

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jtvi-01.php

JOURNAL OF
THE TRANSACTIONS
OF
The Victoria Institute,
OR,
Philosophical Society of Great Britain.

GENERAL SECRETARY:
E. J. SEWELL.

LECTURE SECRETARY:
E. WALTER MAUNDER, F.R.A.S.

VOL. XLIX.



LONDON:

(Published by the Institute, 1, Central Buildings, Westminster, S.W. 1.)

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

584TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,
HELD IN THE CONFERENCE HALL, THE CENTRAL HALL,
WESTMINSTER, ON MONDAY, JANUARY 15TH, 1917,
AT 4.30 P.M.

A. T. SCHOFIELD, ESQ., M.D., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the preceding Meeting were read and confirmed, and the SECRETARY announced the election of Mrs. Sarah D. Nicholl and Miss C. Hussey as Associates of the Institute, and the election of Miss Ethel D. James, B.A., Associate of the Institute, as a Member.

The CHAIRMAN said that it was with very great pleasure that he called upon the Very Rev. the Dean of St. Paul's to read his paper on "Christian Mysticism." It was an occasion of gratification to the Victoria Institute to be addressed by one who had devoted much of his life and attention to so important and difficult a subject as that upon which he was about to speak.

CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM. By the Very Rev. W. R. INGE,
M.A., D.D., Dean of St. Paul's.

THE MYSTIC AS THINKER.

THE subject on which you have been so good as to invite me to speak to you is one on which I have written and spoken so much that I am afraid some of you may be able to guess only too well the sort of thing which you have to expect from me about it. I will try not to repeat myself more than I can help, and the subject is very large—indeed, inexhaustible. Moreover, if there is any truth in the contention of the mystics themselves, it is so much bound up with vital experience that seventeen years of life—and that period has elapsed since I wrote my Bampton Lectures—cannot go for nothing in one's attitude towards it. For no one can talk or write profitably about mystical religion, or Christian mysticism, unless he is trying to some extent to make the experiences which he describes his own. And in this quest experience, rather than learning, is the educator. The mystics (says Royce) are the most thoroughgoing of empiricists. They are absolutists, no doubt; the spiritual world for them is an eternal fact, not an ideal; but their Absolute is at the same time the goal of

spiritual progress—a goal which is, in a manner, present at every stage of the race; the mystical ladder, we may say, is a progress *within* the infinite or absolute, and ultimate reality in the sphere *in* which the spirit moves. *Consciousness* is not the measure of our apprehension of the truth; much of our deepest life is submerged; but the spiritual life must be lived (*vécu*, as Bergson is so fond of insisting); otherwise our words about it will ring hollow.

In spite of the vogue which the word mysticism has undoubtedly gained since the beginning of the present century—a vogue which is itself strong evidence of the degree in which the centre of gravity in religion has swung round from authority to experience—it is still necessary to say something about the meaning of the word. Perhaps the long half-conscious association of the word with nebulosity and airy nothingness (mysticism!) is no longer to be found. Most people know something about the Greek mysteries, and that mystery and sacrament mean the same thing, but the idea still prevails that the mystic is a religious dilettante—that his religion is an æsthetic luxury—a dainty fancy which takes pleasure in finding “loose types of things through all degrees,” so that anything may be a “symbol” of anything else, and we may transform the world into a cryptogram or a system of masonic signs, as it suits our pleasure. It is suggested that one attraction towards becoming a mystic is that it enables us to maintain an attitude of graceful indifference to sublunary problems, and especially to our duty towards our neighbour.

Several writers have tried their hand at definitions. I will give three recent ones. Granger: “Mysticism is that attitude of mind which divines and moves towards the spiritual in the common things of life, not a partial and occasional operation of the mind under the guidance of far-fetched analogies.” Rufus Jones: “Mysticism is that type of religion which puts the emphasis on immediate awareness of relation with God, on direct and immediate consciousness of the Divine Presence. It is religion in its most acute, intense, and living stage.” R. C. Moberly: “It is an inward light which makes itself manifest as character; a direct communion of love which is also, to the fullest extent, wholly rational at once and wholly practical; it is as much knowledge as love, and love as knowledge; it is as truly contemplation as activity, and activity as contemplation. This is the ideal of mysticism.” This last is wanting in precision. I should lay stress on the *first-hand* quality of all mystical religion. Mysticism is religion *new-given*.

It may be that the majority in every age must be content to live on tradition, to believe on trust, and to repose on the common strength, but it is necessary that there should be a select few who are called to see for themselves. They *cannot* take their convictions on hearsay; they are not satisfied even with what ordinary people call experience. They are impelled by an inner necessity to come, if it may be, into immediate contact with the spiritual realities which encompass us, to "taste and see how gracious the Lord is." The mystic is he who has succeeded, at least in a measure, in this quest. Like the Old Testament patriarch, he can say, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

In this address I can only touch upon some aspects of a great subject. The popular and approved method now of writing about mysticism is to treat it as a chapter or branch of the psychology of religion. A mass of literature has appeared during the last twenty years, among it being works by W. James, Starbuck, Coe, Leuba, Murisier, Delacroix (the ablest), and many others. Materials have been collected in great abundance to illustrate the varieties of religious ecstasy, the means by which it can be induced or encouraged; the state of health, age, and condition of the experient; the fluctuations between joy and misery—the rapture and the dark night of the soul; the duration of the visions and their contents—these and many other subjects in which religion and medicine might dispute the right to make a diagnosis of the case, have been investigated with great industry and excellent results. Nevertheless, since I must leave out something, I choose to leave out all this side of the subject. It is, after all, an *external* method of treating a great fact in the life and experience of the race—the fact, I mean, that many thousands of men and women have been absolutely convinced that they have had immediate assurance and consciousness of the Divine, that they have seen Him Who is invisible and visited the land which is very far off. The psychologist does not *deny* the truth of these intuitions; it is not his business either to affirm or deny anything about ultimate truth. But by his way of treating the mystics as medical "cases," whose abnormal experiences are, if possible, to be accounted for by the state of their nerves or by the austerities through which they have gone, he does practically assume that the mystical experience is purely subjective, or at any rate that the most interesting part of the phenomena is in connexion with psychopathy. That, I venture to say, is not the most favourable attitude for studying the things of the spirit. The

spiritual life has its own laws, which are different from those of the body—I will even say, adopting the tripartite classification of our natures into body, soul, and spirit, that the laws of spirit are different from the laws of soul. I think we shall understand the mystics better, and even more scientifically, if we adopt provisionally their own point of view, and assume that when they tell us that they have had an illumination from above, they are speaking the truth, and are neither deceivers nor deceived.

