

Summary of the Tenets of Mysticism

Introduction

Mysticism is variously defined since the word comprises many teachings in diverse religions and sects.

The word itself derives from several possible Greek words: the Greek word *mystikos*, meaning 'an initiate into a mystery'; or from the Greek *myo*, meaning 'to conceal'. Or possibly from the Greek noun *mystes*, an initiate of a secret cult (Greek mystery religion). The root verb *myein* ('to close,' especially the eyes or mouth), indicating a person who kept a secret, is probably the fundamental source of all these words. The overriding meaning has to do with being initiated into a mystery; esoteric¹ knowledge.

Mysticism describes the search for immediate knowledge and personal experience of metaphysical states of consciousness, or levels of being, beyond normal human perception, leading to communion with the Supreme Being or elemental cosmic force.

Some other definitions

1 Belief that union with or absorption into the Deity or the absolute, or the spiritual apprehension of knowledge inaccessible to the intellect, may be attained through contemplation and self-surrender. 2 Belief characterised by self-delusion or dreamy confusion of thought, especially when based on the assumption of occult qualities or mysterious agencies. New Oxford English Dictionary

The habit or tendency of religious thought and feeling of those who seek direct communion with God or the divine. Chambers' Dictionary

The experience of mystical union or direct communion with ultimate reality. The belief that direct knowledge of God, spiritual truth, or ultimate reality can be attained through subjective experience (as intuition or insight). Merriam Webster Dictionary

Mysticism is either a religious tendency and desire of the human soul towards an intimate union with the Divinity, or a system growing out of such a tendency and desire. As a philosophical system, Mysticism considers as the end of philosophy the direct union of the human soul with the Divinity through contemplation and love, and attempts to determine the processes and the means of realising this end. This contemplation, according to Mysticism, is not based on a merely analogical knowledge of the Infinite, but as a direct and immediate intuition of the Infinite. The Catholic Encyclopaedia

The art of union with Reality. The mystic is a person who has attained that union in a greater or less degree, or who aims at it and believes in such attainment. Evelyn Underhill

The technique of mysticism may result in the direct intuition of, and union with, an ultimate spiritual reality that is perceived as simultaneously beyond the self and in some way within it. Aldous Huxley

The essential basis of mysticism

There are two key elements to mysticism:

- *Seeking a direct experience with God who dwells within.* This is done without any reference to Christ as a mediator but is immediate (without means).

¹ Intended for or likely to be understood by only a small number of people with a specialised knowledge or interest. Arcane.

- *Establishing subjective emotional experiences as the key arbiter of spiritual knowledge.* The crucial factor is what is felt rather than what is known rationally.

Having gained a basic understanding of what mysticism is about, let us progress to itemise the fundamental tenets.

Tabular analysis of mysticism

Mystical tenet	Mystical comment	Biblical Doctrine
Foundation – God is hidden within man’s soul		
The deep soul of man is pure and God dwells within the recesses of the soul.	Man’s soul was originally pure but sin has darkened it, like a diamond caked in mud [sic. Teresa of Avila]. The pure soul is unrecognisable.	Total Depravity – man is depraved, & completely unable to perform any spiritual work. The root of man’s nature is sin not God. Man is separated from God by sin.
	The deep recesses of the soul are still pure.	The heart is desperately corrupt.
	God dwells deep within but is not known naturally by man without spiritual exercises.	Man cannot know God without grace.
	The divine spark in all men. God’s ground and the soul’s ground is one ground. [Meister Eckhart]	The centre of man is sin and a depraved heart.
	The 'Inner Light of the Living Christ' in all people. [George Fox]	
Goal		
Union with God, perfection of knowledge and virtue, communion.	To realise the soul’s potential it must return to its divine source –‘the shining sun in the centre of the soul.’ [Teresa of Avila]	God’s transcendence – God is totally other than man and separate from him.
Methods		
An inward journey. Self-effort and willpower. Often spoken of as a gradual rising upwards as if on a ladder or sometimes as a descent into nothingness where God dwells in darkness.	In this journey knowledge of the self and God increase.	An objective Gospel - Mysticism is subjective and inward, but the Gospel is outward. It is the impact on the soul of something from outside it.
	The soul is God’s garden which must be cultivated for God to delight in it. [Teresa of Avila]	The soul is a garden for the devil unless God has converted it.
	Nothing great is ever achieved without much enduring. [Catherine of Siena]	There is no life and spiritual power in subjective insights but only from revelation by God.
Self emptying; death of the self life.	‘To yield is to be preserved whole, to be bent is to become straight, to be empty is to be full, to have little is to possess.’ [Taoist phrase]	Man cannot reach God by self will and self effort. Indeed he can do no good thing and no spiritual work. Dying to self can only be achieved after conversion, not before it.
	‘Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.’ [Jalal ad-Din Rumi (Persian Poet and Mystic, 1207-1273).]	
	‘In order to realize the Self, renounce everything. Having cast off all (objects), assimilate yourself to that which remains.’ [Annapurna Upanishad]	
Denial of rationalism.	‘It is indeed the mind that is the cause of men’s bondage and liberation. The mind that is attached to sense-objects leads to bondage, while dissociated from sense-objects it tends to lead to liberation.’ [Amrita-Bindu Upanishad]	The Bible upholds rationality; worship is rational, not mindless. A gift of the Spirit is self-control.
	‘One has to go beyond the mind to experience the spiritual bliss of desirelessness.’ [Meher Baba]	

