in general terms these aspects of the mystics teaching that are common to all of them, and then proceed to the further question of its significance for philosophy. In general, our mystics are agreed as to the spiritual nature of reality. The Neoplatonists, following out the main lines of Plato's thought postulated the systematic structure of reality and maintained that it is spiritual both in nature and in origin. This thought, as we have seen Section IV.

The Philosophic Character of English XIV th Century Mysticism.

- A. General.
- B. Development of a Teleological point of view.
- C. The mystics experience of values.
- D. Intuition and contemplation.
- E. The nature and function of reason.
- F. The nature of the will.
- G. Immortality.
- H. General conclusion.

of their own free things around us, is that which is above us. They are moved by a passion which they are convinced of its existence, transcending our powers of unaided reason. Yet they are also convinced that it can be known, and that they are able under certain conditions, to attain union with it. As Miss Underhill points out, mysticism, 'is the expression of the innate tendency of the human spirit towards complete harmony with the transcendent order: whatever be the theological formulae under which that order be understood.' Like Plato, the mystics can only find final rest and satisfaction in what is eternal and immutable. Once attained, however, as with Julian and the others, the world around becomes a mirror which reflects the Beauty, Wisdom and Love of God. Their powers of perception are deepened, and they live in the consciousness of the all pervading presence of the Divine. In Him, 'they live, and move, and have their being.'

General.

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Roll has been called the English Bonaventura. Julian too is impressed by the all pervading presence of God. Everything that is made symbolises his love. They do not, of course confuse God with nature, but seek for Him behind, and beneath the symbolism of the senses, for they are impressed with the transcendence of God.

Their mysticism is therefore objective in outlook. They conceive of their quest in the manner of Bonaventura, as a journey of the soul from things around us, to that which is above us. They are moved by a passion for Absolute Truth: they are convinced of its existence, transcending our powers of unassisted reason. Yet they are also convinced that it can be known, and that they are able, under certain conditions, to attain union with it. As Miss Underhill points out, mysticism, 'is the expression of the innate tendency of the human spirit towards complete harmony with the transcendent order: whatever be the theological formula under which that order be understood.' Like Plato, the mystics can only find final rest and satisfaction in what is eternal and immutable. Once attained, however, as with Julian and the others, the world around becomes a mirror which reflects the Beauty, Wisdom and Love of God.

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On the side of their own personality the English mystics have been brought to realise, again, we believe, under the teaching of medieval conditions, ~~that~~^{that} the goods of the soul rank highest. For the Platonists and the great Christian fathers taught that human conduct is a system of purposive behaviour directed to the attainment of ends. Here the element of value is involved, for man, so taught the Greek Philosophers, and also the Church Theologians, seeks and Eternal Good. Man is thus the bearer of a moral vocation, which, as our mystics have shown, in its highest reaches involves the experience and outlook of the genuinely religious spirit.

From the point of view of Platonism, indeed, the good is to be attained by unassisted human nature. But the great Christian philosophers, and in particular our own group of mystics, have shown that 'illumination' is required, that man can only accomplish so much, but that Virtue, or Goodness must, in its richest, deepest aspects, be 'infused' through the working of God's Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Incarnation has transfigured Greek philosophy as we find it in the Christian scheme of thought.

In the last place, and with the mere mention of this point we shall pass to the consideration of the philosophic character of English XIV th Century mysticism, our mystics, like the Platonists too, if we take into consideration especially Plato's teaching in the Symposium and the Phaedrus, and the Phaedo, make much of love to God as the motive power by which they are driven to Him. But love is enhanced desire, as we have seen. It is a sentiment that involves reason and will as well as feeling, and every desire is therefore fundamentally rational, for it implies a judgment of value. What is desired, in any level of desire, is for the agent a 'good', in the possession of which, he believes he will attain a measure of satisfaction. We are thus ~~led~~^{led} to the consideration of the Ontological status of spiritual values, and the part they play in the moulding and perfecting of our personality. Mysticism, generally, has a deep contribution to make to this aspect of philosophic thought, and as we have already pointed out, what other mystics have done, for the thought of their respective countries

English mysticism has done for England. For they claim to have attained that union with spiritual reality which has thereupon revealed itself in the transformation of their lives; more, in contemplation, with which we shall also deal, they lay claim to supernatural knowledge. We shall require, therefore, to deal with that form of intuitional thinking that the mystics name contemplation. Other aspects and points bearing on their doctrines will be dealt with as they arise.

The question we have set ourselves to answer from the philosophic point of view is, 'what are the conditions that make such experience as that of the mystics, possible?' To answer this question we shall require a large canvass in order to deal in a comprehensive manner with the various problems raised. There is, of course, the subjectivist answer generally given by the psychologists, that the mystics are subject merely to the 'projections' of their own consciousness. Modern developments in the psychology of religion attempt to explain all religious belief and experience on a purely subjectivist basis. This does violence to the subject matter of such experiences.

Moreover, such a position leaves the subject-matter of moral philosophy and aesthetics on the same plane. Those who attempt to explain our consciousness of God, or sin, or of moral and aesthetic ideals as being merely 'projections' or 'complexes' are like an intending traveller about to set out on a long journey, who attempts to pack a tremendous amount of luggage in a very small attaché case.

But consciousness may be, at least tentatively, defined as a unique kind of synthesis of the life-forces of the organism, and the nature of its environment. That is, in all consciousness, there is a subjective and an objective reference. This may be applied to religious experience as well. In other words, as against all, not merely psychologists, who maintain the subjectivist point of view, we shall contend that the grounds of religious belief so far from being subjective in character, are not so, but objective; and further, that the objective conditions, in every case are the conditions, that make the experience possible, not merely where the content of that belief is

concerned, but also of the human capacity to know it. From our studies in mysticism generally, and in our English mystics in particular, this position would seem to be warranted.

Our more general position therefore is, that Nature, and I use the term in the widest possible sense so as to include Super-nature, is bound up with the conditions that make knowledge of it possible, and in particular that Universal Spiritual Values play a determining part in the ordering of the Universe. We are thus on the side of the Platonists, and the Augustinians especially, and in general agreement with the views expressed in Bonaventura's *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, which was influential in moulding the outlook of Rolle and the other XIV th century mystics. We do not forget our debt to the Aristotelian Aquinas, but what we accept from his teaching on the nature and function of reason, and its relation to revelation, will not be found to conflict with, but rather supplement what we have to say in support of this position.

A further preliminary consideration is necessary, and that is with regard to the term 'experience'. What ought we to imply by 'experience'?

The English mystics, no more than their more philosophic predecessors Platonist and Christian, could find any evidence of God's existence, or attain to knowledge of, and union with, Him, in and through 'sense experience' alone. It is only after the spiritual capacities have been illumined that they were able through the senses, to discern in nature, the footprints of the Uncreated Wisdom. Within the term 'experience' we must therefore include, and it is legitimate to do so, man's moral and spiritual capacities and experiences as well. Obviously, more enters into the human spirit than what comes by way of the senses. There are ideals of character and conduct, aspirations and intuitions, that seem to have but little relationship with the phenomena presented to the senses, the more so since these ideals are formal in character, and are not specified in detail. Moreover, we are saved from subjectivism once again, by the reflection that 'experience' always implies two things, or rather that it possesses two aspects. There is on the mental side 'experiencing', on the subjective side, 'that' which is experienced. Put otherwise, there is

to explain the 'higher' in terms of the 'lower', the particular 'awareness' on the mental side, and the objective aspect is 'that' of which we are aware. Failure to distinguish these ^{two} aspects within the concept 'experience' has often issued in a subjective interpretation of moral and religious experience, and even in such thorough-going scepticism as that of Hume. As Kant has taught in his objective deduction of the categories, all consciousness is consciousness of objects, and all awareness is awareness of meaning. Only so is experience possible at all. This leads us to our main position which we have now to justify, that 'Nature' in the wider sense of the term already indicated, that is, as including 'Supernature', is bound up with the conditions that make knowledge of it possible, and from the more special point of view of the mystics, enables us further, to come into the closest possible relationship with it. We are led by pursuing this line of thought to a position that is implied in the reality of the experience of all christian mystics, including that ^{the} of XIVth century mystics of England, a position that issues in a teleological view of the universe. Again we remind ourselves of the influence the doctrines of the Incarnation, and salvation by Divine Grace had upon our mystics. The Neoplatonists conception of teleology was not sufficiently deep, just because they sought to attain union by their own unaided efforts. As we shall see, in the case of the English mystics revelation is required, reason is assisted throughout to the knowledge of God, and the personality is possessed by an Ineffable Reality that, under certain conditions, which we have already noted, seeks it out.

Development of a Teleological point of view.

