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EDITORIAL

AS TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS

WHAT is mysticism? How many ministers could give a satisfying definition if asked the question by an intelligent parishioner? The very word is suggestive of the vague, the obscure, and the intangible, and hence the uninteresting and the impractical. But the difficulty is that some minds seem to be attracted to an object of inquiry or faith in about direct ratio to its nebulous and unmanageable character. Let such a nature become convinced that a subject can be clearly understood and confined within recognized limitations, and he loses interest. This accounts, at least in part, for the great array of pseudo-philosophic, or pseudo-religious, cults that seek attention to-day. Certain mental types must think—or function in some fashion—in the realm of the supernatural, the occult, the mysterious, the inscrutable, even the uncanny, or else fail altogether to get beyond the sordid common-places of life. Mysticism has always been a sort of camp follower of religion, Christian and otherwise.

MYSTICISM AND CHRISTIANITY

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RELIGION is, shortly, the reaction of the human soul in the presence of God. As God is as much a part of the environment of man as the earth on which he stands, no man can escape from religion any more than he can escape from gravitation. But though every man necessarily reacts to God, men react of course diversely, each according to his nature, or perhaps we would better say, each according to his temperament. Thus, broadly speaking, three main types of religion arise, corresponding to the three main varieties of the activity of the human spirit, intellectual, emotional, and voluntary. According as the intellect, sensibility or will is dominant in him, each man produces for himself a religion prevailingly of the intellect, sensibility or active will; and all the religions which men have made for themselves find places somewhere among these three types, as they produce themselves more or less purely or variously intermingle with one another.

We say advisedly, all the religions which men have made for themselves. For there is an even more fundamental division among religions than that which is supplied by these varieties. This is the division between man-made and God-made religions. Besides the religions which man has made for himself, God has made a religion for man. We call this revealed religion; and the most fundamental division which separates between religions is that which divides

revealed religion from unrevealed religions. Of course, we do not mean to deny that there is an element of revelation in all religions. God is a person, and persons are known only as they make themselves known—reveal themselves. The term revelation is used in this distinction, therefore, in a pregnant sense. In the unrevealed religions God is known only as He has revealed Himself in His acts of the creation and government of the world, as every person must reveal himself in his acts if he acts at all. In the one revealed religion God has revealed Himself also in acts of special grace, among which is included the open Word.

There is an element in revealed religion, therefore, which is not found in any unrevealed religion. This is the element of authority. Revealed religion comes to man from without; it is imposed upon him from a source superior to his own spirit. The unrevealed religions, on the other hand, flow from no higher source than the human spirit itself. However much they may differ among themselves in the relative prominence given in each to the functioning of the intellect, sensibility or will, they have this fundamental thing in common. They are all, in other words, natural religions in contradistinction to the one supernatural religion which God has made.

There is a true sense, then, in which it may be said that the unrevealed religions are "religions of the spirit" and revealed religion is the "religion of authority." Authority is the correlate of revelation, and wherever revelation is—and only where revelation is—is there authority. Just because we do not see in revelation man reaching up lame hands toward God and feeling fumblingly after Him if haply he may

find Him, but God graciously reaching strong hands down to man, bringing him help in his need, we see in it a gift from God, not a creation of man's. On the other hand, the characteristic of all unrevealed religions is that they are distinctly man-made. They have no authority to appeal to, they rest solely on the deliverances of the human spirit. As Rudyard Kipling shrewdly makes his "Tommy" declare:

The 'eathen in 'is blindness bows down to wood and stone,
'E don't obey no orders unless they is 'is own.

Naturally it makes no difference in this respect whether it is the rational, emotional or volitional element in the activities of the human spirit to which appeal is chiefly made. In no case are the foundations sunk deeper than the human spirit itself, and nothing appears in the structure that is raised which the human spirit does not supply. The preponderance of one or another of these activities in the structure does, however, make an immense difference in the aspect of that structure. Mysticism is the name which is given to the particular one of these structures, the predominant place in which is taken by the sensibility. It is characteristic of mysticism that it makes its appeal to the feelings as the sole, or at least as the normative, source of knowledge of divine things. That is to say, it is the religious sentiment which constitutes for it the source of religious knowledge. Of course mystics differ with one another in the consistency with which they apply their principle. And of course they differ with one another in the account they give of this religious sentiment to which they make their appeal. There are, therefore, many varieties of mystics, pure and impure, consistent and inconsistent, naturalistic

and supernaturalistic, pantheistic and theistic—even Christian. What is common to them all, and what makes them all mystics, is that they all rest on the religious sentiment as the source of knowledge of divine things.