I shall therefore *not* take the psychologist's standpoint in speaking of mysticism; I shall rather assume the mystical experience as a fact, guaranteed by the numerous persons who have testified to it. And I wish in this address to consider the special characteristics of the intellectual life of the mystic. Some of you may feel inclined to protest that the intellect is not an active or necessary factor in mysticism. The mystical experience, it will be said, is pure, immediate feeling, a thing *given* as it is. It is purest and most trustworthy when it is taken simply as it is, not "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." The intellect, it will be said, *works over* the remembered experience, the wonderful illumination, and distorts it. It selects, rejects, and rearranges; it moulds the experience in accordance with preconceived notions—*e.g.*, the scholastics of mysticism have often arrayed mystical experiences in a chronological order. According to these authorities, the first stage is a period of disquietude and oscillation, in which the subject, uncertain what he is seeking and how to get it, renounces effort and abandons himself to passivity. Then comes the response—the period of visions and auditions, of trance and ecstasy—all the "mystical phenomena." Thirdly, a period of depression, pain, and feeling of dereliction. Lastly, of expansion and tranquil joy, when the soul has recovered from its sickness, and knows that it has what it desired. Or, again, another scheme divides the ascent of the soul into three stages of purification, illumination, and union. But are these stages really experienced, and always in the prescribed order? Or does the intellect impose its own forms upon the memory, giving the experience a shape and order which they had not of themselves? Again, how often the intellect has interpreted the mystical experience in terms of dogma or philosophy! The mysterious visitant of the soul, which at the time merely appeared as something divine, something not ourselves and higher than ourselves, is invested by the intellect with the attributes of Christ or the Virgin Mary. The mystical state, which is

independent of forms of faith, and is identical in the Buddhist, Mohammedan, or Christian, is turned into a revelation of the truths of some particular creed. The same is true of philosophy. Nearly all speculative mystics have been influenced by Neoplatonism, and have adopted the philosophy of Plotinus as the framework of their theology. But this does not prove that the mystic, as such, has had the Neoplatonic philosophy revealed to him as the truth about God, the world, and himself. The dogmatic system, or philosophic system, imposed by the intellect upon the consciousness, is really extraneous and irrelevant. We shall (so we are told) get nearer to the heart of mysticism by neglecting the dogmatics and the philosophy of the mystics, and attending only to what they seemed to hear while they were "hearkening what the Lord God will say concerning me."

There is much truth in all this. But, on the other hand, it is a blunder in psychology to suppose that there is or can be any "pure" experience in which the intellect has no part. Certainly no record exists, or could exist, of any such "pure" experience; so that if we wish to banish all intellectual constructions from our survey, we shall be unable to use any of the great mystical literature which was usually composed a considerable time after the experiences described, and which invariably bears the marks of analytic and synthetic thought. We shall be restricted to our own private experiences of ecstasy, if we have had any such; and we shall soon be convinced that it would be easier to reconstruct a vision of a sunset exactly as we saw it on a given day last year, than to reproduce the exact forms and colours of a heavenly vision seen by us during prayer. Perhaps in such visions there is no form—nothing clear or definite at all; perhaps all the outlines are drawn afterwards by the intellect.

But why should we be so anxious to get rid of the results of reflexion? Why should we suppose that the original undifferentiated, formless vision is higher and more trustworthy than the same experience after it has been thought over and studied? It seems to me mere superstition to suppose that the vision was inspired, but that we spoil it as soon as we subject it to thought and scrutiny. There is no higher guarantee of the truth or value of a sudden illumination than of the truth of a dogma or of a philosophy. All the mystics have been afraid of self-deception in their visions. And the most emotional and least intellectual have suffered most from these vagaries of the imagination. No, there is nothing sacred or infallible in pure intuition, and strictly there is no such thing. We must, therefore, give up the attempt to separate the mystic's memories of what he

actually saw from the mental reconstruction of it made by his mind. Memory itself is a creative activity, not the turning back of pages to a previous chapter. When we study one of the speculative mystics, we have before us a man who is trying to co-ordinate and put in their proper places certain unusual data of consciousness, of which he has the same, or a higher degree of conviction than he has of the objects presented to his senses. His mysticism is not merely the highest stage in a logical pyramid. It is something that he has lived through, and is trying to understand. Why in the world should we leave our Plotinus and Eckhart, Boehme and Coleridge, and Emerson, and go to some hysterical nun in the hope of getting our mysticism "pure?" Religion from which reason has been strained off proves on inspection to be a very muddy liquid. At any rate, if we are to learn from the mystics, we must not listen to them only when they speak of experiences which are strictly "not transferable"; otherwise the wisest of them will tell us that they can teach us nothing. "He who has seen God is silent," as one of them says. We will take the mystical experience as a solid fact, guaranteed by those who have had it, though they cannot pass it on to us; we will ask them how God and the world and the human soul appear to those who have had this experience. That they can explain to us, and it is that which we want to learn from them. We shall find that they do not call in their mysticism at every step in their philosophy. Rather that remains till the last as the summit and crown of earthly and heavenly wisdom. They are quite ready to meet other philosophers on their own ground. But the heavenly vision shines all the time in front of them. It shows them in what direction they ought to move. It inspires them with something more than faith and hope—with a blessed certainty that the unity and reality which they seek as philosophers is a fact which they have *seen* afar off, so that they know that it is there. Ethics can show us what ought to be metaphysics what must be; they engage in these quests with joy and confidence, therefore they already know—though only in absolutely general terms and without outlines—what *is*.

"What is reality?" is the primary question to which we must all return some answer. Is it *matter*—is it the world which may be resolved into particles—molecules, atoms, etc.? Matter is always on the point of vanishing away—science has subdivided the molecule till there is little left of it except something of the nature of electricity. If we confine ourselves, by abstraction, to merely *quantitative* categories, as if extension were the only ultimate fact, we shall be driven, if we are logical, to