The problem that now suggests itself is that of method of interpretation of the data at our disposal, in particular the experience of the mystics. In passing, we may note that the problem of method has been in the fore-front of philosophic theory since the time of Bacon and Descartes. Our method is the attempt

to explain the 'lower' in terms of the 'higher', the particular in terms of the universal. In so doing we are in line with what is best in the platonic philosophy. In choosing this method philosophy must differ from science. Perhaps for that reason psychology, claiming as it does to be a special science, fails to do justice to the mystic experience. For the success of science depends on its ability to abstract from the whole of reality that part it is desirous of studying. In so doing it is acting legitimately, but with philosophy it is quite otherwise. The problems of philosophy are non-isolable. In giving an answer to any one of its problems, it must, tentatively at least, formulate such an answer as will be relevant to the whole. In so doing it must take reality as a whole for its province, since it seeks not only to discover the nature of God, or the conditions of a particular aspect of human experience, but also the ground on which we can maintain that our scientific, moral, aesthetic, and religious judgement, are valid.

This is an exceedingly important point, and it has a central bearing on our problem, ^{for} ~~but~~ as we have pointed out, every desire implies a judgement of value. The English XIVth century mystics stake much on the ordering of the desires upon God. The deeper question for philosophy involves a consideration of the grounds on which we may establish the validity of values. It is therefore incumbent upon us to show how these judgements are valid of reality, to make clear the philosophic implications of English XIVth century mysticism, and attain the end set down in the introduction to this thesis. That is, we shall attempt to make good our claim that the values which have called for a reconstruction of life were brought into the fore-front of human thought under the stimulus and discipline of medieval conditions. Such investigation should afford us insight into the nature of reality, which we, perhaps to a lesser degree than the mystics, directly experience. We may now come to closer grips with our attempt to develop a teleological point of view in order to account for the experiences of the mystics.

All human conduct is purposive in character. We do, as a matter of fact, set ideal ends before ourselves, apart from matters of routine, and direct our activities to the attainment of such ends. No other category adequately accounts for the peculiar characteristics of human nature except that of purpose.

Certainly it is characteristic of the English mystics to a very high degree. All kinds of disciplines and spiritual exercises are undertaken in order to reinforce their purpose, and to ensure the attainment of their end. But even on a wider scale the category of purpose can be applied to the functions of the church and the state, educational and economic institutions as well as to the lives of individuals.

In similar manner the category of purpose must be given a universal reference as well, though not quite in the same sense in which it is applied to human conduct. But the reference in this wide sense is with regard to the 'meaning' of the cosmic process as interpreted in the light of our specific human knowledge and experience. That, of course, means we must attempt to interpret the nature of the whole in the light of our experience of the part. But this need not involve us in any insuperable difficulty, for all scientific investigation has proceeded in like manner, and as we shall see, it is the very nature and function of reason itself to proceed in this way.

The central idea then, in a teleological explanation ~~xxxx~~ is that of 'purpose', but it is plain from the fore-going that we cannot apply that conception in a popular sense as involving a distinction between 'means' and 'end'. For in considering the relation of a whole to its component parts, this distinction vanishes, and its place is taken by a conception of the world in which the 'whole' appears as the necessary unity of its components, and the components as the necessary differentia of the whole. Thus envisaged, our true principle of explanation is, that the True is the 'whole'.

We may take as an analogy a piece of music such as the overture to the first act of Tannhauser. The parts are organic to the

whole, and cannot be understood out of their context. An experienced ear may detect the two varying themes of the Venusberg music, and the Song of the Holy Pilgrims, but still, these are in harmony with the entire overture, and with each other. The universe likewise, we may maintain, is rational through and through, and hence scientific study of it is possible. By 'purpose' therefore, we mean the significance of the universe as experienced by such as the mystics, affirmed in their judgements about it, and marked in the conformity of their lives to the revelation of its deeper significance.

We have now to take into consideration a further mystical postulate, and that concerns the human personality. The mystics claim, and in our examination of their works we have seen how it worked out in their lives that this Reality even in its deepest and richest spiritual aspects can be known by the human mind, and that the human mind can attain union and harmony with it. Now, from our general standpoint, the claim must be made that Personality is one of the necessary differentia of the whole which we have postulated. If Reality is 'One', then Personality is rooted and grounded in the structure of the universe. Modern developments in biology can be ~~sight~~ cited in support of this position, and the generally accepted theory of evolution but affirms the statement. To that extent our study of the mystics experience will be the more deeply justified if an account can be given, satisfactory to philosophy, yet one that does not conflict with the teaching of science.

We may therefore insist that all the rich and varied data of personal experience, in so far as it is systematic and coherent in expression, enables us the more adequately to determine the character of the Universe in which the individual is placed.

This position is reinforced by the fact that only through the activities of human reason is science possible at all. But, in our study, we are not to be confined to one aspect of human activity, namely that of scientific investigation. We are taking into account as evidenced deeply by the experience of all mystics, the

moral and religious vocation of all mankind, and as we have seen this in its higher reaches involves the experience and outlook of the genuinely religious spirit. To condemn these latter aspects of the human personality as illusory and unreal also implying that the historical evolution of such institutions as the church are likewise the result of illusions, and to maintain, as some naturalistically minded thinkers would appear to do that having served their purpose such institutions will be set aside, is indicative of an unwarranted and perverse way of examining the facts. For ethical and religious principles are bound up with, and embodied, in, these institutions. Such a view as that briefly indicated, is on a level with the equally untenable view of the nature of human reason as being able to supply unassisted in any way, from its own resources, all the necessary conditions for the deepening of the life of the soul, and more generally for the betterment of human life as well as the understanding of the nature of things.

In opposition to all such teaching I wish to maintain in the first place, that the moral and spiritual values implied primarily in the experience of the mystics we have considered, and more generally in the ethical and religious nature of man, can be established on the same footing as the logical criteria admittedly considered valid, and holding universally, by scientific thinkers, and also the upholders of a Secularist view of the universe generally. The discussion is bound to take this wider reference, for continuity is as much indicated in Reality, as is its multitudinous variety. Only so can we maintain the rationality of the Real.

Secondly, I shall seek to argue that these values which represent the highest type of existence known to us, and which lie deepest in human nature, will afford the real clue to the teleology implicit in the cosmic process, and as such, will be found to offer a genuine basis, open as the mystics have demonstrated, to empirical verification, for christian theism.

For man, as a person is, as the Neoplatonists taught, in organic relationship to the Reality which gave him being, and man as a person is much more ^{than} ~~as~~ man as an organism. This immediately brings other facts within our purview, such as those of moral obligation and religious observance.

We shall be guided throughout by the formal principle of consistency or coherence, but the matter to be thus moulded, as it were, is all the wealth that experience presents. Dealing with a teleological view, in the light of the specific moral and religious aspects of human personality, the idea of 'purpose' passes into that of '^{value} ~~value~~', for it is the character of the 'whole' that we are seeking to determine. Sorley has pointed out in his book "Moral Values and the Idea of God", that "ethical ideals have a direct bearing upon practice. What we say ought to be, becomes a demand that it shall be: it is potentially an object of desire, and determines our wishes and conduct". Again he says, "No view of reality can be accepted as one on which our specifically human consciousness can rest unless it commend itself by satisfying these practical needs as well as our more strictly theoretical requirements".

Without committing ourselves to Sorley's general standpoint which is Berkelian in character, the quotations given indicate the nature of the quest on which we are about to embark. That is, we must endeavour to discover the ontological status of 'values', The True, the Beautiful, and the Good, and solve our problem as to their validity. These are really two aspects of one problem, and it is fundamentally a logical problem. We have thus been led through our consideration of the mystics, to the wider problem ^{to} as/the nature of Personality, and also to determine how values are related to existence.

I desire to maintain that our judgements of value stand on the same plane of objectivity, and therefore justify parity of treatment, as the strictly logical scientific judgements for which absolute validity is claimed. In so doing, I do not wish to develop a fully articulated theory of knowledge, because that would

take us too far afield, but we may briefly indicate the importance of this question for a philosophic interpretation of the universe on Idealist lines.

Scientific judgements claim absolute validity, that is, they are valid of reality. Since we claim parity of treatment for our religious, ethical, and aesthetic judgements, and I include the higher religious and spiritual experiences, then theory of knowledge becomes of paramount importance for philosophy. The question that is raised is briefly this. Can we formulate a theory of knowledge that will offer an adequate interpretation of the data at our disposal, which will also harmonise that aspect of our practical adaptation to the world, as determined by our sense-data, with the results reached by scientific investigation, and still permit of the formulation of judgements that are universally valid of reality?