Denial of desire (esp. in Buddhism).	'When all longings that are in the heart vanish, then a mortal becomes immortal and attains Brahman (infinite consciousness or God) here.' [Katha Upanishad]	Dying to the old nature, with all its desires and temptations, can only take place after you have become a new creation with a new nature.
	'The entire life of the personal ego is continually in the grip of wanting, i. e., an attempt to seek fulfilment of desires through things that change and vanish. But there can be no real fulfilment through the transient things.' [Meher Baba]	
The threefold path (particularly in Christian mysticism), purification; illumination and union.	<u>Purification</u> : discipline, particularly in terms of the human body (prayer, fasting, asceticism). <u>Illumination</u> : enlightenment of mind; consciousness of spiritual realities; perceiving God or a transcendent order. <u>Union</u> : contemplation or 'Mystical Contemplative Prayer' producing feelings of being united with God.	Purification can only come from being born again and cleansed by the blood of Christ. No man can work this up; it is a gift of the Spirit to the elect. Union with God is experienced at conversion and regeneration as a gift from God; it needs no climbing a mystical ladder to get it.
Visions and spiritual insight substitute for scripture and analytical knowledge. Introspection.	'Your visions will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes.' [C.G. Jung]	Only God's work can direct the person to righteousness, Only God's word give spiritual revelation to the elect. Visions apart from God's word can just as easily be the work of the devil or just the human imagination.
Experience of a mystery unveiled. Appropriation of hidden wisdom. The period before gaining revelation is often a 'dark night of the soul' – helplessness; suffering of self to produce enlightenment..	'It is precisely because we resist the darkness in ourselves that we miss the depths of the loveliness, beauty, brilliance, creativity, and joy that lie at our core.' [Thomas Moore, 'Dark Nights of the Soul'.] 'There is no coming to consciousness without pain. People will do anything, no matter how absurd, to avoid facing their own soul. One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious.' [Carl Gustav Jung]	The Gospel is a mystery hidden to the world but unveiled to the elect. The inner core of natural man is not God or goodness but sin and depravity. 'Every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.' [Gen 6:5]
Feelings that result from mystical experiences		
Ineffability	Difficulty in describing the event.	This is because the conscious will is not engaged.
Mystery	(Sometimes called 'noetic quality') belief that the experience reveals hidden knowledge.	It does not experience truth since truth is only in Christ and revealed by God's word.
Transient	Short experiences.	This is because it is difficult for the body to continue in this abnormal state.
Passivity	Out of normal conscious control.	This is due to the deliberate suspension of self-control; mindlessness.
Unity	(Especially unity of opposites) sense of oneness with everything; completeness,	This is identification with demonic forces that occupy the whole earth.
Timelessness	Transcending time.	This is because normal bodily functions are suspended. Also the cause of the experience (drugs, ascetic practices etc.) disrupt the functions of the body.
True self	Belief that one finds one's true self, a cosmic self, identification with a greater power beyond ego, life and death.	What it does is cause a unification with demonic powers that masquerade as a cosmic god.