mere mathematics, symbols which correspond accurately to nothing in the real world. Matter, however, is a mere abstraction. All that gives it meaning and value—all that gives it any *quality* whatever—is plainly bestowed upon it by the soul. The world of the man of science is full of values and qualities other than spatial: even if he calls himself a materialist, his world is full of soul. It is not the particles of matter to which we can attribute purpose, beauty, design, wisdom, etc. All these are gifts from the soul, when it informs matter and imposes upon it a meaning and a destiny. The attempt, which science has often set before itself, to detach existence from value, and to describe to us a world of existence without values, is a hopeless attempt, and one which betrays some mental confusion. The real world may prove to be something higher than the soul-world; it is certainly not anything lower. If there were nothing but matter, there could be no materialism; there certainly could be no sound science. For science is concerned with the appraisal and valuation of the world of existence. Take the most materialistic of philosophers, and you will find that his work is full of poetical, dramatic personalization of ideas. How naturally he breaks into capital letters! It is no use to spell God with a small "g" if you are driven in the next page to spell "Nature, Force, Energy," etc., with capitals. Nature, say many modern philosophers (Fechner, Lotze, Eucken, Max Müller, etc.) is possessed of soul throughout. This is not merely revived hylozoism: it means that reality is not matter existing independently and viewed from outside by the mind or soul. All that we call real is in a sense *created* by soul. Soul is inwoven with the innermost texture of the world as it really is. And so when we look upon the wonders of nature, we are contemplating that which owes its being to the highest principle that we can discern within ourselves. Many, like Plotinus, Emerson, etc., have spoken of the "universal soul," or over-soul, to which our souls are in some mysterious sort of subordination, and the characters of which are reflected by nature as in a mirror. (I shall show you presently that we cannot stop at soul—soul drives us upward to that which is above itself; but we are trying to follow the intellectual ascent of the mystic, and we have so far got merely to soul, as the spiritual principle which creates the world as we know it—creates it as a mirror to reflect itself and give actuality to its own activity.) Therefore, when we contemplate the glories of Nature, it is no vain fancy if we find in them types and shadows of our own highest thoughts, and of that which is above and beyond our highest thoughts. We need not trouble ourselves by asking

whether *we* bring to nature the beauty which we find there. In a sense we do ; but only in the sense in which we are one with the spiritual principle which creates those glories and endues the visible forms with the hues of the Divine goodness, wisdom, and beauty. The power of seeing the Divine in nature varies almost infinitely in different people. The true genius of nature—mysticism—is a rare product—much rarer than might be inferred from those who talk and write of such experiences at second hand. Those who have it not may console themselves with the reflexion that this gift is rarely found associated with a very keen and delicate human sympathy. One is a compensation for the other. Wordsworth affords a case in point. One quotation will be enough to illustrate his wonderful power of *reading* inanimate nature.

“ He looked :

Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth
 And ocean’s liquid mass in gladness lay
 Beneath him. Far and wide the clouds were touched
 And in their silent faces could be read
 Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
 Nor any voice of joy : his spirit drank
 The spectacle : sensation, soul, and form,
 All melted into him ; they swallowed up
 His animal being : in them did he live
 And by them did he live ; they were his life.”

This degree of mystical intuition is a rare gift ; but many who could not describe their feelings, which are indeed partly subconscious, derive great benefit from contact with nature. We shall hardly aspire, with Blake,

“ To see the world in a grain of sand
 And a heaven in a wild flower,
 Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
 And eternity in an hour.”

But many will echo the words of Kepler, “ My wish is that I may see the God Whom I find everywhere in the external world, in like manner within and inside me.” The order, beauty, and “*concordia discors*” of nature, its vastness and minuteness, above all, perhaps, its crushing refutation of the puny individualist, who wants to live for himself and make his surroundings conform to him.

“ The lesson writ in red since time began,
 A hunter hunting down the beast in man ;
 That till the chasing out of its last vice,
 The flesh was fashioned but for sacrifice.”

I must not expatiate on this attractive theme. Soul contemplates nature, and in contemplating creates. The image of the universal soul (a Christian would say of the Spirit that breathed upon the waters) floats over all nature, and is reflected in it. We seize resemblances; we recognize the likeness of that which we desire to see, and a peculiar thrill of joy passes through us. A whole network of obscure sympathies and symbols surrounds us: now and then we see something clearly, at other times an *ἀμυδρὰ συμπάθεια*; generally we see nothing, to our own misfortune.

But what is soul? Is it a fixed entity at all? Can we draw a line where our souls leave off and the universal soul or Divine Spirit begins? Is not the soul a wanderer over all fields of being, from top to bottom? Has it not affinities with the Absolute, with the Eternal World of Spirit, with the sphere of its own proper activities, and, below itself, with matter? Potentially it is all things: a microcosm. And what is its relation to the objects of its perception, to which it stands, as we have said, as a kind of Creator? Does it *create* the values which it perceives? Are truth, beauty and goodness only facts for the soul—psychical products only valid within the soul's range of activity? Surely not. The soul, if it affirms anything decisively, repudiates this dignity for its own subjective activity. Things are what they are, not at all because we think them so—no, not when our thoughts are most inspired. The glories which we see in nature are glories which the soul confers upon that all but non-existent abstraction, "matter"; but whence does the soul draw them? Does she find them in herself? Are they her own qualities? No, they are not; of that we feel quite sure. And therewith goes, for us, the whole base philosophy of pragmatism, which makes the human soul the measure of all things. No, the soul sees good and bad, fair and ugly, true and false, in itself and its surroundings, because the objects of its thought are indeed so. It recognizes an order of reality above itself, a sphere of existence which owes nothing to soul, and to which soul owes everything. When we contemplate the eternal laws of God, we are engaged with something above ourselves, something more thoroughly real than the world as it reveals itself to our souls, something of which the soul itself is but a pale reflexion. So the soul-life carries us up of necessity beyond itself. Not here is our final home. The world of spirit, which for the mystical thinker is the sole world of ultimate reality, is called the *κόσμος νοητός* of Plotinus, Spirit by most moderns, heaven in religious language. We are driven to admit

that there must be such a world by some purely philosophical arguments, which I have not time to discuss—contradictions involved in the ideas of time and space, obliging us to postulate an *eternal* world, above these categories; contradiction in the ideas of change and permanence, of unity and plurality. This purely intellectual consideration converges upon the same point with the moral aspiration for a perfection realized somewhere, a goal of striving; and with the beatific vision, already seen “in mists and shadows dim” by the mystic.

In this world of ultimate reality the contradictions above mentioned are reconciled. Instead of time we have eternity—a state in which all that ever has been or will be lives together in a timeless present—lives in its real character and ultimate tendency, as God knows it to be. Instead of space, with its mutual exclusiveness of all objects, we have τὸ ἄλλο ἐν ἄλλῳ. There is no hindrance to union in the spiritual world except discordance of nature. All are transparent and known to each other. In this sphere we believe that the mind and purpose of God are fully realized and also fully active; for this is another antinomy which is transcended ἐκεῖ. The divine attributes of goodness, wisdom and beauty, make a triple star; they cannot be resolved into each other; none is subordinate; all are shining together in harmonious perfection. There evil, if not annihilated, is overcome and transmuted; there all in our world that has any real meaning and value, all that has any divine and eternal quality, is preserved safe for evermore. All human spirits live with God in the rank which belongs to them, and enjoy the felicity which is possible to them. There are, no doubt, lost spirits—mysticism is not concerned to assist universalism; but their punishment must be such as a perfect being could inflict. *Pœna damni*, yes; torture, no. In this, the spiritual world, relation between subject and object is closer than ἐνταῦθα. Spirit beholds the spiritual world as identical with itself. They cannot be separated. The eternal “ideas” are not *outside* the eternal mind—they are its expression, its speech, its actuality. In this world the soul finally comes to itself, and reaches its true home; but in thus attaining its consummation it passes from the lower soul-life into that higher and completer life which we call spiritual. It lives in God’s presence, with face ever turned to him.