We may argue, in the light of present day scientific doctrine, that Nature has given us existence, and in the course of a long period of experimentation and preparation, has endowed us with sense organs and instinctive dispositions, and capacities, which enable us to adapt ourselves to our environment. In the course of so doing, the capacity for contemplation and scientific investigation has also developed, until in man it reaches the highest stage where he is enabled to discern ~~Truth~~^{TRUTH}, Beauty and Goodness, and in the light of these absolute values, he may even set aside pressing practical needs and aspects of his existence, and reorganise his life on a different level. This is precisely what the mystics have done. It is the result of their deeper insight into spiritual reality.

By means of the fundamental categories, bound up with his awareness of space and time which he directly apprehends in terms of sense experience, man is enabled to transcend the 'immediate' and view it in the light of the universal meanings such categories embody. On this view, we are able to regard Reality as integrally bound up with the conditions that make knowledge of it possible, in bringing about the knowing mind. Treating the data realistically,

^{have} we reached an idealist view of Reality, by interpreting the strictly naturalistic and practical origin of our powers and capacities, in the light of the conditions that gave them existence.

The universal features of Reality embodied in our apprehension of Time, Space and the categories, enable us to transcend our subjective and planetary limitations, and in so doing, to formulate scientific and logical judgements which are absolutely valid.

The main position inadequately and sketchily stated above, is capable of full demonstration and argument, (1). and it embodies the important point for our immediate purpose, that our judgements of value are similarly grounded. We shall work this out in somewhat greater detail.

We are likewise endowed by Nature with instinctive and emotional qualities of mind, which give rise to those idealistic tendencies that are so deeply rooted in human nature. This may be profoundly illustrated in any survey of the development of civilization from savagery and dark superstition down to the comparatively high degree of enlightenment obtaining in our own modern times. Even the average humanity of man as exemplified in his bread-winning, law-abiding activities, involves at every step self-discipline and self-sacrifice, and the renunciation of lower selfish impulses, and lead to the formation of natural virtues. The sense of responsibility is gradually widened, and under the growing recognition of standards of value, ideals of justice, of truth, of generosity and right-dealing come to be recognised as guides to conduct. When we take a more comprehensive sweep the same aspects stand out. Great social and religious movements have been popular because they were emotional in character. This is exemplified in the wave of religious fervour that swept the country under the preaching of Wesley, and which saved our land

(1). It is fully worked out in Professor Kemp Smith's book "Prolegomena to an Idealist Theory of Knowledge".

from being overwhelmed by the horrors of revolution. Similar movements have recurred in isolated districts from time to time.

Movements such as these, have been characterised by an intense enthusiasm for the well-being of humanity, and carry with them ethical implications that strike deep into the roots of human character, transmuting the more selfish and egoistic tendencies in human nature, into a tender regard for, and solicitous care of, the good of others. Moreover, we must admit that the human mind is endowed with these capacities, they are native to it.

It may, of course, be argued, that such movements engender biologically necessary illusions which play a transient part in fitting us into a more comfortable adaptation to our environment. But it is easy to show, and here the mystics again come to our aid, that as a matter of fact, such ideals have very often taken the opposite direction. The mystics, and very often the average individual as well, appear to be anything ~~but~~ happy or comfortable when assailed by a deep sense of sin and other unworthiness, under the illumination that religious conviction can bring. Perhaps here we find the inner meaning of that part of their experience they call "The Dark Night of the Soul". The greatest saints have been those who were most conscious of their own ~~utter~~ unworthiness. Yet, as often happens, and again the experience is manifested in the lives of our mystics, those whose struggles are greatest against temptations and physical frailty, are aroused and possessed to a greater extent by the Supernature thus revealing itself, than are ordinary individuals. And despite the trial and pain of the conflict they have such inward joy and quiet confidence in the ultimate goodness of Reality, that they are unwavering in their resolution to pursue their quest.

In maintaining the absolute validity of logical criteria, it is implied that knowledge yields insight into the genuinely Real, and truth therefore is objectivist in character. This is the reason why the Theory of Knowledge is so central in Idealist philosophies. Otherwise, it would be impossible to maintain the

absolute validity of spiritual values. We have further seen that the characteristic type of self-transcendence involved in scientific judgements is bound up with the type of capacity that Nature has gifted to us, that Nature is intimately bound up with the capacity for knowing it. It is because universal features of reality, apprehended as such in Space, Time and the fundamental categories are involved in all knowledge that we are enabled to transcend our limitations and formulate judgements that are valid throughout Reality, are like universals, also valid of Reality, that is, possessing a genuine objective status in the Real, involved in our judgements of value? In solving this problem we shall have accomplished the main part of our task.

We shall include the achievements of the human mind in the arts, as well as religious, mystical and moral experience. For the Gothic cathedrals are as much a mystical expression of the religious life of the time as are the experiences of the mystics themselves. Perhaps it will be best to set our answer in a large context and examine the data offered by a general survey of primitive beliefs. Even here we find that fundamental categories, possessing permanent value for all that is best and deepest, and most highly valued in our complexly conditioned modern life, already play an important part. Values are recognised and embodied in the moral and religious practices that mark the distinctive features of human personality. The Blood Feud Code, for example, embodies a strong moral sanction, and exercises a restraining influence on the indiscriminate taking of life. Our modern legal penalties for offences of a like nature, embody a similar conception. Polygamy is an advance on polyandry, and that likewise indicates an increasing respect for the rights invested in human beings.

It may be legitimately argued that such values awake in us, by appealing to our social instincts, our feelings, and our emotions a deepening sense of the richness of their own possibilities, and in so far as they do so, they have a continuing validity for the

ultimate and irreducible aspects of human nature. A more searching scrutiny of the history of these primitive people than that attempted here, would reveal to an even greater extent their deep appreciation for the values that lie deepest in our experience.

The truth is, that, as in the field of knowledge, so in regard to our spiritual religious and moral vocation, all that is of characteristic human worth involves, if not for the agent, at least for the human influences that surround him, a long and costly elaboration and preparation, which requires centuries of civilisation to come to full fruition.

As Baron von Hugel points out in his Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of religion, the acquisitive instinct, in this way, develops into the altruistic impulse that is manifested in the generous help of others, and the combative instinct grows into a burning love of adventure, exploration, and rational service.

Recognition of the higher virtues is thus seen to depend on a growing recognition of the higher values. Even knowledge of vice, as such, pride, selfishness and the like, depends on the appreciation of ideals which indicate the actual presence and place of the value we call Goodness so far as it bears upon the development of moral character and personality. How otherwise is the experience of the mystics explicable? it is just a deepening realisation of the presence and constraint of the Holy Spirit of God that compels them first to recognise their sinfulness and then to seek the substitution as Hilton enjoins, of the opposite virtues in place of self-will and pride. From the more strictly philosophic point of view we may argue that here Nature is being revealed as Super-nature.

In so far as we do so, and view our dependence as creatures on the apprehension of ideals of value, that are in this way creative of a transformed personality, we are passing from an anthropocentric view to one that is theocentric or Christo-centric as the case may be, and thus such values are the basis of an adequate theism.

Thought here, as in the changing aspects of scientific data, seeks the permanent behind the flux of historical appreciation, and like science, finds it in the universals that give structure and coherence to our human experience. We are at the same time, by this means enabled to transcend the peculiar limitations of our creaturely existence and to contemplate the nature and richness of ultimate Reality. The omni-presence of religion in the human race is a symbol of the step from the finite particulars of the senses to the universals of thought. To put it otherwise, philosophy studies man in his natural setting, and as we see, though human personality is rooted and grounded in physical and social conditions, yet philosophy is bound to refer, for an adequate explanation of the facts, to the wider, richer, deeper, spiritual reality which has given birth to the human personality with all the distinctive ~~of~~ marks of its religious and moral vocation. And in this wider reference patient thought and systematic reflection, brings into view the fact, that, complex as it is, Ultimate Reality is not chaotic, but is ordered and coherent, possessing a definite structure which is progressively revealed as human insight deepens.

Particulars are found to be everywhere conditioned by universals

Each judgment lies in a rich and complex context; fundamental categories are bound up with all human experience, and scientific thinking, and ~~and~~ ^{and} these universals we are dependent for our criteria of Truth, Beauty and Goodness. Such universals prescribe the possibilities as well as maintain the actualities of personal life.

They are revealed to us in the progressive revelation that is made to us as our intellectual and spiritual powers are awakened, enlarged and quickened. Thus an idealist viewpoint, which is likewise truly realist, involving as it does the assertion that though limited by our personal perspective and circumstances, in sense-experience, as well as in the aspirations and desires of the religious life, together with its emotional responsiveness so much emphasised by all mystics, to the influences touching us, we have

a direct, face to face apprehension, of reality in its Natural and Supernatural aspects, such a viewpoint finds the clue to the rich and comprehensive nature of the Reality which surrounds the person, and to the ultimate problems of human life and destiny in thus interpreting the values that are so integral to the development of moral and religious character and personality. We assert, therefore, that we are justified in contending that spiritual as well as intellectual values possess absolute validity, and yield insight into the complex nature of the independently Real.