Practices		
Meditation		Meditating on Scripture is a good work but meditating on emptiness is not as it leads to passivity.
Praying intensely and continually.		Forbidden as it leads to mindless passivity when not directed by the Holy Spirit ('pray in the Spirit').
Intense repetitive music and chanting.		Forbidden as it leads to passivity.
Dance; especially dancing till you drop.		Forbidden; a vain expression of the flesh and leads to passivity. Normal cultural social dancing (e.g. at a wedding) is acceptable.
Repeating the names of God (e.g. Sufism).		Vain repetition is of no value; knowing God is of value.
Yoga		Forbidden; leads to passivity.
Asceticism: inflicting extreme pain (e.g. American Indian sun ritual), mortification of the flesh, excessive fasting, denying normal sexual activity.		Physical extremes do not control the old nature.
Sexual activity		Forbidden outside marriage.
Drugs (e.g. Peyote [Mescaline], Cannabis) to achieve enlightenment.		Forbidden, as it is a sin against the body. Enlightenment is in Christ imparted to the elect through the Holy Spirit.
Psychological anomalies, such as: temporal lobe epilepsy, near-death experience, altered state of consciousness.		Seeking such things is forbidden; self control must be maintained at all times and is a gift of the Spirit. This obviates being 'slain in the Spirit'.
Staring at mandalas		Forbidden as it leads to passivity.
Teachings		
Denial of evil in the spiritual world they tap into.	Nietzsche criticised metaphysical systems established on the premise that the good man is the opposite of the evil man, rather than just a different expression of the same basic impulses. [Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Beyond Good and Evil', 1886]	Sinners attempting to tap into the spiritual world by occult means communicate with demons not with God. The devil is real and dangerous.
Dualism – the spiritual ideal world is good; the fleshly material world is evil.	Platonism & Gnosticism; New Age.	Everything created by God is good if used for the purpose it was created for.
Unity of all things (monism).	'The way up and the way down is one and the same' [Heraclitus].	The world of sin and the world of righteousness are separated. Heaven and earth are separated. God is separate from his creation.
	'Atman is Brahman, neti neti, "Neither This nor That".' [Advaitan]	
	'God and me, me and God, are One.' [Kundalini Yoga, Sikhism]	
	'The eye through which I see God is the same eye through which God sees me; my eye and God's eye are one eye, one seeing, one knowing, one love.' [Meister Eckhart]	
	'Oneness with the beyond is his message of salvation. The non-duality of eternal bliss is his god. Mastery of the inner senses is his guiding light.' [Nirvana Upanishad]	
Denial of time. If all is one, the past and the present are illusory.	In this moment there is nothing that comes to be. In this moment there is nothing that ceases to be. Thus there is no birth-and-death to be brought to an end. Thus the absolute peace in this present moment. Though it is at this moment, there is no limit to this moment, and herein lies eternal	God lives in eternity outside of time but man is a material being subject to time and decay.

	delight. [Sixth [Zen] Patriarch, Ch'an Master Hui-neng] I have realized that the past and future are real illusions, that they exist in the present, which is what there is and all there is. [Alan Wilson Watts.]	
Use of riddles and illogical aphorisms to teach a supposed point.	'What is the sound of one hand (clapping)?' [Zen] 'I climbed into the plum tree and ate the grapes I found there. The owner of the garden called to me, "Why are you eating my walnuts?"' [Yunus Emre]	We are to seek real wisdom that is practical in effect. This begins with fearing God.
Completion		
Union with God.	The end of the journey is union with God (e.g. Hinduism) and perfection of knowledge.	Union with God is the beginning of the work of grace not the end.
	This union has many forms: in Hinduism it is unity with the world soul and losing individuality. In other forms the union with God is either nothingness or sensual pleasures.	Union with God at this time is spiritual and the kingdom is heavenly only. In the restoration, after the Return of Christ, union with God assumes a material form in the new world. Heaven is then on a restored earth.
	Many mystics deny the concept of a personal God and see the attainment of the goal being oneness with the universe.	God is real and sovereign.
Theosis or divinisation, becoming God.	'God became human so that man might become god'. [Attributed to Athanasius.] 'As rivers flow into the sea and in so doing lose name and form, so even the wise man, freed from name and form, attains the Supreme Being, the Self-luminous, the Infinite. He who knows Brahman becomes Brahman.' [Upanishads]	Genuine Christians share in the nature of God but never become God because he is infinite and they are finite. There is only one God, not millions of little gods.
Achieving the conscious presence of God rather than union.	'The eye with which I see God is the same with which God sees me. My eye and God's eye is one eye, and one sight, and one knowledge, and one love.' [Meister Eckhart, m Sermon IV.]	Any Christian can know the presence of God in true prayer at any time.
Personal transformation.	'Having been made one with God, the soul is somehow God through participation. ... through this substantial transformation.' [John of the Cross, The Living Flame Of Love.] Love produces such likeness in this transformation of lovers that one can say each is the other and both are one. ... both are one in the transformation of love. [John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle.]	Progressive sanctification is normal in the Christian life. The transformation is to become gradually more morally like Christ. Without Christ there is no transformation.

Quotes by mystics

For the Eastern mystic, all things and events perceived by the senses are interrelated, connected and are but different aspects or manifestations of the same ultimate reality. Our tendency to divide the perceived world into individual and separate things and to experience ourselves as isolated egos in this world is seen as an illusion which comes from our measuring and categorising mentally. It is called *avidya*, or ignorance, in Buddhist philosophy and is seen as the state of a disturbed mind which has to be overcome:

'When the mind is disturbed, the multiplicity of things is produced, but when the mind is quieted, the multiplicity of things disappears.'

Although the various schools of eastern mysticism differ in many details, they all emphasise the basic unity of the universe which is the central feature of their teachings. The highest aim for their followers - whether they are Hindus, Buddhists or Taoists - is to become aware of the unity and mutual interdependence of all things, to transcend the notion of an isolated individual self and to identify themselves with the ultimate reality. The emergence of this awareness - known as 'enlightenment'- is not only an intellectual act but is an experience which involves the whole person and is religious in its ultimate nature. For this reason, most eastern philosophies are essentially religious philosophies.

Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, p24.

The Tao exists in the crickets ... in the grasses ... in tiles and bricks.

