

MYSTICISM, THE UNIFYING PRINCIPLE
OF ALL RELIGIONS

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*Mysticism is the incommunicable knowledge of
God received in contemplation.* —Dionysius.

FOR hundreds of years Mysticism has been considered an irrational, illogical and unscientific study. It has been associated with all that is uncanny, erratic, weird and undemonstrable. The strangest beliefs, the most unfounded superstitions, the vague dreams of abstract thinking, the unscientific theorising, have been called mystical simply because mysticism in its true sense was understood by only a few. To-day this is changed. The most profound thinker, the most advanced scientist, admits that he finds in true Mysticism the fundamental laws and principles which he cannot find in the colder teachings of science, laws and principles which are super-scientific, which not only contain all that science can reveal, but also that which science has not and cannot apprehend or comprehend. The simple desire to be at One with the Divine Will, and the concentration of all one's powers to that end will ultimately bring the knowledge that leads to Union, for the light of Mysticism is man's heritage, and is no monopoly of the intellectual mind—"Do the Will and ye shall know the doctrine whether it be of God."

Dean Inge, in an article contributed to the first number of "The Pilgrim," said: "There does not

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seem to be any reason why the testimony of the Mystics should be less trustworthy than that of other specialists. Their reports show a remarkable unanimity. It is impossible to guess the date or nationality of a mystical work; we often cannot even tell whether a quotation comes from a Christian, a Mohammedan Sufi, or a Buddhist."

A statement of such importance (and which I know to be positively true from my personal study of the subject)—coming as it does from a dignitary of the Established Church (who, because he is a mystic himself, does not permit mere prejudice to stultify his vision)—must perforce carry strong conviction to all who are embarking on the study of mysticism. For that which is the same, which is alike to all, which becomes an identical experience to all who dare to live the life of the Spirit, cannot be other than unadulterated Truth.

Coventry Patmore in his book, *The Rod, The Root, and The Flower*, says: "What the world which truly knows *nothing*, calls Mysticism, is the science of Ultimates...the science of self and evident Reality; which cannot be reasoned about it is the object of pure reason or perception. The babe sucking its mother's breast, and the lover returning after twenty years' separation to his home, and food, in the same bosom are the types and princes of Mystics."

Every intelligent thinker is a seeker after Truth, and it is only when he becomes deadly in earnest, and is eager to pay the price of attainment through self-discipline and the Path of Renunciation that he becomes a true Mystic, for, in proportion to one's love of Truth—Mysticism

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passes from the merely intellectual plane to a realisation of the Real. "Where the philosopher guesses and argues, the Mystic lives and looks." He *knows*, but cannot convey his knowledge to another, it must be earned, it must be won, as he has earned and won it. He therefore can only indicate the path and stimulate the aspirant by the light and force which emanates from him, through the imperfect and oft-times disconcerting language of first-hand experience.

Through the teachings of the Mystics, and ultimately through the Mystical experience itself, we become freed from those theological and surface differences and limitations which separate us from each other and from the enlightened ones of all other races of the world. Every religion on earth has ministered to the needs of each nation or people to whom it was given, it has enshrined some vital truth essential to the development and progress of its recipients. Seekers after spiritual truth may therefore draw their inspiration from all inspired sources, and are more than justified in refusing to admit the claims of monopoly and finality in any particular religion or cult. Christianity is admirably suited to the Western mind, but unfortunately the Western mind has not enjoyed and *does* not enjoy, the pure, unadorned teachings as delivered from the lips of the Master Himself. If the Church had only been loyal, if it had persistently cleared those sublime teachings of all unnecessary accretions and simply concentrated all its energies upon giving place to that "Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," there would be no empty seats in

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any of our churches to-day and there would be no rival sects or cults in the religious world.

In a word, the religion of Jesus is *Love*, its ideal is Brotherhood, it has no room for racial or class hatred and animosity. The Soul of Buddhism, Sufism, Hinduism, is identical with it, and it is only man's own imperfect additions which have prevented unity and concord in the world. "New Thought," "Christian Science," Theosophy, and Spiritualism each emphasises, in its own particular way, neglected or forgotten truths which very fallible leaders of the Church as the result of worldliness, love of temporal power and authority, have hitherto repudiated, repressed, or ignored. Jesus did His disciples go forth and proclaim the "Kingdom of Heaven," "heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils, freely ye have received, freely give." He clearly taught that all who whole-heartedly followed in His footsteps might do even greater things than He did. The Apostles healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, raised the dead, and cast out devils, and the reason why their successors fail to exercise the same beneficent power is because they have lost the key to the secret of that mystic power, that joyous dominion over Nature so beautifully and gloriously exemplified in the life of our Blessed Lord. There would be no need for the various cults of religious thought outside the Churches, if the Christian Church itself would only teach *Christ* in all fulness and simplicity. Spiritualism is little else than a protest against the stupid dogma that an impassable gulf divides this world from the

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after world, and as the Christian Bible teems with Angelic appearances, clairvoyance, visitations from the dead, visions, dreams, and physical phenomena, we can only conclude that the materialistic tendencies of the Church have impaired its vision and limited its contact with the Source of power and illumination. Personally, I feel no need for any authoritative statement from a Lambeth Conference on Spiritualism or any other "ism" for my guidance and direction. I have long ago since proved to my own satisfaction that there are no dead, and that the so-called dead are only separated from us by a very thin veil, and I am well aware that Sir Oliver Lodge expressed a great truth, when he said, not long ago, to an august body of scientists "My brothers, I *know* the dead live. I have seen and talked with them." It was found necessary by certain enlightened Clerics to advise the Archbishop of Canterbury to select *experienced* and therefore authoritative men to deal with the subject at the Conference. Why such a step should have been thought necessary is itself a serious reflection upon the present mentality of the "powers that be." I have touched upon this subject because Spiritualism is clearly a protest against sceptical materialism, and came to prove to the scientific investigator that psychic phenomena were not all fraudulent deceptions but genuine experiences. Mysticism is so illimitable a subject that one can only approach its vastness within certain circumscribed limits, and, therefore I want simply to emphasise the fact of it being the unifying principle of all religions. Mysticism being the *method*

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of attaining the sum of All-Knowledge, of leading man to the centre of divine wisdom and truth in the Christ within, it becomes clear that *the Christ being One* everywhere, the inward experience must be *alike* whether it be attained by Hindu, Buddhist, Christian or Mohammedan Sufi.

Science pursues Knowledge through phenomena; Mysticism explains phenomena by interior knowledge. There were Mystics before Jesus. The great pre-Christian Mystery Systems existed solely for carrying on the Mystical tradition and facilitating spiritual development, and since His time we know that men of all faiths have attained that development and found the God Within independently of any allegiance to Christian doctrine, and often, as with Plotinus, when vigorously opposed to that doctrine.

Stripped of the Christian theological language in which the classical Mystics of Christendom clothed their utterances. The results they achieved and recorded appear identical with those described by the Vedantist, Buddhist, Taoist, Sufi, or Platonist. What can a Ruysbroeck, or Eckhart, or a Teresa tell us of the contemplative or unitive states that we cannot find told and experienced by Oriental Teachers who knew nothing of the Western Master?

(To be continued)

The heavenly rays of inspiration not only light our path and make it plain, but kindle vigour in our heart to follow on.

—St. Francis de Sales.