As Professor Fringie Pattison says in his Idea of God, "To frame an ideal and pursue it means the presence of an 'infinite' in the finite experience, or from the other side it is the mark of a finite being who is the partaker of an infinite life." Or, to quote Baron von Hugel "as our removal of objections to the reality of an external world necessarily establishes its reality for us - because there is the vivid impression, the sense of a transhuman reality all around us, which clamours to be taken, as it gives itself and which was only refused to be thus taken because of these objections; so now our removal of objections to the reality of the Super-human Reality necessarily establishes its reality for us - since there again, is the vivid impression, the sense of a still deeper, a different, transhuman Reality which penetrates and sustains ourselves and all things, and clamours to be taken, as it gives Itself." (1)

Philosophy then, from an idealist standpoint, having regard to the spiritual and moral apprehensions of the average individual, still more when it comes to the study of the deeper reaches of the human spirit as they are manifested in the experiences set down by the mystics, is bound to hold that man's personality, the instrument of all his deeper and fuller apprehensions, is constituted by the presence and harmonising influences of spiritual values possessing universal validity. In their absoluteness they, at one and the same

(1) Essays and Addresses. First series, page 44.

time, create in us our deepest moral and religious experience, and also, deliver us from the limitations of a strictly animal existence.

But it may be objected that we come to an appreciation of the Beautiful and the Good by means of sense data which have physiological and physical conditions. This, it is held, that these are relative and contingent. For example, the deep appreciation of the grand music in an Operatic Overture may on a slight alteration in the structure of the inner ear, become a desire to escape from a maddening jumble of noises. Moreover in the sphere of art there are different canons of beauty. Witness the outcry against such a group of sculpture as Epstein's "Rima" or "Night". Again, it may be reasoned that our moral codes appear to be bound up with historical contingencies. For example, we are bound to appreciate the debt that Hebrew Theology owes to persecution inflicted by enemies, the long and trying periods of exile, domination by the Babylonians, Medes and Persians and others, the scattering of the nation throughout the world.

Obviously the objection is not cogent, for on such a subjectivist view, the reality of the physical world can as readily be called in question as that of the spiritual realm and of God. It may be argued on this view that everything is contingent and illusory, that there is no permanence in the Real, or if there is, we have no basis for inferring it.

The answer to this aspect of the objection has been sufficiently indicated in our discussions alike of the strictly cognitive as well as the spiritual data we have at our disposal, for we have seen that Reality is integrally bound up with the conditions that make knowledge of it possible, that enable us to apprehend it. For the powers and capacities that we undoubtedly possess, enabling us not merely to adapt ourselves to our physical environment, are of such a nature, that we are enabled to transcend the strictly natural, but as we find we can only do so, in so far as the terms and materials required for the operation of such powers and faculties are given to us.

We pass, therefore, to the real question raised by the objection.

It refers to the 'meaning' of values. We may admit that the very nature of religious and moral experience, even in respect of its chief evidences, renders the clear explication of its content and significance infinitely more difficult than is the analogous task with regard to the physical world. That is one reason why the mystics set down their experiences in symbolic expressions difficult for the average mind to comprehend. The mystics themselves are only too well aware of their inability to express clearly the things they have experienced.

For Julian, it is 'a formless enlightenment'. The author of the Cloud of Unknowing, and the others, Hilton included, utter warnings against any who have not received the call to attempt the arduous mystic way. Rolle can only express himself in terms of Calor, canor, dulcor, And such must be the case with every advance into the depth and riches of any subject-matter of this nature.

We may argue, however, that the actual experiences, the data with which we start, are never simply impressions which are felt to be subjective at the time of their reception. Always there is involved a subject - object relation in which the two mutually condition one another. Kant's analysis as set down in his deductions of the categories has made this abundantly clear, and it must be taken into account in any theory of knowledge, also in the study of aesthetics, and morals, where the trans-subjective worlds of the True, the Beautiful and the Good, are necessary presuppositions. Only so are our judgments valid.

Let us now approach the problem more closely. In the first place, we must be careful not to identify 'meaning', with the vehicles through which it is expressed; it is always relatively independent of its embodiments. A meaning, similar to that expressed, say in the Tannhauser overture, can also be expressed in the painting of any great artist, as Watts picture of 'Hope'. The spiritual exaltation embodied in the imposing Gothic cathedral, can receive expression in Epic poetry of the Miltonic type. This is so because 'meaning' possesses an universal element. Its function, as thus expressed,

is to carry us beyond the immediate to the rich content which has partially revealed itself as it were at the one point, and in so doing, we are offered indications of still greater possibilities that lie behind it. We are thereby enabled to reach the independently Real, and the ripening experience that normally comes with increase of years will disclose still greater and richer possibilities to our reverent gaze. Again we have the witness of the mystics to their experiences of the meanings revealed in their moments of ecstasy and union. So great were the possibilities disclosed that one and all they declare only in the fuller life lying beyond the grave could they even then in part, adequately enter into them. They were impressed by the transcendence of God and hence their warm devotion to the Incarnate Christ.

Just as sense-data form the starting point of the scientist, and afford him clues to the nature of their physical conditions, so feelings and conations, desires and aspirations afford us clues to the values that condition and occasion them. They are the media of something more than the purely physical constitution of nature, and through them the deeper aspects of our environing Reality in part, reveals itself. Scientific investigation itself proceeds on the assumption that the universe is rational throughout, and such investigation of what seems to be most contingent invariably reveals the deeper rationality which has there manifested itself. Man must rationalise and value in fulfilment of his moral vocation, and both are necessary to give meaning to life. Reason, subjective faculty of the individual mind though it be, implies as the condition of its own possibility rationality in the nature of things. Only as Reality cooperates with the individual mind is reasoning possible at all.

Spiritual values therefore, of Goodness, Love and Beauty, have a determining voice in the ordering of the universe. As we have tried to show, they are the very values that constitute what is of most enduring worth in human personality. The universe from every point of view is a purposive unity in which the creative activities of these values work in and through us, and as we respond to their

influence, they educate and coerce us into a deeper and fuller knowledge of themselves, transforming our personality in the process.

This is the main value of the witness of our mystics from the point of view of philosophy. That of course, might be truly said of all mystics. But as we have pointed out and as noted by others (1), the significance of the mystic experience from one point of view, is, that no matter where it appears, or in what period of time, it conforms to the same general type. We have therefore chosen to deal with the issues raised from a philosophic point of view that in a manner covers not only the spiritual exercises and inspirations of the mystics alone, but these as they are related to moral and religious experience generally, for we believe that the one can cast light on the other. Further, it can be argued, that the experience of the mystics does not represent a experience different in kind from that enjoyed by the average individual, but rather one that involves deeper insight and a greater sensitivity of apprehension. The difference therefore is one of degree. Hilton, undoubtedly, in his *Scale of Perfection* addresses himself to all men and women of goodwill, for whom therefore in his opinion the mystic experience is possible. At the same time, in justice to our English group of mystics it must be said that they issue warnings to those who would attempt to enter into the experience ~~with~~ without the constraint of God's special grace upon them.

We have chosen therefore to approach the mystic experience as it is manifested in our English mystics, through consideration of the nature and status of spiritual values. For the path of value is that which leads the soul to God. Our consideration of the nature and function of spiritual values has led us to a teleological view of the universe. The mystics quest is one that is objective in nature, and we have seen reason to believe that values are constitutive of Reality, and therefore in their own right, are regulative of experience. In both of these aspects our account is justified, for only so could the mystics particular experience

(1) *Mysticism*. E. Underhill, Appendix.

have been possible at all.

Their quest is for Reality in its deepest aspect, and in the vision of the Ineffable Beauty and Goodness the quest for them came to an end, but it accomplished for them also a transformation of character and outlook. For it brought them to the realisation that not by any effort of their own could they build a bridge to God, but they also realised that God, in whom are vested the spiritual values of Beauty and Goodness, is seeking them out, and as they opened their spirits to His Spirit, and purged their desires for his reception, His spirit could and did possess, transform, and illumine them.

The mystics experience of values.

Since we have stated our conviction that the English mystics experience of the spiritual values that condition human personality in the highest aspects it can reach, so far as we can tell, in this world, in so far as we have stated that experience to be due rather to depth of insight and sensitivity of impression than to difference in ~~kind~~ ^{KIND} from the experience enjoyed by the average religiously minded individual, a further question now rises. It is the question relating to our statement that modern values which have called for a reconstruction of life, were first brought into the forefront of human thought under the stimulus and discipline of medieval conditions.