Popular religion thinks and speaks of heaven as future. A recent philosopher has said that to cast the ideal into the future—to identify heaven with some future triumph—is the destruction of all sane idealism. Certainly, to the mystic, heaven is a

state rather than a place. It lies all about us, closer than breathing; "There is not much between us and it," as Plotinus says. It is the eternal abiding reality of which this world is the shadow. But we need not try to get rid of the notion of futurity in connexion with heaven. Time is the form of the will. When we regard our lives as the working out of a unitary purpose—a process still going on—we must look forward to the realization of it as lying in the future, as, indeed, it does. We must look upon these finite purposes as being actually and in very truth working themselves out in time, and as taking their final place in the eternal order *after* they have been accomplished in time. There are philosophical difficulties, I know, in this conception; but it is what we cannot help believing if our probation is a reality, if the conflict between good and evil is a reality; if the time process has a meaning and justification; if, finally, the attributes of God are creative and active forces, and not merely unmoving qualities, fixed pictures of perfection. Mysticism asserts that this spiritual world, which can be proved to be a necessary truth by philosophy, is given as a fact by the highest experience of the soul. It asserts that we can and do know, in part and at certain times, the eternal spiritual world. We can transcend the limitations of our finite existence; we can live the life of the hidden man of the heart. Such a life is not foreign to the nature of the soul. The way to it is by love and yearning, which are natural to the soul when she sees glimpses of her father's house and the home from which she has been exiled. The relation between *ἐνταῦθα* and *ἐκεῖ*—a philosophical rather than a religious problem—Plotinus says *πάντα ἐνταῦθα ὅσα καὶ ἐκεῖ*, and says that the vision is *ἴσως οὐ θέαμα, ἀλλὰ ἄλλος τρόπος τοῦ ἰδεῖν*. The entrance into the spiritual life may be compared with the glimpses of a fourth dimension: an entirely new and higher sphere of existence, unexpected before. "The new birth." No thinker has emphasized this more than Eucken. It is the basis of his philosophy.

We have now answered the question, "What is reality?" It is the contents of the mind of God, manifested chiefly as perfect goodness, wisdom, and beauty. It is the universe, but not the material universe nor the universe in space and time, but the sum total of created things in closest union with the creative Spirit, without Whom they could not exist for an instant. All that has meaning and value here is there, but transfigured and essentialized. In order to reach this real spiritual world, we must ourselves become real and spiritual. We can only see what is akin to ourselves. There-

fore self-discipline, communing with God, "desire and longing," and the practice of good—all these are necessary.

"But," I shall be reminded, "the spiritual world is, after all, not the summit. The more specially mystical part of Plotinus (for that is what you have been giving us) comes at the end, *after* the realization of the spiritual world. Mystical philosophy is not content with the lucid sunny fields of Plato's Elysium, amid the eternal ideas and perfect types of beauty; it penetrates, or seeks to penetrate, deeper yet into the mysteries of the Divine essence, into the light which no man may approach unto, or the darkness which is the secret place of the Godhead." It is perfectly true that the mystics have been led on into this strange region, both by their experience and by their philosophy. Philosophically they have felt that, though in the *κόσμος νοητός* all differences are harmonized, yet there still remains, in *νοῦς* and *νοητά*, a vestige of duality which indicates that the ideal goal has not yet been quite reached. Besides, if at each stage we mount a step higher by contemplating what is next above us, to what must spirit turn? Must there not be a *πηγή θεότητος*, an Absolute Unity? Plotinus, in recognizing the necessity of this conclusion, is careful to place the Absolute "beyond existence." Existence requires unity in duality—a certain degree of discernption and determination. So Eckhart distinguishes between the Godhead and God. The Absolute is even called "Nihil" by Erigena. It is above all description and determination.

* * * * *

Lastly, what connexion has this philosophy of religion with Christianity? It is easy to say, "None"; it is easy to show that Buddhism and Mohammedanism (Sufis) mysticism has been in all essential features much the same as Christianity; it is easy to show that the Alexandrian divines were not very successful in fitting the Christian Trinity into a Neoplatonic frame; it is easy to show that no single Christian dogma is involved in the mystic's creed, and that he is quite independent of any Church, needing none. But (1) the Christian determination to unite in the Christ Logos the creative and *redemptive* office was even philosophically a great advance. It gives a motive for creation. It is successfully worked into the system of most of the Christian speculative mystics; it supplies them with a philosophy of suffering and sacrifice which we do not find in Plotinus. This is an important point which I have not time to discuss. (2) Mysticism, we said, was religion at first-hand. The religion of Christ was eminently this, and so has more in

common with Mysticism than it has with much of the later ecclesiastical religions. "Life is always raised to new levels, and receives a new dynamic quality whenever God becomes real in personal and social experience" (R. Jones). Christianity in its origin was essentially a rich and vivid consciousness of God, rising to a perfect experience of union with God in mind and heart and soul. It was a personal exhibition of the Divine in the human, the Eternal in the midst of time. The direct impact and power of Christ's life on His followers is the most extraordinary thing in the Gospels; it, and not any portents, caused the realization that He was Divine. Christ always taught His disciples to expect a personal experience of God like His own, though less in degree. This Christianity is in its very heart a mystical religion. The first Church was a mystical fellowship, in which each member had received the Holy Ghost. In St. Paul the mystical element is very strong. Christ's "method of inwardness"; His directions as to *prayer*; His ideality and attitude towards wealth, towards death; His emphasis on *love*—all His teaching implied, we may say, a mystical philosophy of religion.

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN said he was sure those present would agree with him in expressing their great indebtedness to Dean Inge for his paper; their indebtedness in a very special degree.

Mysticism was now all in the air, and the pendulum, which in Huxley's days pointed to the material, had now swung far over towards the spiritual; some thought too far. There was no doubt, however, that the word Mysticism had been dragged through the mud to such an extent as to have become, as the Dean had said, spelt with an "i" rather than with a "y." The word therefore as applied to Christianity had been looked at askance by some, and it certainly stood in need of that careful definition which Dean Inge had given. He had pointed out that Mysticism formed an essential part of Christianity. Now any real advance in Christianity was due to the translation of Divine truths into facts, or, in other words, the substitution of personal knowledge of God for second-hand knowledge; and that in itself was Mysticism. He would ask them to allow him to read again words which he was sure they would be sorry to forget (p. 69, lines 18-27), "Mysticism asserts . . . she has been exiled." Those words should be written in all our hearts.