The great variety of the accounts which mystics give of the feeling to which they make their appeal arises from the very nature of the case. There is a deeper reason for a mystic being “mute”—that is what the name imports—than that he wishes to make a mystery of his discoveries. He is “mute” because, as a mystic, he has nothing to say. When he sinks within himself he finds feelings, not conceptions; his is an emotional, not a conceptional, religion; and feelings, emotions, though not inaudible are not articulate. As a mystic, he has no conceptional language in which to express what he feels. If he attempts to describe it he must make use of terms derived from the religious or philosophical thought in vogue about him, that is to say, of non-mystical language. His hands may be the hands of Esau, but his voice is the voice of Jacob. The language in which he describes the reality which he finds within him does not in the least indicate, then, what it is; it is merely a concession to the necessity of communicating with the external world or with his own more external self. What he finds within him is just to his apprehension an “unutterable abyss.” And Synesius does himself and his fellow mystics no injustice when he declares that “the mystic mind says this and that, gyrating around the unutterable abyss.”

On the brink of this abyss the mystic may stand in awe, and, standing in awe upon its brink, he may deify it. Then he calls it indifferently Brahm or Zeus, Allah or the Holy Spirit, according as men about him

speak of God. He explains its meaning, in other words, in terms of the conception of the universe which he has brought with him, or, as it is more fashionable now to phrase it, each in accordance with his own world-view. Those who are held in the grasp of a naturalistic conception of the world will naturally speak of the religious feeling of which they have become acutely conscious as only one of the multitudinous natural movements of the human soul, and will seek merely, by a logical analysis of its presuppositions and implications, to draw out its full meaning. Those who are sunk in a pantheistic world-view will speak of its movements as motions of the subliminal consciousness, and will interpret them as the surgings within us of the divine ground of all things, in listening to which they conceive themselves to be sinking beneath the waves that fret the surface of the ocean of being and penetrating to its profounder depths. If, on the other hand, the mystic chances to be a theist, he may look upon the movements of his religious feelings as effects in his soul wrought by the voluntary actions of the God whom he acknowledges; and if he should happen to be a Christian, he may interpret these movements, in accordance with the teachings of the Scriptures, as the leadings of the Holy Spirit or as the manifestations within him of the Christ within us the hope of glory.

This Christian mysticism, now, obviously differs in no essential respect from the parallel phenomena which are observable in other religions. It is only general mysticism manifesting itself on Christian ground and interpreting itself accordingly in the forms of Christian thought. It is mysticism which has learned to speak in Christian language. The phenomena themselves

are universal. There has never been an age of the world, or a form of religion, in which they have not been in evidence. There are always everywhere some men who stand out among their fellows as listeners to the inner voice, and who, refusing the warning which Thoas gives to Iphigenia in Goethe's play: "There speaks no God: thy heart alone 'tis speaks," respond like Iphigenia with passionate conviction: "'Tis only through our hearts the Gods e'er speak." But these common phenomena are, naturally, interpreted in each instance, according to the general presuppositions of each several subject or observer of them. Thus, for example, they are treated as the intrusion of God into the soul (Ribet), or as the involuntary intrusion of the unconscious into consciousness (Hartmann), or as the intrusion of the subconscious into the consciousness (Du Prel), or as the intrusion of feeling, strong and overmastering, into the operations of the intellect (Goethe).

According to these varying interpretations we get different types of mysticism, differing from one another not in intrinsic character so much as in the explanations given of the common phenomena. Many attempts have been made to arrange these types in logical schemes which shall embrace all varieties and present them in an intelligible order. Thus, for example, from the point of view of the ends sought, R. A. Vaughan distinguishes between theopathic, theosophic, and theurgic mysticism, the first of which is content with feeling, while the second aspires to knowledge, and the third seeks power. The same classes may perhaps be called more simply emotional, intellectual, and thelematic mysticism. From the point of view of the inquiry into the sources of

religious knowledge four well-marked varieties present themselves, which have been given the names of naturalistic, supernaturalistic, theosophical, and pantheistic mysticism.