The ~~statement~~, of course, in those terms, would involve a wider field of discussion than that allowed by the subject of this thesis, for other than mystics played a part. But we hold that the rise of mysticism towards the end of the Middle Ages is significant in this relationship, and we approach the statement from this angle. The question is, how did these individuals come to be thus endowed? What is the creative power that is at work? The answer will be found to reinforce our central contention as to the status and operation of values in a teleological reference.

It may be held that they were specially endowed individuals who possessed a creative power of bringing to light something genuinely ^{new} not merely as regards 'form', but also 'content' as well.

If so, then their powers are inexplicable except on the assumption that their inspiration is a supernatural endowment. But to maintain this attitude is to raise more problems than can be solved, and any attempt at philosophic consideration of the data would soon be brought to a standstill.

Another point of view is possible and more feasible. It can be maintained that the mystical genius as we have it in our XIV th Century group of writers is creative only as regards the 'form' of expression given to the truths it seeks to make plain. That is, the mystic possesses an unusual capacity for reception of all that is best and deepest in the environing influences that surround him, and impinge upon him. Hence the necessity for our introductory matter to this thesis. The XIV th century English mystics were fortunately placed as regards history at the end of medieval and beginning of modern times. They fell heirs to a very rich inheritance of teaching and of thought. They were rooted and grounded in the religious, social and intellectual atmosphere of their times. They benefited from the highly developed doctrines of the church and the emotional fervour of the Franciscan movement, they were immersed in the language and teachings of the Christian scriptures. These and many other influences played upon them. The most outstanding have been briefly noted.

Stimulated by the example and doctrines of the great mystical doctors of the preceding century, with whose works they were for the most part well acquainted, rendered sensitive by their own ascetic practices and by their capacity for suffering, they became intensely receptive of the influences that surrounded them. These they assimilated and fused in the fire of their own glowing ardour for the possession of ultimate truth and eternal good, and what in this way was assimilated was given a fresh embodiment and expression.

More important from our point of view, is the implication carried by the foregoing account of the English mystics, the implication that the real creative agency is not to be found in a special endowment of the individual, apart from a high degree of sensitivity,

but in the environing conditions that surrounded them.

The general life, so rightly and so complexly conditioned, not only by traditions conserved in institutions and embodied in the culture of past generations is at the same time, profoundly modified by minute variations and changes and experiences that are taking place in the lives of the individuals that compose each succeeding generation. Each human individual strives independently towards his own ends, and seeks to organise and master his own life. To that extent he modifies, even if in infinitesimal ways, the common life.

Changes, therefore, in feeling and in thought of masses of individuals profoundly influence society as a whole.

As we have argued, man's personality is organised and constituted in a more than natural setting. Super-nature, involving the regulative influence of spiritual values must also be taken into account. And man himself, as every Platonist would teach, really searches for an eternal Good, one in which a lasting satisfaction is to be found. Such is the implication carried by the judgment of value implied in each of his desires, even if he does seek for its realisation in wrong places and unworthy objects. He is stimulated into his quest for that Good by the supernatural influences that are at work within him. From the more general point of view then, our men of genius are just those, who, more receptive of such influences than average individuals, more sensitive to the influences at work, not merely detect such influences when they manifest themselves, but seeking also to understand the causes which have initiated and sustained them, enable their age to understand and act upon such influences and powers which are thus predetermining the goal towards which humanity, in the mass, is tending. They are the mouth pieces through which the spirit of the age becomes vocal; they are the conscious spokesman of what has been unconsciously loved and sought.

But what in the end really counts, is the atmosphere, social, cultural, religious, in which they live. They themselves are explicable only against the background which has stimulated them and expressed ~~thm~~ itself through them.

So it is with our group of mystics. They are part of a great mystical epoch in which they were outshone by some of their greater brethren on the Continent. But they are in the movement.

That they were of sensitive mind is readily seen from some of their writings. Rolle, in his earlier works, complains bitterly of the misunderstanding of those from whom he expected sympathy.

He longs for a friend who will stand by him. Solitary through he was, there is always the feeling that had he been received he would have undertaken the work of preaching and teaching. As it is, he writes much, surely not for himself alone, but for the sake of helping others to his own point of view. Similarly with Hilton and Julian, and their are hints of the same desire for social intercourse in the *Cloud of Unknowing*.

There are hints, too, of their capacity for suffering and therefore for deep feeling. It was following upon a serious illness undoubtedly brought on by her desire for mystical experience that Julian received her revelations. Hilton and the author of the *Cloud* warn the reader that much pain and suffering may accompany the quest for ineffable vision. In the background of their thought there is always, though not to the same extent as in other mystics, the *Dark Night of the Soul*.

Thus in England, as on the Continent, the spirit of the age, expressed itself. They appear at the end of a period of high thinking and great endeavour. The church was growing in power, the mystical impulse of the Franciscan movement was spreading westwards, the minds of men and women everywhere, especially among the younger nations of the west, were being subconsciously stimulated and directed towards the higher values of life. Through the mystics all this became articulate. What was merely confused in the thought of the masses became clear to them. They sought both to know the Good, to realise the ultimate issues of life, and to find themselves in harmony with it. Their mystical genius, therefore, is a phenomenon of great sociological and spiritual significance.

Intuition and Contemplation.

It is true, the mystics were not philosophers given to abstract scientific reasoning, but the apprehension of new truths and fresh ideals, at least, new and fresh to the age of society in which they lived are not the products of reflection, that is of scientific reasoning, they are the outcome of particular intuitions. For new truth, or rather fresh truth, presents itself in the concrete setting of such intuitions before its contents are explored by conceptual thinking. Hence we noted that in our study of the mystics experience we had to make allowance for the 'idea' even where it was not explicitly stated.

Mysticism, in England, as elsewhere, is the outcome of insight into the nature of Ultimate Reality resulting from this consciousness. Only from this philosophical point of view can we understand their insistence on the contemplative life as being the highest type of religious experience. Intuitional thinking is equivalent to the apprehension of concrete reality, and thus it is more complex than abstract thinking. That is why its results can supply for abstract thought almost inexhaustible material. As such it cannot be reduced to mere feeling, or to pure cognition, but a complex in which both depth of feeling and thought are involved.

Our point of view can be reinforced by a consideration of the Reality which they sought to apprehend, and to possess. They were seeking to contemplate the Perfect Wisdom, Beauty and Goodness of God. No wonder their experience took mystical form. For even from the point of view of philosophy, we cannot define the Good or the True, or the Beautiful except in terms of themselves. We are therefore led to postulate, in the case of the mystics, an intuitional consciousness as the ground of their insight into the ultimately real. This they fostered and developed by various mystical practices, by purging the desires, by intense longing and prayer, and by a requisite humility of spirit. One and all confess, that in the end God, whom in those ways they seek, though in part revealed, still remains incomprehensible, still, as Plotinus ^{taught} ~~thought~~,

transcends thought and knowledge. But unlike Plotinus, our mystics find rest and satisfaction in the concrete manifestation of the Godhead in Jesus, and in devotion to His Person.

From these points of view our study in English mysticism is a study in that branch of the religious consciousness in which are revealed depths of meaning that lie concealed from the ordinary consciousness. These mystics, so far as we know, were the first in England to reveal such depth, and we might have been saved from some of the excesses and insufficiencies of Deism centuries later, had their testimony and experience been more fully taken into account.

Our teleological point of view, which we maintain is implied in the experiences set down by the mystics, is reinforced by these considerations. For, apart from the seemingly necessary practices and desires required on the human side, Reality is the sole source of the mystics inspiration, and likewise of their transformed lives. Reason itself, whether considered from the point of view of intuitional consciousness or that of reflective thinking, a subjective faculty of the human mind, implies as the condition of its own possibility, rationality in the nature of things. Only as Reality co-operates with the individual mind is reasoning possible at all: to be subjectively possible, rationality must be objectively real. In this wider reference, truth is Reality come to a consciousness of its own meaning through the individual mind. The mystics have contributed to the sum of knowledge that which has inspired their own peculiar type of genius. The sole distinction between them and the average individual is found in their greater sensitivity to the revelations and meanings of which Reality ^{is} full. The power which directs all progress, either in the religious or the secular realm, is thus seen to lie beyond the individual in the Universe to which he belongs. Reality, acting upon him, and ~~making~~ through him, reveals, under certain conditions it may be, to him its wealth of meaning, and so consistently compels him to develop those ideals that are in harmony with and give expression to itself.

Before passing on to consider one or two outstanding points

raised by our study of the mystics from this philosophical point of view, it will be advisable to strengthen our main position by the critical examination of two somewhat different views, both of which may be traced to one underlying but fruitful source of error. That we shall find to be in connection with the nature and function of reason and its relation to faith and revelation.