He could not close without alluding also with great pleasure to the wonderful glimpses of the future state that Dean Inge had given with so much eloquence. All present had had a great privilege in listening to such a paper.

Mrs. E. Herman (author of *The Meaning and Value of Mysticism*, who was present by invitation of the Council) was called upon by the Chairman to open the discussion.

Mrs. HERMAN said: It gives me peculiar pleasure to be here—thanks to the kindness of the Council—and to enjoy the privilege of listening to Dean Inge, to whom, in common with all students of Mysticism, I am under great obligation. May I be permitted to say, that in my own humble efforts to help students of Mysticism towards a just appreciation of its main tendencies, I have consistently striven to show that all valid Mysticism involves intellectual activity of the highest order, and that I owe my convictions upon this point to the influence of the Dean's Bampton Lectures on "Christian Mysticism," which first set me to investigate the philosophical affiliations of the great Mystics. In expressing my high admiration of the paper to which we have just listened, I would only draw attention to a question asked at its close. "What relation," asked Dean Inge, "has Mysticism to Christian thinking?" The connection in which this question was put suggests at least an alleged cleavage between mystical philosophy and Christian thought. I venture to submit that there is indeed such a cleavage, and that while Mysticism represents an integral element of Christianity—the element of inwardness—it has not provided a fruitful principle for Christian thinking. I cannot substantiate this position in any convincing manner in so short a time; I can only indicate its basis.

Briefly, the cleavage between mystical theology and the main stream of Christian thought is that the former centres in the Incarnation, while the latter finds its normative principle in the Cross. It arises out of a living experience of redemption, and it is this experience, and not Neoplatonic speculation, as we find it in the philosophical mystics, that has proved the source of the most influential developments of theology. Church history is one long commentary upon this text. The great thinkers who made Church history were men who sought to formulate, not a Christology primarily, but a Soteriology: men whose interest in redemption was the animating pulse of all their thought. I need only remind

you of how this worked out in Gnosticism. The only Gnostic thinker who left a deep mark upon history was Marcion; and Marcion, by his personal concern for redemption, almost pulled Gnosticism over to Christian ground. We know how St. Paul and St. John, in using the *Logos*-conception, burst these Greek philosophical terms to pieces, as it were, and re-shaped them into fit vehicles for the expression of the mystery of redemption. We know how the men who saved Christianity from the secularization of Gnosticism, such as Tertullian and Irenæus, had the *certitudo salutis* as the driving power of their thought. We also know how thinkers like Lucian and Arius worked out their systems without any genuine soteriological conviction, and how their work has perished, whereas that of Athanasius stands. At every point of its development theological thought of the great creative order has had for its motive a practical interest in redemption. The weakness of philosophical Mysticism seems to me to lie in its attempt to graft upon the *schema* of Christian doctrine conceptions borrowed from a system based upon entirely alien presuppositions. The result has been that, on its intellectual side, Mysticism has often trailed away into sterile by-paths of Christian thought.

The Rev. J. J. B. COLES, M.A., said they were greatly indebted to Dean Inge for the help they had had in his writings and lectures. He had, as he had said, not dealt with the subject that afternoon from the psychological standpoint, but it was rather a question of the intellectual life of the Mystic. He (the speaker) thought it was right that they should bear this in mind and keep to the special line and department which the Dean had himself mapped out. No doubt he would agree that in questions connected with the intellect of the Mystic, and also intellect generally, the question of memory was very important.

The question he desired to ask about memory was this: How far could we accept the definition both of Eastern and Western Oriental ideas of memory as being intellectually sound and complete? Blake wrote about the "Sculptured Halls of Los" or the "Great Memory." If we went to Oriental Mysticism we found that the question of memory arose in connection with what were called "the *Akashic* records." If we took a turn to the writings of a scholar such as Dr. Rudolf Steiner, we found that he had adopted the idea of these "halls of memory," and so it seemed to

be very general with them, that there was apparently a record, in the ether around us, of all mundane affairs, and that we got our information from this mystic source. He would ask Dean Inge whether Christian memory was not a much more reliable and comprehensive thing. For instance, there was memory which perished with disintegration of the brain, but spiritual memory, memory of the soul, was much more important, lasting and eternal. Was not the memory of the soul a distinct thing from the memory of the brain? If in this soul-life we would be saved from false ideas of Mysticism, and be guarded against evil suggestions from the unseen world, our intellect should be guided and instructed by the written Word of God. If that was not the case, if our actual memory and power of reasoning were not built up solely by the Word of God, we should be in danger of holding a very defective view of Christianity itself.

REV. A. GRAHAM-BARTON said: I rise to express my gratitude to the reader of the paper, who has proved himself to be a master of mystical lore.

At the same time, I am convinced that he is going against the conclusions of many of the chief Mystics when he seeks to give a supreme place to intellectualism in the realm of the Mystic.

I submit that whatever part the intellect may be invited to take after the vision, or ecstasy, it has no place in the illumination of the spirit.

I think that Moberly's definition of Mysticism, as quoted by the Essayist, that "it is, to the fullest extent, wholly rational," is scarcely in keeping with actual experience.

Reason retires when the soul gives itself entirely to the meditation of the purely spiritual.

It is then that the ideal is attained, and oneness with God glorifies. Ruysbroeck, in his *De Calculo*, puts the case in a clear light.

He writes: "Simple unity with God can be felt and possessed by none save by those who stand before the immense brightness without reason and without restraint." If we do not distinguish soul from intellect, and the moral from the mental, our faith will be at peril.

I do not agree with the Dean when he denies to the soul an entire entity, and speaks of it as wandering across an abyss.

I am satisfied that the soul is a separate entity, and, whilst dependent upon outer help, is self-existent.

I would have liked the Dean to have differentiated more the Mysticism Christian from the other mysticisms. Ancient Hinduism and Modern Spiritualism, Oriental Theosophy and Christian Science, in their mystical teachings, are surely at discord with the mystery of Godliness as given in the Divine Word.

The richest mysteries to me are the simplest. By the regeneration of the soul there enters, by the Holy Spirit, the best of mystical experiences. All else, I fear, is merely the romance of religion.

Dean Inge might make his message more clear by seeking to distinguish the absolute from the relative. Although the unknowable is as fathomless as infinity itself, yet the glimpses of the far-off glory, given to us by seers like him, call forth our highest gratitude.