The common element in all these varieties of mysticism is that they all seek all, or most or the normative or at least a substantial part of the knowledge of God in human feelings, which they look upon as the sole or at least the most trustworthy or the most direct source of the knowledge of God. The differences between them turn on the diverging conceptions which they entertain of the origin of the religious feelings thus appealed to. Naturalistic mysticism conceives them as merely "the natural religious consciousness of men, as excited and influenced by the circumstances of the individual." Supernaturalistic, as the effects of operations of the divine Spirit in the heart, the human spirit moving only as it is moved upon by the divine. Theosophical mysticism goes a step further and regards the religious feelings as the footprints of Deity moving in the soul, and as, therefore, immediate sources of knowledge of God, which is to be obtained by simple quiescence and rapt contemplation of these His movements. Pantheistic mysticism advances to the complete identification of the soul with God, who is therefore to be known by applying oneself to the simple axiom: "Know thyself."

Clearly it is the type which has been called supernaturalistic that has the closest affinity with Christianity. Christian mysticism accordingly, at its best, takes this form and passes insensibly from it into evangelical Christianity, to which the indwelling of the Holy Ghost—the Christ within—is fundamental, and

which rejoices in such spiritual experiences as are summed up in the old categories of regeneration and sanctification—the rebegetting of the soul into newness of life and the leading of the new-created soul along the pathway of holy living. From these experiences, of course, much may be inferred not only of the modes of God's working in the salvation of men but also of the nature and character of God the worker.

The distinction between mysticism of this type and evangelical Christianity, from the point of view which is now occupying our attention, is nevertheless clear. Evangelical Christianity interprets all religious experience by the normative revelation of God recorded for us in the Holy Scriptures, and guides, directs, and corrects it from these Scriptures, and thus molds it into harmony with what God in His revealed Word lays down as the normal Christian life. The mystic, on the other hand, tends to substitute his religious experience for the objective revelation of God recorded in the written Word, as the source from which he derives his knowledge of God, or at least to subordinate the expressly revealed Word as the less direct and convincing source of knowledge of God to his own religious experience. The result is, that the external revelation is relatively depressed in value if not totally set aside.

In the history of Christian thought mysticism appears accordingly as that tendency among professing Christians which looks within, that is, to the religious feelings, in its search for God. It supposes itself to contemplate within the soul the movements of the divine Spirit, and finds in them either the sole sources of trustworthy knowledge of God, or the most immediate and convincing sources of that knowledge, or, at least, a co-ordinate source of it alongside of

the written Word. The characteristic of Christian mysticism, from the point of view of religious knowledge, is therefore its appeal to the "inner light," or "the internal word," either to the exclusion of the external or written Word, or as superior to it and normative for its interpretation, or at least as co-ordinate authority with it, this "inner light" or "internal word" being conceived not as the rational understanding but as the immediate deliverance of the religious sentiment. As a mere matter of fact, now, we lack all criteria, apart from the written Word, to distinguish between those motions of the heart which are created within us by the Spirit of God and those which arise out of the natural functioning of the religious consciousness. This substitution of our religious experience—or "Christian consciousness" as it is sometimes called—for the objective Word as the proper source of our religious knowledge ends therefore either in betraying us into purely rationalistic mysticism, or is rescued from that by the postulation of a relation of the soul to God which strongly tends toward pantheising mysticism.

In point of fact, mysticism in the church is found to gravitate, with pretty general regularity, either toward rationalism or toward pantheism. In effect, indeed, it appears to differ from rationalism chiefly in temperament, if we may not even say in temperature. The two have it in common that they appeal for knowledge of God only to what is internal to man; and to what, internal to man, men make their actual appeal, seems to be determined very much by their temperaments, or, as has been said, by their temperatures. The human soul is a small thing at best; it is not divided into water-tight compartments;

the streams of feeling which are flowing up and down in it and the judgments of the understanding which are incessantly being framed in it are constantly acting and reacting on one another. It is not always easy for it to be perfectly clear, as it turns within itself and gazes upon its complex movements, of the real source, rational or emotional, of the impressions which it observes to be crystallizing within it into convictions. It has often been observed in the progress of history, accordingly, that men who have deserted the guidance of external revelation have become mystics or rationalists largely according as their religious life was warm or cold. In periods of religious fervor or in periods of fervid religious reactions they are mystics; in periods of religious decline they are rationalists. The same person, indeed, sometimes vibrates between the two points of view with the utmost facility.