Chuang-tzu, *The Roaring Stream: A New Zen Reader*, p. 117

I, the fiery life of divine essence, am aflame beyond the beauty of the meadows, I gleam in the waters, and I burn in the sun, moon, and stars I awaken everything to life.

Hildegard of Bingen

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy of elevated thoughts;
a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the Mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

William Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey*.

Man becomes aware of the Sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the Profane ... In his encounters with the Sacred, man experiences a reality that does not belong to our world yet is encountered in and through objects or events that are part of the world.

Mircea Eliade

For if the will has nothing to employ it and love has no present object with which to busy itself, the soul finds itself without either support or occupation, its solitude and aridity cause it great distress and its thoughts involve it in the severest conflict.

Teresa of Ávila, *The Life of Saint Teresa of Ávila by Herself*.

I used unexpectedly to experience a consciousness of the presence of God, or such a kind that I could not possibly doubt that He was within me or that I was wholly engulfed in Him. This was in no sense a vision: I believe it is called mystical theology. The soul is suspended in such a way that it seems to be completely outside itself. The will loves; the memory, I think, is almost lost; while the understanding, I believe, though it is not lost, does not reason—I mean that it does not work, but is amazed at the extent of all it can understand; for God wills it to realise that it understands nothing of what His Majesty represents to it.

Teresa of Ávila, *The Life of Saint Teresa of Ávila by Herself*.

Body and spirit are in the throes of a sweet, happy pain, alternating between a fearful fiery glow, a complete impotence and unconsciousness, and a spell of strangulation, intermitted sometimes by such an ecstatic flight that the body is literally lifted into space. This after half an hour is followed by a reactionary relaxation of a few hours in a swoon-like weakness, attended by a negation of all the faculties in the union with God. From this the subject awakens in tears; it is the climax of mystical experience, productive of the trance.

Teresa Of Ávila, *The Interior Castle* (translated by Mirabai Starr).

The city is the image of the soul, the surrounding walls being the frontier between the outward and inward life. The gates are the faculties or senses connecting the life of the soul with the outward world. Living springs of water rise within it. And in the centre, where beats the heart, stands the holy sanctuary.

Catherine of Siena

Summary of characters

The most important western mystics include:

- '*Dionysius the Areopagite*' [late 5th or early 6thc]; a Syrian monk used this fraudulent name (Acts 17:34); hence also 'Pseudo-Dionysius'. This is the beginning of Christian mysticism in writing.
- *Meister Eckhart* (Eckhart von Hochheim) [c1260-1327]; German Dominican mystic. 'Rhineland Mysticism' chiefly comprised of Eckhart, Johannes Tauler, and Henry Suso. Its origins lay in the works of Hildegard of Bingen.
- *Jakob Boehme* [1575-1624]; German Lutheran mystic.
- *Julian of Norwich* [c1342-c1413]; English mystic.
- *Thomas a Kempis* [1380-1471]; German Christian mystic.
- *Adi Shankara* (or Acharya Shankara); [either 688 or 788 - 820] Indian philosopher and mystic; the reformer of Hinduism who re-established the dharma (way) of *The Upanishads*. Widely read in the west.
- *Teresa of Avila* [1515-1582]; Spanish Carmelite reformer and mystic.
- *John of the Cross* [1542-1591]; Spanish mystic.
- *Plotinus* [205-270]; father of Neo-Platonism; Egyptian mystic and philosopher.
- *Ignatius of Loyola* (Inigo Lopez de Loyola) [1491-1556]; Spanish mystic & founder of the Jesuits or the Society of Jesus.]
- *Francis de Sales* [1567-1622]; French mystic and Roman Catholic bishop of Genoa.

Each type of mysticism has its own teachers, wise men, gurus and prophets. It would be pointless to list them all (if it were possible). The above are the most well-known.

Mystical movements

- Greek philosophy – Platonism and Neo-Platonism.
- Gnosticism. Syncretism of Christianity with Greek philosophy and eastern occultism.
- Zen and other movements within Buddhism.
- Taoism [Daoism] within Chinese religion; see Laotzi's *Tao Te Ching*.
- Cabala & Hasidism & Merkabah mysticism (or Chariot mysticism, based on visions such in Ezekiel) within Judaism.
- Sufism within Islam (e.g. whirling dervishes).
- Hindu mysticism (e.g. *The Upanishads* & *The Vedanta*).
- Sikhism – Guru Nanak (a variant of Hinduism).
- North American Indian shamanism (witch doctor, medicine man).
- 'Christian' mysticism: Dionysius the Areopagite; Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler and Henry Suso. Jan van Ruysbroeck; Teresa of Avila, and John of the Cross (esp. *The Dark Night of the Soul*). English mystics: Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton and Julian of Norwich. Catherine of Siena, Brother Lawrence and Catherine of Genoa. Books such as *The Theologia Germanica*, *The Cloud of Unknowing* and Thomas a Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*. Certain Pietists; many Quietists; Quakerism; Shakers; New Thought; Christian Science; Unity School; many aspects of Higher Life; Charismatics and Pentecostals.