Mr. E. WALTER MAUNDER, F.R.A.S., said he felt that the Victoria Institute had been very highly honoured in being addressed by so eminent a thinker as Dean Inge upon a subject of so much interest and difficulty. For himself he must express himself deeply grateful, because he must admit that of the literature of Mysticism he knew little or nothing. His studies had lain in a very different direction. He hoped Dean Inge would forgive him if, as a scientific man, he confessed he was compelled to disagree with the sentence at the foot of page 64. He felt that the Lecturer's treatment of matter might be likened to the efforts made by one man to turn another out of a room. The first man would give a little push in one direction and then a little push in another direction, continually shifting his own standpoint the while, and so little by little he would elbow his opponent off the premises. He did not think matter could be treated in that way. He did not think it was possible for us to consider matter as empty of reality; to regard it as "a mere abstraction" was, he thought, forbidden to us by the very fact that our own nature was in part material. So with regard to the particular illustration used in the paper:

"Matter is always on the point of vanishing away—science has
"subdivided the molecule till there is little left of it except
"something of the nature of electricity."

The statement, so far as the last words went, was correct enough,

but the inference seemed to him to be in exactly the opposite direction from that drawn by the Lecturer. Time was when we knew nothing of the structure of matter; now we know a good deal. Surely the inference was that that which possessed so complex a structure was real. There was a time when the planets were simply points in the heavens: mere mathematical points, having "neither parts nor magnitude," but only position, and their positions seemed to change capriciously. Now we had telescopes and could study their surfaces and see the seas on Mars and the clouds on Jupiter. Surely that did not point to the planets having no existence; the details which we perceived upon their surfaces were an argument for the actuality of the planets.

The subject in hand that afternoon was not Mysticism in general, but "Christian Mysticism." As he listened to the Lecturer, the question arose in his mind, "Were any of the New Testament writers mystics?" And he turned in thought to the first Epistle of St. John. Was there ever elsewhere expressed in so short a document so full an apprehension of the presence of God, and such fervent devotion towards Him? Had we not there mystical writing of the very highest possible character? If we read that little treatise through, we saw that St. John came straight to the fact of the Incarnation. "That which was from the beginning"—He Who was from all eternity—and then St. John continues: "Which we have heard, Which we have seen with our eyes, Which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the Word of Life." He came at once to Christ born in the world. Surely there could be no Christian Mysticism in any true sense of the word, that did not in like manner sum itself up in our Lord Jesus Christ, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, Who was made Man, and born into this world. If that was so, if it was true that He Who was throughout all the ages, came into this world, and became Man for our salvation, then we had stamped upon manhood the character of reality. And every science pointed in the same direction. If we left religious and philosophical questions on one side, and came to pure science, we found that man himself was ultimately the one standard to which we referred all things. Why was this? Was it not because man was made in the image of God, and God purposed before all the ages to bring His only-begotten Son into the world as Man?

He was extremely grateful to Dean Inge for his paper, which was full of suggestion and would repay much study and thought.

Mr. JOSEPH GRAHAM observed that allusion had been made to the fact that Mystics existed in all religions—Buddhist, Mohamadan, and so on; and if that fact were accepted there was nothing peculiar to Christianity in Mysticism. If Mysticism existed in all religions, the fact seemed to be that it arose from something in the human mind, something common to all; and he ventured to explain it on this ground, that owing to the condition into which mankind had come from the Fall and by the existence of sin, the harmony of man's nature, body, soul, and spirit, had been disturbed. Secondly, there would be found all over the world men of strong spirit reaching out by their spirits to the infinite; and practically that was Mysticism. He was very much struck by what Mr. Maunder had said in calling attention to the Incarnation of Christ, and he would carry his thought just a step further. St. Paul prayed that our whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and St. John said: "When we see Him, we shall be like Him." The question was: What like? "In His person, and in Him only, up to the present moment, has been restored harmony of body, soul, and spirit." In Christ Jesus there was a Man with a body perfectly adapted to the needs of the spirit; and it was the purpose and aim of Christianity to bring man to that condition. However much the spirit of a man might reach forward towards it, he was hampered in the present circumstances both by his body and his soul. True Mysticism, therefore, was a reaching out towards that which Christ had attained, and which we were assured on the authority of Holy Scripture He had attained on our behalf.

Professor LANGHORNE ORCHARD, M.A., B.SC., said he was in agreement with what Mr. Maunder had said so well about matter. Certainly matter was not an abstraction: it was a reality. It was not the highest reality: the highest reality was spiritual. He could not concur with the gentleman who said intellect was foreign to Christian Mysticism. He thought himself that the supreme intellect was found in God and Christ. With regard to the definitions which were quoted on p. 60, it appeared to him that Mr. Rufus Jones gave the best; but the essence of Christian

Mysticism was communion with God, and in that definition the idea of communion was not expressed. Christian Mysticism found its very life in communion with infinite Love. We love God because He first loved us, was at once the plea and the power of Christian Mysticism. "God has shone forth from the recesses of the infinite, and I have seen His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. That glory has attracted me, and I live for it. I want it in order to satisfy the deepest needs and longings of my being." That was the essential thought in Christian Mysticism—communion with God. God was the infinite Spirit; God was the infinite Light; God was the infinite Love, Who had come forth to seek and to save him who was lost. That was Christian Mysticism as he understood it—spiritual harmony, harmony with God, based upon communion springing out of obedience, in response to Divine Revelation.

He wished to thank the author for his able and deeply thoughtful Paper.

The SECRETARY read the following note from the Rev. Canon R. B. GIRDLESTONE, M.A.:—"We ought to thank the Dean for his helpful and suggestive Paper. The Greek word 'mystery,' to which he refers on p. 60, is rare in the O.T., and is used in the sense of 'secret.' St. Paul uses the verb once (Philippians iv, 12) as marking his initiation into the secret of contentment. I suppose that Mysticism is a reaction from Positivism, and marks a mode of attaining knowledge of spiritual things in which the senses and the reasoning powers are in the background. It marks a short cut to spiritual things, and is almost the same as intuition, being something like Coleridge's 'reason.' The Dean deals with it as the product of intellect; but this and other words are used in slightly different senses by different writers. The Mystic mainly has to do with the spirit-world, and the mental process which he goes through is akin to inspiration, and may be illustrated by the experiences of Ezekiel and St. Paul. It implies, or ought to imply, a certain sympathy with divine holiness; for the pure in heart shall see God—mystically, but really.

I once saw in Tours a striking statue of Descartes. There is a book in his right hand, and his left hand is pressed against his heart; beneath him is engraved the time-honoured sentence, '*Cogito, ergo sum.*' The *ego* is at the root of all human sensation, thought and feeling. It is the soul or self, and gets into touch with God

through faith and prayer and submission ; and Jesus Christ is the bond of union between the self and ‘the God of the spirits of all flesh.’ We are all Mystics if we are in touch with the Eternal, though we do not all put our philosophy into the same words.”