It is, however, with pantheism that mysticism stands in the closest association. It would not be untrue, in fact, to say that as a historical phenomenon mysticism is just pantheism reduced to a religion, that is to say, with its postulates transformed into ends. Defenses of mysticism against the inevitable (and true) charge of pantheising usually indeed stop with the announcement of this damaging fact. "Lasson," remarks Dean Inge as if that were the conclusion of the matter instead of, as it is, the confession of judgment, "says well, in his book on Meister Eckhart, 'Mysticism views everything from the standpoint of teleology, while pantheism generally stops at causality.'" What it is of importance to observe is that it is precisely what pantheism, being a philosophy, postulates as conditions of being that

mysticism, being a religion, proposes as objects of attainment. Mysticism is simply, therefore, pantheism expressed in the terms of religious aspiration.

This is as true within the Christian church as without it. All forms of mysticism have no doubt from time to time found a place for themselves within the church. Or perhaps we should rather say that they have always existed in it, and have from time to time manifested their presence there. This must be said even of naturalistic mysticism. There are those who call themselves Christians who yet conceive of Christianity as merely the natural religious sentiment excited into action by contact with the religious impulse set in motion by Jesus Christ and transmitted down the ages by the natural laws of motion, as motion is transmitted, say, through a row of billiard balls in contact with one another. Yet it would only be true to say that mysticism as a phenomenon in the history of the church has commonly arisen in the wake of the dominating influence in the contemporary world of a pantheising philosophy. It is the product of a pantheising manner of thinking impinging on the religious nature, or, if we prefer to phrase it from the opposite point of view, of religious thought seeking to assimilate and to express itself in terms of a pantheising philosophy.

The fullest stream of mystical thought which has entered the church finds its origin in the Neoplatonic philosophy. It is to the writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius that its naturalization in the Eastern church is usually broadly ascribed. The sluice-gates of the Western church were opened for it, in the same broad sense, by John Scotus Erigena. It has flowed strongly down through all the subsequent centuries, widening

here and there into lakelets. The form of mysticism which is most widely disturbing the modern Protestant churches comes, however, from a different source. It takes its origin from the movement inaugurated in the first third of the nineteenth century by Friedrich Schleiermacher, with the ostensible purpose of rescuing Christianity from the assaults of rationalism by vindicating for religion its own independent right of existence, in a region "beyond reason." The result of this attempt to separate religion from reason has been, of course, merely to render religion unreasonable; even Plotinus warned us long ago that "he who would rise above reason falls outside of it." But what we are immediately concerned to observe is the very widespread rejection of all "external authority" which has been one of the results of this movement, and the consequent casting of men back upon their "religious experience," corporate or individual, as their sole trustworthy ground of religious convictions. This is, of course, only "the inner light" of an earlier form of mysticism under a new and (so it has been hoped) more inoffensive name; and it is naturally, therefore, burdened with all the evils which inhere in the mystical attitude. These evils do not affect extreme forms of mysticism only; they are intrinsic in the two common principles which give to all its forms their fundamental character—the misprision of "external authority," and the attempt to discover in the movements of the sensibilities the ground or norm of all the religious truth which will be acknowledged.

"Mystics," says George Tyrrell, "think they touch the divine when they have only blurred the human form with a cloud of words." The astonishing thing about this judgment is not the judgment itself but the

source from which it comes. For Tyrrell himself as a "Modernist" held with our "experientialists," and when he cast his eye into the future could see nothing but mysticism as the last refuge for religion. "Houtin and Loisy are right," he writes, "the Christianity of the future will consist of mysticism and charity, and possibly the eucharist in its primitive form as the outward bond. I desire no more." The plain fact is that this "religious experience" to which we are referred for our religious knowledge can speak to us only in the language of religious thought; and where there is no religious thought to give it a tongue it is dumb. And above all, it must be punctually noted, it cannot speak to us in a Christian tongue unless that Christian tongue is lent it by the Christian revelation. The rejection of "external authority" and our relegation to "religious experience" for our religious knowledge is nothing more nor less, then, than the definitive abolition of Christianity and the substitution for it of natural religion. Tyrrell perfectly understood this, and that is what he means when he speaks of the Christianity of the future as reduced to "mysticism and charity." All the puzzling facts of Christianity—this is his view—the incarnation and resurrection of the Son of God—and all the puzzling doctrines of Christianity—the atonement in Christ's blood, the renewal through the Spirit, the resurrection of the body—all, all will be gone. For all this rests on "external authority." And men will content themselves, will be compelled to content themselves, with the motions of their own religious sensibilities—and (let us hope) with charity.