The first view is that represented by Paulsen and Bergson. (1). They maintain that the characteristic aspect of human activity is purposiveness but without fore-sight. Bergson especially has been impressed by the all pervasive aspect of duration, and philosophy owes him a debt for his exposition of the nature of the *duree*. The teleology of the process he characterises as one in which the world is creatively advancing into novelty. The *elan vital* yields us driving force. It differentiates itself in structure, but offers no information as to our goal. Strangely enough, Bergson seems to see in this fact an omen of better things to come, but does not seem to realise that also the worst might happen since there is no indication as to the direction in which we are ultimately going.

Our seeming 'ideals', so concretely intuited by the mystics, when realised, cast the mirage of their possibility back into the past; we have never really been in possession of them, but when the *elan vital* has reached a certain position we imagine that we possessed fore-sight of the goal now reached. Paulsen's position is similar though differently stated.

Let us now compare this statement with that of Bertrand Russell in his essay 'A Freeman's Worship'. (2). "Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving: his origin, his growth, his hopes, his love, his griefs, are but the outcome of collocations of atoms: no heroism, no courage, no intensity of thought or feeling can preserve the individual beyond the grave. Man belongs to an alien and inhuman world. Alone amid hostile forces, what is man to do? The God who

(1). Intro. to Philosophy, Paulsen, pub. Kagan Paul, also

(2). Mysticism and Logic, Bertrand Russell. Creative Evolution. Bergson.

exists cannot be good: the God whom we can worship is the creation of our own conscience, and has no existence outside it. The free man will worship the latter."

Both of these statements fundamentally misrepresent the situation as it really is. Bergson's position is unsatisfactory since it implies that there is no definite structure in reality, only the increasing differentiation of the *elan vital* as it proceeds on its way like a stream that rises ever higher than its source and gathers novelty as it passes on. In other words, Bergson has no satisfactory theory of universals or values, and the same may be said of his view of the nature of reason. He tends like all empiricists, to ignore the presence of ideal factors which condition human experience.

The mystics of XIVth century England in their teaching imply two things. These are that the vision they attain is Reality. Or from the philosophic standpoint the values apprehended are constitutive of the Real, moreover, they are also regulative of life. Their mysticism is a way of life, true, but it is a way of life that depends on the things apprehended.

The Nature and Function of Reason.

The deeper question raised by these writers has a direct bearing on the subject matter of our thesis. It is this. Can reason, unassisted in any way, develop out of its own resources, through intuitive apprehension of rational principles, the true standpoint on religion and moral? This view of reason is utterly false, and is not only in conflict with the result obtained by scientific investigation, but is also in direct conflict with the empirical evidence.

We may admit that the subjective limitations of human beings prevent complete fore-sight from being possible, but the presence of universal values enables us to formulate ideals to the realisation of which we can bend our efforts. Such ideals, by their very nature, are not detailed or highly specified. They are formal in character and therefore flexible and adaptable to new situations as such arise.

So far as we do apprehend these ideals they influence our activity. They reveal the presence of values which start as ideals. The individual for example is aroused by the 'goods' to which his efforts are directed, and such native powers and capacities as he possesses are stimulated into activity by these spiritual values which supply the driving force necessary to achievement. Thus nature, and supernature, revealed as values, co-operate to further the realization ~~as~~ of our ideals.

We have here an indication of the answer to Bertrand Russell's assertions as to the subjective standing of our ideals and religious beliefs. In such assertions as these the mind must be regarded as possessing quite extraordinary/^{creative} capacity. Creativeness in the artist, the social and religious reformer, and the English mystic, is more or less so in appearance only. It is certainly not creativeness in any absolute sense. Rather, we maintain, creative activities work through us. Our efforts depend on the values which take possession of us, which appeal to us in many and diverse ways, stimulating our thoughts and emotions at times to the white heat of rapturous abandonment to the course they indicate for us. Such indeed was the experience of the English mystics, and such has been the experience of the great leaders of religious movements, of martyrs, of great statesmen and outstanding social reformers. They were possessed by a spiritual reality not native to them. They were the shadows cast by a reality greater than themselves.

Here we find the secret of human personality and the key to its nature and destiny. The spiritual values of Truth, Beauty and Goodness have brought us forth, called us to our moral and spiritual vocation, have disciplined us, prescribed our ideals to us, and the actual instances realised in experience are but indications only of still greater possibilities which await fulfilment in our lives. The possible instances of actual existing universals prescribe our ideals to us, and in so far as they do so, they at the same time yield to us that amount of insight into the future which is necessary for the coherent and constructive ordering of our experience.

The view of the nature and function of reason implied in Bertrand Russell's Essay, and found in other naturalistically minded thinkers as well, is thus seen to be at variance with the empirical evidence culled from the more general fields of artistic and moral achievement and outlook, no less than from consideration of the Vision and lives of our mystics. In its place we must put what may be termed the Historical or Institutional view. That is, experience is necessary in all fields, and moreover, in the disciplining of reason, the accumulated data of past generations is required in order that reason might come to full fruition as an instrument whereby we can obtain insight into the nature of the Reality that has borne us.

If we take a wide historical sweep from our own particular point of view, we may say that religion always brings with it organisations and institutions. This is at once a source of strength and weakness; strength, because what is most precious in experience and knowledge is thus conserved, and functions in the enrichment of the situation into which the new generation is born: weakness, because the dead hand of authority, or misinterpreted experience, tends at times to become erected into non scientific dogma. Here we see clearly in its true light, the nature and function of reason. Reason is only capable of acting as it is fructified by manifold influences that lie beyond the scope of the individual, ^{it} thus is assisted throughout, and the experiences which assist it are not common or natural to all men, though there is in all men a capacity of assimilation though not of acquisition.

In every generation specially endowed individuals, in the sense in which our mystics were thus endowed, are required, in order to acquire spiritual experience in its deeper forms. Institutions are necessary in order to preserve for later generations what is thus gradually acquired. Personalities, specially sensitive to the truths thus preserved, are again necessary as media through which the stored experience may be transmitted to those less finely tempered than themselves. And again, from time to time certain

individuals are, by those Institutional and Personal influences, themselves so aroused and raised above their individual selves, as to be able themselves to contribute to the store of social and spiritual experiences, and so to enrich and further develop the institutions that nurtured them. All this contributes to the development of the individual. He is disciplined and guided in a development of his beliefs, and in the acquisition of his fundamental sympathies. In this manner the powers, influences and inspirations of the Spiritual Order create from the raw material of the moral life, as we find it in natural man, the deeper and finer personalities exemplified by such as our mystics. Two points claim our attention here. The first is, that reason is fructified by experience into apprehension of what is rational or permanent and abiding through the flux of the temporal series, and the natural powers of reason clarify experience by means of the ideals presented by the possible instances of universals thus brought into view. Thus Religion, as Baron von Hugel points out, begins, and proceeds and ends with the Given, with existences, realities, which environ and penetrate us, and which we have always a-new to capture and to combine, to fathom and to apprehend ... as stimulated and sustained by a tenacious conviction that are real, if dim, confused knowledge of reality is with us already prior to all our attempts clearly to analyse or completely to synthesise it.

Revelation, in experience, is the dynamic force that coerces us, into recognition of our fundamental dependence upon it for our enlightenment and guidance. Faith, therefore, is not blind; it is a discovery of the universal spiritual values, and the conviction, that in the development of experience, ever deepens, that in throwing our lives widely open to the reception of the values indicated by our ideals, we are attaining to our true destiny, and realising our true nature.

The second point is, that the Augustinians all along, and they have had the deepest influence on our group of mystics, have insisted that illumination is required, that reason must be assisted. So we find in the English mystics this same insistence. The human soul

may proceed just so far, indeed it must, for the soul must be made fit for the reception of the highest Truth and Goodness, but in the end, everything depends on the Grace and Will and Self-revelation of God. Truth and Virtue come not by merit, but by Grace. Ultimately they are matters not of choice, but of pre-destination and necessity.

From a wider point of view, we can now understand more fully the phenomenon of the appearance of a group of mystics such as ours in ^{century} XIV th/England. Lovers of the church, with all its conserved experience, its mystical dogmas, its promises and its potencies, immersed in the doctrines and inspiring teaching of the Christian scriptures, deeply devotional by nature, as they seem to have been, earnest searchers for truth, conscious of the weakness and discords of their own nature, and that of those around them, inspired by the writings of the great Christian philosophers and teachers, whose example must also have inspired them, they too were aroused out of themselves and raised above themselves by that which was above them, and so in their writings, unwittingly it may have been, they sought to enrich the institution that had nurtured them. That they did not entirely succeed is no fault of theirs; in some ways perhaps they were too far ahead of their times. But what they did do was to assimilate and reformulate some of the thought of the Middle Ages, and its richest discoveries, and to make what they had thus assimilated, accessible to their own age. In so doing, they set the very values that call for a reconstruction of life into the forefront of modern thought, having first demonstrated the same in their own transformed and deeply spiritual lives. They sought to teach by their manner of life, as well as by their written works, how a deliberate purposive life is made possible to all mankind, and how his happiness is secured. They showed the former to be possible through the perception of the ultimate values, since these as objects of desire, lead us to their definition as ends to the will.