Mr. M. L. ROUSE, B.A., B.L., said that he had been much pleased that the Lecturer had stated that it was not the miracles but their intercourse with Christ, which had led the Apostles to accept Him as the Messiah (Mr. Rouse here quoted the call of five of the Apostles, recorded in St. John i, before the Lord had wrought any miracle). Mr. Rouse asked “Have not Christian Mystics generally made the mistake of living too much in retirement?” and instanced the case of Madame de la Mothe Guyon, who confided her three very young daughters to guardians in order that she herself might be free to lead an ascetic life. Daniel, on the other hand, though he devoted himself to prayer, yet when his prayer was ended arose to do the king’s business, and did it so well that his adversaries could find no fault in him.

LECTURER’S REPLY.

The LECTURER, in replying, said he wished to express his thanks for the kind things that had been said about his Paper. He hoped some of the speakers would excuse him if in his reply, which must be short, he confined himself to two only out of the points which had been raised, the two which seemed to be the most important. The first was the objection that had been raised that the great Mystics had on the whole expressed themselves in a hostile sense towards human reason, and that therefore he very much over-emphasized the intellectual side of his subject. It was necessary to distinguish between the reasoning faculty and the higher reason. According to the philosophy with which he had been dealing, the discursive reason belonged to the soul and not to the higher spiritual life, because its whole function was to distinguish between things and ideas on the plane of the soul-life. Therefore we could quite understand that some of the Mystics had insisted that we must not stop short at the stage of reasoning in that sense. The higher faculty was certainly not purely intellectual, but neither was it destitute of intellect. It was rather the whole personality, the whole man, the mind and will and affections exalted into a higher plane where they worked together. Therefore the vision of God was vouchsafed to the whole man, and not to one particular

faculty. There were, he knew, a good many Mystics who had disparaged intellect because they wished to rest knowledge of God on pure feeling. Professor Flint said that pure (?) feeling was pure nonsense, and he believed that was true. We found, in point of fact, that those Mystics who had trusted to feeling without any kind of reflection or any intellectual light had been a prey to the most childish, foolish, and painful hallucinations. The history of Mysticism showed that it could not be separated from the intellect altogether. As a rule the philosophic Mystics had been free from the great drawbacks of the mystical life which came upon some in the nature of what were called mystical phenomena, apparitions, auditions, and all that deplorable farrago of superstition which filled some books.

The other point upon which he wished to say something was the question raised by Mr. Maunder about matter. It was his fault that he did not explain that he was talking during part of his address rather in a Platonic manner, and using matter in the Platonic sense. Matter, for the Platonist, is not "material." It is the residuum left after all that gives meaning to phenomena has been abstracted. But the "materialist" errs in that he imports into his system a mass of ideas and valuations which, on his own principles, he has no right to use. If he confines himself to matter and energy, he will have nothing to work with but mathematical symbols, which have only a hypothetical existence.

The CHAIRMAN said this brought their proceedings to a happy conclusion, and he asked those present to pass a hearty vote of thanks to the Lecturer.

The Meeting adjourned at 6.25 p.m.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS.

The following written communications were received before the Meeting, but were not read, owing to lack of time :—

Mr. T. B. BISHOP :—The researches of science have taught us that there are no two organisms in nature that are exactly alike, and especially are we told that no two human beings ever have existed, or ever will exist, that are absolutely alike in every part and combination of their structure. Nothing is perhaps more wonderful than the varieties of feature and complexion which are to be found

in the small space occupied by the human face. It would certainly be extremely inconvenient if we were all exactly alike.

Now is it not extremely probable that there is just as much diversity in the characters of men, and in their attributes of mind and soul? And may we not take it as quite certain that God deals with each one according to his characteristics?

On page 61 of the paper reference is made to Mr. William James, whose book, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, is so often referred to. I once glanced through this book, and I saw that he gave extracts from writers of various schools of thought who had written of their own religious experiences, and he seemed to treat them as representatives of all Christians. But they could not be representative of the very large class of people who would never dream of putting their innermost thoughts and feelings upon paper.

From all that we read of the Mystics who lived in the Dark Ages, and whose writings or whose memoirs have come down to us, it seems clear that most of them must have been earnest and faithful men. They could not have had the Word of God in such an accessible form as we have it to-day—they certainly had no reference Bibles and concordances. Doubtless God taught them. What we may call by the name "intuition," was in their case doubtless the teaching of God's Holy Spirit, given, in each case, according to their need.

One great danger of the present day is that people, and especially young people, should mistake their own feelings, and their own ideas, which often may mean their own desires, for Divine guidance. All genuine Christian experience must be founded on Christian doctrine, and all Christian doctrine must have for its foundation, *facts*—the facts that are revealed to us in the Word of God, and these are briefly summarized for us in the Creeds. It must never be forgotten that our religion is based on *facts*, and we must beware of any teaching, by whatever name it is called, which ignores any of these fundamental facts. There is the fact of God the Father, of God the Son, and of God the Holy Spirit: the fact of our creation, the fact of sin, the fact of our redemption, and the facts of future reward and punishment. We cannot afford to omit in our teaching any of the essential facts.

It is an exceedingly grave statement that we find on page 60 of the paper—that the centre of gravity in religion has swung round from

authority to experience. We cannot rightly consider anything as true Christian experience unless it is founded on authority—on the authority of God's Word.

When we turn to the older Mystics such as John Tauler, of Strasburg, Nicholas of Basle, and Suso, whom we read of in Mrs. Bevan's *Three Friends of God*, and Lady Julian of Norwich, and Richard Rolle, who lived in the 14th century, and of whom the Rev. Dundas Harford has written, we find them true to the most fundamental evangelical truths (though Suso was a severe ascetic), and their writings justify the definition of Mysticism by Rufus Jones, which we find on page 60 of the paper as "that type of religion which puts the emphasis on immediate awareness of relation with God, on direct and immediate consciousness of the Divine presence." Then again Bishop Hall's *Christ Mystical* is a delightful and deeply spiritual volume of the 17th century, and was much loved by that wonderful soldier-mystic, General Gordon. With such Mystics we can have the fullest sympathy, and their history cannot fail to be helpful.

But we must not forget the danger there is of any teaching in the present day that would at all exalt the personal feelings and experiences of even the holiest of men unless these are based on the sure foundations of God's Word.

Mr. SYDNEY T. KLEIN, F.L.S., F.R.A.S.:—The great charm running throughout Dr. Inge's paper on "Christian Mysticism" is, I think, the absence of all sophistry and theological diction; one feels at once that he is a true lover of his subject, by the tender way in which he handles all matters that are sacred, and therefore dear to those who, like him, have set out on the true Quest.

I like the broad-minded way in which he acknowledges that the Quest is open alike to all, whatever religious denomination they may belong to. Every human being is surely a potential son of God, and yet the presentation of the Absolute, with its infinite variety of aspects, must be so different to every individual that the same definition of Mysticism will not satisfy everybody, and each phase of humanity will have its special aspect.