There is nothing more important in the age in which we live than to bear constantly in mind that all

the Christianity of Christianity rests precisely on "external authority." Religion, of course, we can have without "external authority," for man is a religious animal and will function religiously always and everywhere. But Christianity, no. Christianity rests on "external authority," and that for the very good reason that it is not the product of man's religious sentiment but is a gift from God. To ask us to set aside "external authority" and throw ourselves back on what we can find within us alone—call it by whatever name you choose, "religious experience," "the Christian consciousness," "the inner light," "the immanent Divine"—is to ask us to discard Christianity and revert to natural religion. Natural religion is of course good—in its own proper place and for its own proper purposes. Nobody doubts—or nobody ought to doubt—that men are by nature religious and will have a religion in any event. The *sensus divinitatis* implanted in us—to employ Calvin's phrases—functions inevitably as a *semen religionis*.

Of course Christianity does not abolish or supersede this natural religion; it vitalizes it, and confirms it, and fills it with richer content. But it does so much more than this that, great as this is, it is pardonable that it should now and then be overlooked. It supplements it, and, in supplementing it, it transforms it, and makes it, with its supplements, a religion fitted for and adequate to the needs of sinful man. There is nothing "soteriological" in natural religion. It grows out of the recognized relations of creature and Maker; it is the creature's response to the perception of its Lord, in feelings of dependence and responsibility. It knows nothing of salvation. When the creature has become a sinner, and the relations proper

to it as creature to its Lord have been superseded by relations proper to the criminal to its judge, natural religion is dumb. It fails just because it is natural religion and is unequal to unnatural conditions. Of course we do not say that it is suspended; we say only that it has become inadequate. It requires to be supplemented by elements which are proper to the relation of the offending creature to the offended Lord. This is what Christianity brings, and it is because this is what Christianity brings that it so supplements and transforms natural religion as to make it a religion for sinners. It does not supersede natural religion; it takes it up in its entirety unto itself, expanding it and developing it on new sides to meet new needs and supplementing it where it is insufficient for these new needs.

We have touched here the elements of truth in George Tyrrell's contention, otherwise bizarre enough, that Christianity builds not on Judaism but on paganism. The antithesis is unfortunate. Although in very different senses, Christianity builds both on Judaism and on paganism; it is the completion of the supernatural religion begun in Judaism, and it is the supernatural supplement to the natural religion which lies beneath all the horrible perversions of paganism. Tyrrell, viewing everything from the point of view of his Catholicism and dealing in historical as much as in theological judgments, puts his contention in this form: "That Catholicism is Christianized paganism or world-religion and not the Christianized Judaism of the New Testament." The idea he wishes to express in that Catholicism is the only tenable form of Christianity because it alone is founded, not on Judaism, but on "world-religion." What is worthy

of our notice is that he says "world-religion," not "world-religions." He is thinking not of the infinite variety of pagan religions—many of them gross enough, none of them worthy of humanity ("man's worst crimes are his religions," says Dr. Faunce somewhere, most strikingly)—but of the underlying religion which sustains and gives whatever value they possess to them all.

Now mysticism is just this world-religion; that is to say, it is the expression of the ineradicable religiosity of the human race. So far as it is this, and nothing but this, it is valid religion, and eternal religion. No man can do without it, not even the Christian man. But it is not adequate religion for sinners. And when it pushes itself forward as an adequate religion for sinners it presses beyond its mark and becomes, in the poet's phrase, "procuress to the lords of hell." As vitalized and informed, supplemented and transformed by Christianity, as supplying to Christianity the natural foundation for its supernatural structure, it is valid religion. As a substitute for Christianity it is not merely a return to the beggarly elements of the world, but inevitably rots down to something far worse. Confining himself to what he can find in himself, man naturally cannot rise above himself, and unfortunately the self above which he cannot rise is a sinful self.