- Modern occult movements: Rosicrucianism; Theosophy; Spiritualism and Faith Healing; Wicca and other magic occult groups; New Age (multiple groups within this movement).

Mystics endorsed by certain evangelicals today include:

- Madame Guyon (born Jeanne Marie Bouvier de la Mothe) [1648-1717] French Quietist.
- Miguel de Molinos [1640-1697] Spanish Quietist.
- Francois Fenelon (Francois de Salignac de la Mothe) [1651-1715] French churchman associated with Madame Guyon.
- Meister Eckhart.
- Johannes Tauler.
- Teresa of Avila.
- Ignatius Loyola (founder of the Jesuits – dedicated to destroying the Reformation and withholding the Bible from individuals).²
- John of the Cross.
- Thomas a Kempis.
- Brother Lawrence [1605-1691] French mystic.
- Though not actually a mystic, John Wesley was steeped in mysticism from a young age and promoted the books of the Christian mystics until he died. He was the main inspiration for subsequent mystical movements such as frontier Methodist camp meetings, the Holiness Movement, Higher Life and Pentecostalism. He also allowed mystical phenomena (e.g falling down, crying out) in his meetings whereas other preachers stopped them. Methodism contained many mystical aberrations.³

Though there are some occasional flashes of spiritual insight in these writers, their teachings and methods are flawed, unbiblical and sometimes downright dangerous. Also remember that they were all under the rule of Romanism, which undergirds their doctrine.

Modern 'Christian' mystical writers

- Joyce Huggett [b.1937]; Popular 'Christian' author of *Listening to God* and many other books.
- Agnes Sanford [1897-1982]. Mystical healer and false teacher.
- William Law [1686-1761]; '*Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*'. Included here because it is so popular.
- George Fox [1634-1691]; Founder of the Quakers, which produced many mystics, such as John Woolman. Notice the central feature of Quakerism was the Inner Light mystical doctrine. Included here because Quakerism is still having a significant influence.
- Watchman Nee [1903–1972]; Nee, while writing much of value, sometimes had tendencies to endorse mystical ideas. See especially '*Release of the Spirit*'.
- M. Scott Peck; his views on God and the mind are unorthodox, containing mystical and pantheistic statements.

² For example Tim Keller strongly recommends Loyola saying he wrote, 'great stuff' in the period of the Counter Reformation.

³ Blunt's *Dictionary of Sects, Heresies, Ecclesiastical Parties and Schools of Thought*; Art 'Perfectibilists' Rivington's, 1874. *Many mystical divines have believed that a life of profound devotional contemplation leads on to such an union with God that all which is base and sinful in the Christian's soul becomes annihilated, and there ensues a superhuman degree of participation in the Divine perfection. Such a doctrine was held by the great mystic whose works pass under the name of Dionysius, and from him was handed down to the Quietist Hesychasts, the strict Franciscans, the Molinists, the Jansenists, and the German Mystics, from whom it passed on to the English Methodists, among whom it has always been a special tenet that sanctification may, and ought to, go on to perfection.*

- Richard Foster; emphasises mysticism in discipleship. The first edition of *Celebration of Discipline* was widely criticised and subsequent editions toned his message down.
- Brennan Manning; a Franciscan priest popularised by Frank Viola's writings.
- Frank Viola endorses the mystics and commends Contemplative Prayer.⁴
- Tim Keller endorses Roman and Quaker mystics and commends Contemplative Prayer and the *Lectio Divina* (amongst other things).⁵
- Liberal Catholic writers: Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Matthew Fox, Bernadette Roberts and Katherine Nelson.
- Many Charismatic books blatantly popularise mystical teachings and practices, claiming the mystics as their forebears. For example, John Wimber (a former Quaker) commended Ignatius Loyola and Teresa of Avila in *Power Evangelism*. In his seminars he commended many mystics including Morton Kelsey, Agnes Sanford and many Roman Catholic mystics. Other Charismatic works teach mysticism even though the writers have no clue what they are doing.

It is surprising that eminent Christian preachers endorse both modern and historical mystical works, For instance, Martyn Lloyd-Jones stated that John Tauler was almost evangelical and praised the effects of his preaching; his followers copied this stance. Yet one writer says: '*There is nothing whatsoever of the Atonement of Christ in Tauler. He does not preach an atoning Christ who has died as the substitute for the sins of His people, or who has brought reconciliation between a wrathful God and a repentant people, or who has served as the propitiation for our sins.*'⁶ Lloyd-Jones had a tendency to be attracted to effectual preachers even if their theology was suspect. Getting many people to swoon (as Tauler did) is not indicative of conversion. If Tauler did not preach the Biblical Gospel then his converts were not genuine Christians.

Short biographies of some principle 'Christian' mystics

Hildegard of Bingen

Hildegard was a German abbess and mystic who became the leader of a convent near Bingen. She experienced increasing numbers of visions as she aged. The Archbishop of Mainz authorised these and gave her a monk for a secretary. Pope Eugenius III also supported her.