I agree entirely with the writer that the Quest is not helped by the Intellect; but I would go further, and say it is only when we have realized the limitations of our finite Intellect, and therefore its uselessness for comprehending the Infinite, that Mystical experience

becomes possible. I should define the Mystical state as a looking inwards instead of outwards ; it is the realization of the *Immanence* of God, that we are indeed one with the All-loving, and that the Spiritual is nearer to us and has much more to do with us than the physical has, if we could only see the truth and recognize its presence.

The Intellect is necessarily governed by the Objective owing to the conditions of our earthly life. We are living in a world of continuous and multitudinous changes ; in fact without those changes we could have no cognizance of our surroundings, we should have no consciousness of living. All our sense organs require movement or change for their excitation, because they can only act under the modes or limitations of time and space : these necessitate *motion* as the very basis of apprehension, because motion is the product of those two modes, namely, the time that an object takes to traverse a certain space ; and as our conceptual knowledge is based upon our perceptual knowledge, our very conceptions are limited by time and space, and are therefore governed by the objective. On the other hand, the Mystical or Spiritual outlook is unlimited, everything that is objective to the finite is subjective to the Spiritual. For example, the whole of Creation may be looked upon as the materialization, in time and space, of the "Thought" or Will of the Absolute ; the Intellectual outlook can, as it were, only look on the outside, the forms or phenomena, of that materialization, whereas the Mystical inlook enables us to understand the *noumena* or meaning of that thought.

Intellectualism, or what I will call Intellection, can only look upon that great "Thought" as a long line of events, in sequence, stretching from past to future eternity ; it is obliged by its limitations to look lengthwise at time, as though it were similar to our dimension in space, and has no knowledge of it in any other direction, but the Spiritual outlook, being independent of time-limitation, can realize that "Thought" as being, what in our finite expression we should call, instantaneous, and the whole of creation from beginning to the end of time would be lying open to view. This may be clearer if we take as illustration our mode of gaining knowledge by reading a book. Intellection insists that one word comes in front of, and is followed by, another word : it can only think in finite sequences ; the contents of that book can only be examined as though it were a long line of words, a succession of thoughts, but, if pressed, Intellection

has to acknowledge that the whole book, the completed thought, is lying there open to view.

It is difficult, as the writer has pointed out, for those who have not gone through a certain experience, to understand the language of the Mystics ; the experience is not in any way a *vision* in the ordinary acceptance of the word, it is not anything that can be seen, heard or felt by the touch, it is entirely independent of the physical senses. The "still small voice," which may at times of rapture be momentarily experienced in music, is something much more wonderful than can be formed by sounds ; but it cannot be held or described in finite words, and yet it is much more real and dear to us than the outward physical impression.

Intellection tries to solve the question of questions in the form : "Can I (with my intellect) find out the Absolute so that I may possess him ?" And the answer ever comes back : "*No*, because I am trying to storm the Sanctuary of the Unthinkable, the Infinite, by means of a ladder which cannot reach beyond our finite conceptions, and can deal therefore only with the shadows cast by the outlying ramparts upon our physical plane" ; he is, of course, looking in the wrong direction, namely, outward instead of inward ; but the Mystic asks the question : "Can the Absolute find me out and possess me, and thus make me feel that that which is within me is akin to, is, in fact, a part of Him, and that I am possessed thereby ?" And the answer ever comes back from those who are on the true Quest : "Yes, because the Unthinkable, the Hidden, which desires to be found, is ever trying to come into our consciousness to waken the knowledge that His Sanctuary, or what is called the Kingdom of Heaven, is within us, that we are not an external but an internal creation of the All-loving." Such a realization, like the "still small voice" in music, is far above analysis and synthesis or intellectual gymnastics as employed by Intellection.

Rev. JOHN TUCKWELL, M.R.A.S. :—I am much disappointed at being unable to be present at the reading of this paper. It is a subject in which I feel a deep interest, and there are some questions relating to it on which I should have welcomed further information.

I have accepted the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as true, but the Mystics tell us that they have come into direct contact, at the summit of the "mystical ladder" (page 60), with the Infinite or Absolute or Ultimate Reality, and often spell those terms with

capital initials. What I am anxious to discover is (to take one of the terms referred to), who or what is this Absolute ? (spelt with a capital initial on page 67). Does this Absolute possess the attributes of personality ? Does He or It think, design, plan ? If there be such an Absolute, what is His relation to the God of the Bible—"the Eternal, Invisible, the only wise God" ? According to some writers, the two cannot be identical, for their attributes are not identical. Are we then to conclude, as Professor William James suggests, that the God of the Bible may be a Personality subordinate to the Absolute ? If so, Mysticism is unscriptural ; I for one must reject it and regard Christian Mysticism as impossible.

The Dean's answer to the question "What is reality ?" (page 69), I am afraid is not very satisfactory. He says it is the *contents* of the mind of God manifested chiefly as perfect goodness, wisdom, and beauty. In expanding this definition he tells us that these "contents" are not the "material universe," but the "sum total of created things," which presumably must include what we know as the "material universe." But how can "created things"—not the purpose, design, or foreknowledge of them, be it observed, but "created things"—be conceived of by us as included in the contents of the mind of God ? Such difficult phraseology and definition of terms makes the whole subject of Mysticism suspect to those of us who believe that truth is always clear. If the experience of the Mystic is a Divine reality, I for one desire above all things to possess it, but am held back from the pursuit of it by its apparent irreconcilability with the truths revealed in Holy Scripture.

Again, the Mystic, whether Buddhist, Mohammedan, and Christian, claims to have had a certain experience, and we have no right to deny it, and I am glad that the Dean admits that it must be subject to an intellectual interpretation. But if Mysticism be "religion at first hand" (page 70), what are we to do with the claims of Christ ? The Buddhist and Mohammedan reject Christ as Mediator and Saviour. A modern writer on Mysticism says it would make no difference to him if it were proved that no such person as Christ ever existed, for he is in direct contact with the Absolute. Mysticism, when it professes to see all things in universal harmony, must needs make light of the Scripture doctrines concerning sin and atonement, for sin is only a dissonant chord in the universal Oratorio. The Dean kindly tells us that those of us who have not the Mystic gift

may be consoled by the fact that "this gift is rarely found associated with a very keen and delicate human sympathy" (page 66), and yet on page 70 he says that "the religion of Christ was eminently mystical." Surely this is a contradiction. Where was there ever such keen and delicate human sympathy as that of Christ? These two statements, it is not easy to reconcile.

Mysticism, so far as it cultivates the inner realities of religion rather than merely external forms, may be welcomed if it be true, but in the Scriptures we have "a more sure word of prophecy unto which we do well that we take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place."