In the inward harmony and peacefulness of their own transformed lives they made the latter, plain. But they did more than that.

As we study their writings and seek to visualise them against the background of their own times certain other things stand out as well.

They were fully conscious of the problem of evil. Julian of Norwich in her beautiful little book devotes much space to it, but she cannot solve it for us. Our four mystics however, are agreed on this, and it throws light on human suffering, that a hedonist conception of life is one that is totally inadequate for human personality. To hold that pleasure is the end of life is a view that is out of harmony with the facts. Only by interpreting the nature of the Reality that gave us birth, in the light of absolute values of Truth, Beauty and Goodness, together with all the other aspects of Benevolence, Justice, Generosity, Mercy, and Love, that these bring into our view, do we find the clue to the nature and destiny of the human personality. And, as we have already noted in connection with the constructive relation such values bear to our character, a totally different conception of the Good must be accepted, one that indicates righteous and holy lives as the true goal of human personality.

In that case suffering may well play an important part. The English mystics, as we have said, do not tell us much of their suffering, yet indications are not wanting to show that they too knew what suffering meant. As Baron von Hugel points out, and his witness is in harmony with that of most great mystics, "Christianity, has from the first, immensely deepened and widened, it has further revealed, not the explanation-which never existed for us men-but the fact, the reality, the awful potency and baffling mystery of sorrow, pain, sin, things which abide with man across the ages.

And Christianity has, from the first, immensely increased the capacity, the wondrous secret and force which issues in a practical, living, loving transcendence, utilisation, transformation of sorrow and pain, and even of sin.... Christianity refused these theories (Stoicism and Epicureanism) not by means of another theory of its own but simply by exhibiting a life and lives which continually relive, in their endless various lesser degrees and ways, such a combination of gain in giving and of joy in suffering. Christianity thus gave to souls the faith and strength to grasp life's nettle..... It is to Christianity that we owe our deepest insight

into the wondrously wide and varied range throughout the world, as we know it, of pain, suffering, evil; just as to Christianity we owe the richest enforcement of the fact, that, in spite of all this, God is, and that He is good and loving. And this enforcement Christianity achieves at its best, by actually inspiring soul after soul, to believe, to love, to live this wondrous faith." (1)

For the English mystics too, sin and suffering but drive them back upon God. Consciousness of sin drove them there because they realised that their sins were mightier than themselves, and that the aid of a power higher than themselves was required to give them cleansing and self-respect. They found, too, that without suffering, there could be no real depth in their experience of God.

That is why Julian prayed for a serious illness. "I would that that sickness were so hard as to the death... and this meant I, for I would be purged by the mercy of God because of that sickness. For I hope that it might have been to ~~my~~ my reward when I should have died, for I desired to have bene soone with my God and Maker." (2) By suffering the soul is purified. "We thus suffer because, in fact we do communicate with realities other than ourselves, and hence that these realities so impress and affect us that only by a painful effort can we, violently and artificially, treat those realities as mere fanciful projections of our own." (3)

Over all, is the belief of the mystics, that for the good man the very fact of the presence of evil within is but the greater incentive to overcome it, and thus attain to new heights of spiritual experience. Thus God makes even evil His minister of righteousness, and in the end, 'all shall be well'. Though we cannot find the solution of the problem of evil in our mystics we shall do well to rest with what we have, since moral and religious experience testify to the victory of the good over the bad.

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- (1) Essays and Addresses, first series. Paper on preliminaries to religious belief. p. 114
- (2) Revelations, Chap. 2, page 5.
- (3) Essays and Addresses, ~~paper~~ paper on preliminaries to religious belief. pages 114 and 115.

The nature of the will.

The fact remains with us of the imperfection of our realisation of values. There is no compulsion on us whereby we must attain the realisation of ideals. But if we accept in its full implications what the mystics have taught us, we shall maintain that all existence natural and human is creaturely. The will is secondary; we cannot justify freedom by asserting that the will is a type of entity that acts in independence of other forms of determination. The fact that we are creaturely beings, and that the data of experience, rigorously interpreted, involves the belief that the universe at large, like human personality, is divinely conditioned, enables us to assert that we have been endowed by God with the capacity to respond to spiritual influences and values which appeal to us at all stages, and in different and manifold ways. In so far as we do respond, we are raised from the level of a more or less animal existence to a spiritual plane that is rich in blessing to our souls.

For values are spiritual. They enlighten us and appeal to us, inspiring us to respond to their influence. They even influence our bodies, as may be exemplified in the work of the artist and sculptor; and we have seen that the Middle Ages were rich in ~~Hand~~ Art and architecture. The Berkeleian view of the self as being self-explanatory is far too simple. Personality is too deep and rich and has far too many implications for that view to be true. It raises, as we have seen, all the problems of philosophy, and when we take the most comprehensive view of the data at our disposal, still more problems arise. Since, then, man is a creaturely being, we must regard the will as secondary, and we find that our true freedom is seen in our capacity to respond progressively to an ever deepening, ever widening, ever richer, revelation of God. The English mystics have taught us some of the depths of revelation that still lie ahead, and the ecstatic joy that results from apprehension of them.

Immortality.

Light has also been thrown on the allied problem of immortality for the mystics teach that apprehension of, and union with, God, can only be partially realised here. Fuller consummation lies

in the hereafter. As Dean Inge remarks in his 'Outspoken Essays', (confessio fidei), "religion is the faith that gives substance to values, and philosophy aims at giving them their proper place in a coherent scheme of reality. It is only by the path of value that we reach God at all. Thus the organic union of ethical and religious consciousness is achieved by spiritual religion which finds in God the rational ground of things and the Moral Governor of the universe. Since we maintain this dependence of the creature on the Creator, we therefore assert that the immortality of the soul will depend on the Spiritual Reality which will, we believe, enable it to continue and complete its quest, and will therefore continue to maintain and uphold it. Nor do we need to postulate a mystical Absolute in which all distinction is lost. Rather we maintain that God is bound up with His creation, as we have tried to demonstrate, and is Sovereign within it. That is more in line with true mysticism than is the transcendent one of the Neoplatonists, and moreover is more in accord with the English mystical temperament. They sought to do justice both to the transcendence and immanence of God, for they worshipped the Transcendent One but discovered Him in Jesus Christ and in their own souls.

So too, we must abandon the conception of God as a changeless and self-sufficient being. "If the finite world means anything to God, the ideas of activity and purpose are indispensable. God is either active in the process, or He is no more than an Eternal Dreamer." (1) Surely, this conception of God as active in creative relationship to the world is borne out by the evidences offered by Christian religion and Christian mysticism. Further, it is more congenial to the mystic temperament with its categories of Grace and Divine Love. God gives himself as it were, in the process of bringing human personality to birth, and He creatively upholds it through all the vicissitudes of life.

(1) The Idea of God. Professor Pringle Pattison.

He has created us, and is still seeking us out, is upholding us, nurturing us, articulating and beckoning to us, arousing our desires, and inspiring us into ever deepening acquaintance with Himself.

General conclusion.

We may now proceed to a general conclusion. In so doing one general point remains to be noted. We have sought to maintain throughout, that the English mystics were influenced by Platonic conceptions. Certainly, Platonism remains supreme in the philosophic realm until the time of ARNOLD Aquinas, when account had to be taken of Aristotle. In England, Plato remained the dominant figure so far as philosophy and theology are concerned, but the influence of Aristotle made itself felt on the Continent. His influence is most clearly seen in the emphasis that Continental mystics place upon the contemplative life as against the active life.

An interesting point is raised here, though we shall not enter into a detailed discussion of it. Aristotle certainly emphasised the superiority of the Speculative Reason as against the Practical Reason. The emphasis is clearly seen in the Nicomachean Ethics. He who pursues the life of theoretic wisdom enjoys the ideal life, for his attention is directed to the loftiest objects. This over emphasis of Aristotle's may have been due to his own peculiar temperament and circumstances. He was not a citizen, and took no part in public life. His Macedonian connections perhaps made him an object of suspicion. In any case, that aspect of his teaching emphasising the supremacy of the speculative reason may have disturbed the balance in the minds of later Christian mystics, between the claims of the contemplative life and the active life. Certainly, had they followed the example of Augustine, the active life would have received a greater share of attention.