The visions were recorded, such as in *Scivias*, but she also wrote on the lives of the saints, medicine, natural history, hymns and homilies. Through her printed work and correspondence she gained considerable influence far and wide, travelling throughout France and Germany. Though miracles were attributed to her, she was never canonised.

Meister Eckhart

Johannes Eckhart is considered the greatest German mystic of the Middle Ages whose mystical writings focused on the relationship of the individual soul to God and the mystical stages of union between the soul and God, exhorting men to seek the presence of God within themselves.

⁴ Contemplative (or centring) prayer is a modern mystical fad endorsed by several US New Calvinist evangelical leaders. It focuses on a felt presence of God in a prayer time achieved through various steps. It leans upon the teaching of Christian mystics, such as: The Cloud of Unknowing, St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila; but it was distilled into a simple method of prayer in the 1970's by three Trappist monks. This is basically emotionalism and nonsense, which feeds the self. Ordinary prayer rests upon faith that God is listening without any paraphernalia. Praying in the Spirit is praying with faith.

⁵ *Lectio Divina*, or Divine Reading involves meditative listening to the reading of Scripture. Keller's Redeemer church also recommends the 'Chaplet of the Divine Mercy,' a particular method of using a prayer rope (like a rosary); 'The way of the monk'; and various mystical books and methods, such as Ignatius Loyola's 'Spiritual Exercises'.

⁶ Alan Morrison, article: *The evangelical attraction to mysticism*.

He was a theologian born in Thuringia (Germany), of the Dominican order, influenced by Thomas Aquinas. He taught theology at Saint-Jacques's priory in Paris. In his late 30s Eckhart became vicar of Thuringia. In 1302 he received his master's degree in Paris and became known as 'Meister' Eckhart. In 1303 he became leader of the Dominicans in Saxony, and in 1306 was made vicar of Bohemia.

Despite of his popularity he came under investigation by the Roman Church and was falsely accused of a connection with the Beghards (male versions of the Beguines who led lives of religious devotion without joining an approved religious order) and charged with heresy.

Eckhart published a Defence and appealed to the papacy, then in Avignon. His appeal was denied in 1327 and Eckhart died shortly after. In 1329, Pope John XXII issued a bull condemning as heretical 28 of Eckhart's propositions.

After Eckhart's death, a popular mystical movement arose in Germany, heavily influenced by his works. In some respects he helped pave the way for the Reformation, though his theology was not evangelical. He may have been the first to write speculative German prose and he was a linguistic innovator, coining many abstract terms. As a result, German became the language of popular tracts instead of Latin, something utilised by Luther.

Eckhart found favour much later in the 20th century, particularly among some Marxist theorists and Zen Buddhists. He is noted for bridging Scholasticism with mysticism.

Teresa of Avila

Teresa was a Carmelite nun, born into a good Spanish family and educated by Augustinian nuns. She entered the Carmelite Convent of the Incarnation in 1533 but had to leave due to illness. She re-entered and in the 1550s sought a life of perfection. She then began to have visions and ecstasies.

In 1562 she founded a convent at Avila, writing her first work, '*The Way of Perfection*', as instruction for her nuns. She travelled Spain founding houses for nuns and friars and was assisted by John of the Cross. She wrote several other works, including an autobiography. '*The Interior Castle*' denoted the life of prayer and meditation, noting the intermediate mystical stages of mystical marriage. She was noted for working hard, reforming her order and doing practical good deeds.

John of the Cross

John was a Spanish mystic born, Juan de Ypez y Alvarez, in Castille from a poor background.

He entered the Carmelite monastery at Medina del Campo in 1563 and studied at Salamanca, being ordained in 1567. He was dissuaded from joining the Carthusians by Teresa of Avila and copied her reforms among the friars. He then became the master of the Carmelite College at Alcala de Henares, then confessor of the Convent of the Incarnation at Avila.

He was imprisoned for his reforms in 1577 at Toledo where he started, '*The Spiritual Canticle*'. He escaped after nine months, which caused a separation in the Carmelite order (Calced and Discalced). He founded the 'Discalced Carmelites' with Teresa.

He was the rector of the college at Baeza between 1579 and 1581 then prior at Segovia from 1588. In this period he went to Granada and became familiar with the Arabian mystics. Partly inspired by Aquinas, he wrote the famous '*Dark Night of the Soul*' and finished the *Canticle* plus '*The Living Flame of Love*'.

Distrusted by his superiors he was removed from the friary at La Penuela to Ubeda where he died from inhumane treatment. He was canonised in 1726.

Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite

The real Dionysius the Areopagite was a convert of Paul during his visit to Athens (Acts 17:34); a member of the council of the Areopagus, who later became bishop of Athens.