The pride which is inherent in the self-poised, self-contained attitude which will acknowledge no truth that is not found within oneself is already an unlovely trait, and a dangerous one as well, since pride is unhappily a thing which grows by what it feeds on. The history of mysticism only too clearly shows that he who begins by seeking God within himself may end by confusing himself with God. We may conceivably

think that Mr. G. K. Chesterton might have chosen his language with a little more delicacy of feeling, but what he says in the following telling way much needs to be said in this generation in words which will command a hearing. He had seen some such observation as that which we have quoted from Tyrrell, to the effect that the Christianity of the future is to be a mere mysticism. This is the way he deals with it:

“Only the other day I saw in an excellent weekly paper of Puritan tone this remark, that Christianity when stripped of its armor of dogma (as who should speak of a man stripped of his armor of bones) turned out to be nothing but the Quaker doctrine of the Inner Light. Now, if I were to say that Christianity came into the world specially to destroy the doctrine of the Inner Light, that would be an exaggeration. But it would be very much nearer the truth.
* * * Of all the conceivable forms of enlightenment, the worst is what these people call the Inner Light. Of all horrible religions the most horrible is the worship of the God within. Anyone who knows anybody knows how it would work; anyone who knows anyone from the Higher Thought Center knows how it does work. That Jones should worship the God within him turns out ultimately to mean that Jones shall worship Jones. Let Jones worship the sun or moon, anything rather than the Inner Light; let Jones worship cats or crocodiles, if he can find any in his street, but not the God within. Christianity came into the world firstly in order to assert with violence that a man had not only to look inward, but to look outward, to behold with astonishment and enthusiasm a divine company and a divine captain. The only fun of being a Christian was that a man was not left alone with

the Inner Light, but definitely recognized an outer light, fair as the sun, clear as the moon, terrible as an army with banners."

Certainly, valuable as the inner light is—adequate as it might be for men who were not sinners—there is no fate which could be more terrible for a sinner than to be left alone with it. And we must not blink the fact that it is just that, in the full terribleness of its meaning, which mysticism means. Above all other elements of Christianity, Christ and what Christ stands for, with the cross at the center, come to us solely by "external authority." No "external authority," no Christ, and no cross of Christ. For Christ is history, and Christ's cross is history, and mysticism which lives solely on what is within can have nothing to do with history; mysticism which seeks solely eternal verities can have nothing to do with time and that which has occurred in time. Accordingly a whole series of recent mystical devotional writers sublimate the entire body of those historical facts, which we do not say merely lie at the basis of Christianity—we say rather, which constitute the very substance of Christianity—into a mere set of symbols, a dramatization of psychological experiences succeeding one another in the soul. Christ Himself becomes but an external sign of an inward grace. Read but the writings of John Cordelier. Not even the most reluctant mystic, however, can altogether escape some such process of elimination of the external Christ; by virtue of the very fact that he will not have anything in his religion which he does not find within himself he must sooner or later "pass beyond Christ."

We do not like Wilhelm Herrmann's rationalism any better than we like mysticism, and we would as soon

have no Christ at all as the Christ Herrmann gives us. But Herrmann tells the exact truth when he explains in well-chosen words that "the piety of the mystic is such that at the highest point to which it leads Christ must vanish from the soul along with all else that is external." "When he has found God," he explains again, "the mystic has left Christ behind." At the best, Christ can be to the mystic but the model mystic, not Himself the Way as He declared of Himself, but only a traveler along with us upon the common way. So Miss Underhill elaborately depicts Him, but not she alone. Söderblom says of von Hügel that Jesus is to him "merely a high point in the religious development to which man must aspire." "He has no eye," he adds, "for the unique personal power which His figure exercises on man." This applies to the whole class. But much more than this needs to be said. Christ may be the mystic's brother. He may possibly even be his exemplar and leader, although He is not always recognized as such. What He cannot by any possibility be is his Saviour. Is not God within him? And has he not merely to sink within himself to sink himself into God? He has no need of "salvation" and allows no place for it.