(1) Aristotle. W. D. Ross, Ethics, page 217.

(2) "The Holy Spirit." Chap. 1.

Plato, on the other hand, though he makes good the claims of the speculative reason, never destroyed the balance. The weight of his teaching, his developed doctrines, would have served to preserve it. His exaltation of the speculative reason was qualified by other considerations. His own great ideal was that of statesmanship. So he confesses in his later writings, and his pursuit of this ideal can be seen in such works as the Republic. The rulers of the ideal city were undoubtedly to be men of philosophic ability, but that was because they would also be the more able to apply the principles discovered by speculative thought to the needs of all classes of the state, and so secure harmony. The ideals defined by reason were to be applied in practice for the wellbeing of the human soul, and the various institutions of the state were to subserve the same moral end.

It is interesting therefore, to observe, that though our English mystics never hide their preference for the contemplative life, yet the characteristic of the group is its practical temper. Rolle felt compelled to teach, gather Disciples, and stir others to love.

For he believed that it was reasonable for all men to desire happiness, and that no reasonable man should be without love in this life. He desires that our love of God should be seen in all the relationships and duties of life, and holds with Hilton and the author of The Cloud that those who live well the 'active life' are on their way to the contemplative life. But there is sufficient praise of Mary as against the more practical Martha, to show that the emphasis lies on the side of contemplation, at least in theory, if not altogether in practice,

Their practical temper is seen also in their attitude to the Dionysian teaching with regard to the ~~v~~is negativa. Rolle is almost untouched by its influence, at least in the extreme Dionysian form.

The mystic way for him is a concentration of the will and the desires upon God. We have not to divest ourselves of the attributes of our personality. They have to be transformed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. God is not conceived in

Dionysian fashion as simplicity, that is as unity. Though transcendent God is revealed in Jesus Christ who is at once the mystics object of worship, and their example.

More strongly marked is the influence of this Neoplatonic teaching in the Cloud of Unknowing, but even here there are safeguards. The writer simply means that we must not allow anything to interfere with the concentration of the will upon God. He certainly does not mean that we have to divest ourselves of all virtues and concentrate upon simplicity as Dionysius teaches. "A man may not be fully active, but if he be in part contemplative; nor yet fully contemplative, as it may be here, but if he be in part active."

Put otherwise, virtues must first be acquired, since we can only behold what we, ourselves, are. Rolle emphasises the same truth in ~~The~~ Amending of Life. That being accomplished, we are prepared for the Beatific vision. Then, "look that nought work in thy wit nor in thy will but only God. And try for to fell all witting and feeling of ought under God, and tread all down far under a cloud of Forgetting. And Thou shalt understand, that thou shalt not only in this work forget all other creatures than thyself, or their deeds or thine, but also thou shalt in this work forget both thyself and also thy deeds for God as well as all other creatures and their deeds." (1)

This is the authentic note of Dionysian influence.

Hilton, too, is influenced to some extent by the teaching of Dionysius, though it is probable that the influence came by way of the cloud. But again the teaching is modified, as Dean Inge points out, into a stage on the mystic way. It is but an approach through the night to the true day and will end not in the negation of personality, but in its transformation. (2)

In the last place, though we have been drawing out the philosophic implications of XIV th century English mysticism,

(1) The Cloud of Unknowing, Chap. 43.

(2) Christian mysticism, Inge, page 200.

we are aware of the fact, that the English mystics themselves, were interested in the religious experience for its own sake.

Their quest, like that of all true mystics, began in their sense of need, the need to resolve an inner conflict. The conflict generated the desire for, and the energy to sustain, the quest. In the moments of mystic experience the discord is ended, and union and harmony are attained.

Their personal experience of values is therefore deeply rooted in feeling, though the values themselves are objective.

It is in feeling that such values are conserved, for feeling is the conservative element in human nature. That, in part, explains the pain and struggle, undergone during the process of transformation of character. What has in the past been thus conserved, including much, according to the mystics themselves, that was unworthy, had to be uprooted, as it were melted down in a fire of love, before a different set of feelings could take their place. For feeling is to the individual what an institution is to society.

But the experience does not as we have seen, end in feeling, for the other function of feeling is to reinforce thought and action. The intimate consciousness of God, in the experience of the mystics, was therefore followed by intense thought and action.

Although the mystic may not begin with reason, it does not follow that his experience, and the object of it, are not rational.

What it implies we have tried to indicate in the concluding section of our Thesis.

As the outcome of their experience their worship becomes more objective, that is, it partakes more of contemplation of God, His goodness, His will, His kingdom, than any pleading for special benefits. The fact is, the benefits are already there, the sense of all Encompassing love, of forgiveness, the lack of any desire which would lead to temptation, for the mind is overwhelmingly filled with gratitude.

When the deeper experience has passed, there remains the sense, that we are known of God rather than the sense that we know Him, that His faith is retained for us, rather than our faith being reposed in Him, and that more than our love grasps Him, His love sustains and surrounds us.

Modern values that have called for a reconstruction of life were thus brought in to the forefront of human thought under the stimulus and discipline of medieval conditions. This in our view, was the chief contribution of medieval life to modern civilisation, and it exactly consists in this deepening and transvaluation of the standards of value. Hence our English mystics have, unconsciously it may be, but none the less certainly, played an important part in seeking to deepen the thought and theology of the church.

We shall content ourselves with giving a brief account of the English mystics and their works.

Richard Rolle of Hampole.

Most of the details here given are taken from Horstman's very full introduction to his collection of Rolle's English writings, and from Miss Allen's book 'Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle of Hampole' and material for his biography'.

Richard Rolle was born near Pickering in Yorkshire in or about the year 1290. His parents were well to do, and apparently of gentle birth. It is believed that his father, William Rolle, was in some way a dependent of the great family of Neville; certainly, after receiving a primary education at home, he was sent to Oxford by Thomas de Neville, who afterwards became archdeacon of Durham. There Rolle came under the influence of scholasticism which had received a great impulse from the teaching of Duns Scotus. But Rolle found little to attract him in the intellectual atmosphere of scholasticism. He discovered something more congenial to his temperament in the works of St. Bernard, the Victorines, and Bonaventura.

In his nineteenth year he suddenly left the university and returned to his father's house. Evidently he had made up his mind to adopt the profession of a hermit. We learn that he took two of his sister's tunics, which she brought to him in a wood, and made of them a dress like a hermit's. He then left home, and was supported for a time by Sir John de Dalton, a friend of his father's, and himself the father of two sons who had been Rolle's fellow students at Oxford. During this period the development in spirituality took place which he has himself described in his writings. Several years later he moved away from Dalton's estate, and roamed from place to place in search of solitude. Finally he settled at Hampole, near Doncaster, and here he lived as director of a convent of Cistercian nuns, and here he died, perhaps of the Black Death, in 1349. He wrote both in Latin and English, in verse and prose. His poetry is of genuine lyric quality, often expressing the mood of the moment. A full list of

his works is given in the second volume of Horstman's "Richard Rolle of Hampole".

The author of 'The Cloud of Unknowing' is unknown. The 'Cloud' itself is commonly assigned to the early part of the second half of the fourteenth century, that is after Rolle, and before Hilton. It is supposed that the translation of the 'Mystical Theology' of Dionysius came from the same hand that wrote the 'Cloud'. Other works, that are considered to have been written by this same author, "The Epistle of Prayer, The Epistle of Discretion in the Stirring of the Soul, The Epistle of Privy Counsel, and The Treatise of Discerning of Spirits".

The writer's calling is also unknown, though it is assumed that he was a monk. "Everything points to their (his works) being the work of an original mystical genius, of strongly marked character and great literary ability: who, whilst he took the framework of his psychology from Richard of St. Victor, yet is in no sense a mere imitator of these masters, but introduced a genuinely new element into medieval religious literature".

Walter Hilton.

Walter Hilton was, it is thought, a canon of Thurgarton in Nottinghamshire. He died there on March 24th 1395. He was thus a contemporary of Chaucer. Besides the 'Ladder of Perfection' he wrote many other spiritual works. Many treatises by him are to be found in manuscript in college libraries of Oxford and Cambridge, in the British Museum, and also in several libraries in France.

The 'Ladder of Perfection' like the 'Cloud', and much of Rolle's writings, was originally written for the guidance of a single friend of the Author, probably an anchoress.

Julian of Norwich.

We know little also of Julian beyond what she herself tells us. She was born in the year 1342, and she lived in a cell which was built against the Church of St. Julian in Norwich. Her reasons for writing have already been noticed, and no more need be added here. The 'Revelations of Divine Love' is a most fragrant little book, and it reveals a lovable personality.

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