Pseudo-Dionysius was a 5th or 6th century writer whose works were originally attributed to the other Dionysius. These books made a big impact on medieval theologians, including endorsements by popes. He inspired Hugh St-Victor, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas and Dionysius the Carthusian. The Platonists of the Italian Renaissance, John Colet, Dante and John Milton also supported him.

His works include: *The Celestial Hierarchy* (the mediation of angels to man), *The Divine Names*, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, and a book on mystical theology describing the ascent of the soul to union with God. He also wrote important letters to priests and monks.

He reveals knowledge of Plotinus, Proclus and other Neoplatonists and familiarity with the Bible. Essentially he taught a syncretism between Scripture and Neoplatonism.

He teaches a union between man and God, and man's progressive deification when the soul abandons both the senses and rational thought. Illumination of the soul brings knowledge and closeness to God. He also taught that God relates to the world through a series of angels according to the hierarchy of the church who lead man to deification, The key stages of illumination are purgative, illuminative and unitive degrees.

John Tauler

Tauler was a German Dominican monk influenced by Eckhart and Thomism. He only wrote in German, never Latin, and his sermons were mostly preached to nuns, in a simple style using local metaphors and imagery. However, his mystical teaching would dominate the 14th and 15th centuries. His surviving sermons emphasise the indwelling of God in the human soul and detail the mystic way as practising virtue in humility. Union is not to be desired for its own sake but for the benefits it brings to the soul.

Tauler transformed the elitist academic approach to mystical spirituality, turning it into a practical form of Christianity, with high personal demands. He described what it meant to really be a Christian. He modelled this approach in the Black Death (1348) when he devoted himself to the sick. At one point he stopped ministering and meditated for two years, which produced remarkable results.

Luther read him with profit in his early years.

Catherine of Siena

Caterina Benincasa became a Dominican tertiary⁷ aged 16. She had a vision aged 17 whereupon she vowed her virginity to Christ.

She gathered a group of supporters in Siena (clerical and lay), from 1368, through her spirituality, particularly ecstatic prayer and pastoral power to reconcile people. Out of this came many famous pastoral letters. In 1375 in Pisa she received the stigmata. After 1378 she remained in Rome working toward unity (after the 'Babylonian Captivity')⁸ in support

⁷ A member of the Third Order; nuns who live in the world not a commune.

⁸ When popes removed to Avignon. The term was used satirically (e.g. Dante and Petrarch) suggesting that the pope was under the control of French kings. The truth is that they were there because Italy was unsafe and their work was not restricted.

of pope Urban VI. For her tireless work she (and Francis of Assisi) were named the chief patron saints of Italy by pope Pius XII. She was canonised in 1461.

Her chief sources were Augustine, Bernard and Aquinas.

Comment

Individualism

One of the attractions of mysticism is its strong individualism. If you read mystics they will often denounce formal religion or castigate any type of creed.

A priest once quoted to me the Roman saying that a religion is dead when the priests laugh at each other across the altar. I always laugh at the altar, be it Christian, Hindu, or Buddhist, because real religion is the transformation of anxiety into laughter.⁹

Thus even where there were prominent and accepted national religions, say Hinduism in India, individual mystical groups would emerge over time that avoided the paraphernalia and rituals of the religion for a heart/soul mystical faith (e.g. *The Upanishads*). Sometimes these birthed a new religion that encouraged individualism (such as Zen from Buddhism).

Though Christian mystics were attached to the Roman church, they too challenged people to live a life of individualistic devotion to God. Their teachings were mostly regarding issues separate to the church, which is why they were popular. Attending the formal church rituals was not enough; people wanted to feel God and mystical teachings filled the need for this. Thus the challenges to personal devotion, discipline, asceticism etc.

Mysticism has, therefore, always been popular with people who wish to do something different from the crowd. Thus the modern New Age popularity, which has a mystical path for just about every possible type of person. If you don't like Zen, then there is Hindu mysticism. If you like Hinduism but not all the rituals and idol worship you can adopt Transcendental Meditation. If you don't like that there is Native American shamanism. Failing that there is Sufism. If you want to be more exotic and British there is Wiccan mysticism. Avoiding that you can delve into Rosicrucianism or Theosophy; and so on ad infinitum.

Thus the mystic finds his own path, cobbled together by bits of knowledge and discipline from here and there, and determines to find God within himself on his own. This is attractive to people who do not wish to conform to a religion or submit to a teacher.

Christian mystics

Many of the most famous medieval mystics were Christian mystics. What these essentially did was to formulate a syncretism between Christian ideals and truths with occult practices and methods. Thus the principle issue was to promote a subjective personal investigation using various practices (such as asceticism or relentless praying). The aim was to eliminate the self-life and find God within. It was an inward journey instead of seeking God through revelation in his word. Dying to the flesh was attained by subjective emotional experiences not by practical self-denial and repentance. Rationality was abandoned.

A further problem with Christian mystics is that they take certain Biblical truths and texts, which are entirely for the born-again believer, and apply them to everybody without exception. This is casting pearls before swine. Truths that are only for those who are regenerated cannot be enjoyed by those lost in sin.