We hear much of the revolt of mysticism against the forensic theory of the atonement and imputed righteousness. This is a mere euphemism for its revolt against all "atonement" and all "justification." The whole external side of the Christian salvation simply falls away. In the same euphemistic language Miss Underhill declares that "nothing done for us, or exhibited to us, can have the significance of that which is done *in* us." She means that it has no significance for us at all. Even a William Law can say: "Christ

given *for* us is neither more nor less than Christ given *into* us. He is in no other sense our full, perfect, and sufficient Atonement, than as His nature and spirit are born and formed in us." The cross and all that the cross stands for are abolished; it becomes at best but a symbol of a general law—*per aspera ad astra*. "There is but one salvation for all mankind," says Law, "and the way to it is one; and that is the desire of the soul turned to God. This desire brings the soul to God and God into the soul: it unites with God, it co-operates with God, and is one life with God." If Christ is still spoken of, and His death and resurrection and ascension, and all the currents of religious feeling still turn to Him, that is because Christians must so speak and feel. The same experiences may be had under other skies and will under them express themselves in other terms appropriate to the traditions of those other times and places. That Christian mysticism is Christ mysticism, seeking and finding Christ within and referring all its ecstasies to Him, is thus only an accident. And even the functions of this Christ within us, which alone it knows, are degraded far below those of the Christ within us of the Christian revelation.

The great thing about the indwelling Christ of the Christian revelation is that He comes to us in His Spirit with creative power. *Veni creator Spiritus*, we sing, and we look to be new creatures, created in Christ Jesus into newness of life. The mystic will allow, not a resurrection from the dead, but only an awakening from sleep. Christ enters the heart not to produce something new but to arouse what was dormant, what has belonged to man as man from the beginning and only needs to be set to work. "If Christ was to raise a new life like His own in every man," writes Law,

“then every man must have had originally in the inmost spirit of his life a seed of Christ, or Christ as a seed of heaven, lying there in a state of insensibility, out of which it could not arise but by the mediatorial power of Christ.” He cannot conceive of Christ bringing anything new; what Christ seems to bring He really finds already there. “The Word of God,” he says, “is the hidden treasure of every human soul, immured under flesh and blood, till as a day-star it arises in our hearts and changes the son of an earthly Adam into a son of God.” Nothing is brought to us; what is already in us is only “brought out,” and what is already in us—in every man—is “the Word of God.” This is Christ mysticism; that is to say, it is the mysticism in which the divinity which is in every man by nature is called Christ—rather than, say, Brahm or Allah, or what not.

Even in such a movement as that represented by Bishop Chandler’s Cult of the Passing Moment, the disintegrating operation of mysticism on historical Christianity—which is all the Christianity there is—is seen at work. Bishop Chandler himself, we are thankful to say, exalts the cross and thinks of it as a creative influence in the lives of men. But this only exemplifies the want of logical consistency, which indeed is the boast of the school which he represents. If our one rule of life is to be the spiritual improvement of the impressions of the moment, and we are to follow these blindly whithersoever they lead with no steadying, not to say guidance, derived from the great Revelation of the past, there can be but one issue. We are simply substituting our own passing impulses, interpreted as inspirations, for the one final revelation of God as the guide of life; that God has spoken once for all for the

guidance of His people is forgotten; His great corporate provision for His people is cast aside; and we are adrift upon the billows of merely subjective feeling.

We see that it is not merely Christ and His cross, then, which may be neglected, as external things belonging to time and space. God Himself, speaking in His Word, may be forgotten—in “the cult of the passing moment.” We are reminded that there have been mystics who have not scrupled openly to contrast even the God without them with the God within, and to speak in such fashion as to be understood (or misunderstood) as counseling divesting ourselves of God Himself and turning only to the inwardly shining light. No doubt they did not mean all that their words may be pressed into seeming to say. Nevertheless their words may stand for us as a kind of symbol of the whole mystical conception, with the exaggerated value which it sets upon the personal feelings and its contempt for all that is external to the individual’s spirit, even though it must be allowed that this excludes all that makes Christianity the religion of salvation for a lost world—the cross, Christ Himself, and the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who in His love gave His Son to die for sinners.

The issue which mysticism creates is thus just the issue of Christianity. The question which it raises is, whether we need, whether we have, a provision in the blood of Christ for our sins; or whether we, each of us, possess within ourselves all that can be required for time and for eternity. Both of these things cannot be true, and obviously *tertium non datur*. We may be mystics, or we may be Christians. We cannot be both. And the pretension of being both usually merely veils defection from Christianity. Mysticism baptized with

the name of Christianity is not thereby made Christianity. A rose by any other name will smell as sweet. But it does not follow that whatever we choose to call a rose will possess the rose's fragrance.

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