The principle problem with mystical experiences is that the heart is deceitful and the old nature corrupted by sin so that no discovery is what it seems and the only result is an

⁹ Alan Wilson Watts.

emotional experience leading to greater passivity and loss of self-control. These can indeed give feelings of ecstasy but such are of no value in checking the flesh or revealing God.

Modern day Charismatics are following exactly the same path and yielding the same results. The more you delve inwards, using disciplined methods, the more you are open to satanic temptation through the old nature.

The pendulum effect in history

Christian mystics often prevailed during periods of reaction to cold scholasticism where people wanted a personal experience of God instead of rational teaching. The Biblical method is that a disciple develops both in the pursuit of truth through rational means but also a personal growing experience of God in his heart at the same time.

Church history can be traced through the pendulum effect of a drift towards scholasticism (emphasis on the rational mind) followed by a drift towards mysticism (emphasis on the heart and spirit), and then back again. At the moment we are in a period favouring Charismatic mysticism after a period of cold dogmatic theology [See Appendix One.]

Practical effect

Some mystics sought to use mystical methods that increased personal piety to eventually promote charitable works (e.g. Tauler or Catherine of Siena). However, the effect of most mystics was a withdrawal from the world, usually into a monastery, a cave or atop a pillar. In other words, the mysticism had no positive effect on society but merely titillated the mystic with ecstatic feelings.

Amongst secular mystics it was often the case that mystical practices led to the ruination of the person (such as consequent on taking drugs or ascetic practices leading to ill health).

Many mystics through the ages have not actually done anything but have been supported by their followers. In many modern cases they have become rich (e.g. Guru Maharaj Ji of the Divine Light Mission had fleets of limousines and lived in luxury in America; another example is Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh [now Osho]). Even the more moderate and altruistic Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (founder of Transcendental Meditation) ended up rich; the reported value of his organisation was estimated as billions of dollars, and in 2008 the value of his U.S. assets was \$300 million. John Lennon quickly saw through him and wrote the critical song *Sexy Sadie* about him on the *White Album*.

Biblical doctrines denied by mysticism

Total Depravity

Mystics fail to understand that the heart is desperately corrupt (Jer 17:9) and that man's inner tendency is towards evil always (Gen 6:5). Man is dead in sin (Eph 2:1) and unable to do any spiritual good (Rm 3:10-18).

The more you delve inwards in an introspective journey you will not find God but an utterly depraved old nature. This means that every aspect of the human personality has been corrupted by sin. It does not mean that every man is a sociopath and depraved in an outward expression of wickedness, but that every department of man is rendered unable to do good because of sin. Thus no man can find God without grace.

Conversely, mystics claim that all men universally have God within them and that the deepest root of their self is actually God. This deep root is connected to the universal cosmos and the Supreme Being.

Mysticism: root of man is God. Scripture: root of man is a depraved heart.

Personal sin

In the Bible sin is transgression of the divine law. Thus the individual commits many sins which stack up in God's memory and which require either punishment or salvation. Thus Job says,

How many *are* my iniquities and sins? Make me know my transgression and my sin. Job 13:23

And David could say,

Blessed *is he whose* transgression *is* forgiven, *whose* sin *is* covered. Blessed *is* the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity. Ps 32:1-2

Conversely, mystics deny personal sin as wrongdoing and see sin as the self-life itself. The individual consciousness that is separated from God (which needs to be overcome by mystical disciplines) is sin. Removal of sin is the ascent up the mystical ladder to regain union with God by dying to self.

Mysticism: sin either does not exist or is the self-life. Scripture: sin is personal transgression of God's law needing forgiveness.

Unconditional election

The Bible explains that the only people who come to know God are those he has chosen in eternity. These are called 'the elect'. This means that a person who is not elect can never find God whatever he does. However, sinners have no desire to find God because they are lost in their sins, which they greatly enjoy.

Mysticism: God is known by those who ascend the mystic ladder. Scripture: God is known by those he has chosen and saved.

Definite atonement provided by a penal substitute

The hinge-pin of salvation in Scripture is that the Lord Jesus Christ has merited salvation for the elect as a result of his substitutionary sufferings on the cross. This atoning work provides a propitiation of God's wrath against sinners and a remission of sins in those included in the atonement (the elect).

Mystics fail to interact with this doctrine at all and ignore the need of a Mediator, claiming to be able to commune with God without means. Thus all mysticism is blasphemy in that it denies the central feature of God's glorious salvation.

Mystics do not seek to commune with God by looking to Christ and embracing his redemption but rather by an inward investigation and dying to self, promoted by various disciplines.

Mysticism: union with God is by mystical disciplines. Scripture: union with God is through the work of Christ who died for the sins of the elect.

Justification

In Scripture justification is the crucial act in time that precedes adoption, sanctification and union with Christ. Thus justification leads to experiencing the very goal sought by mystics – union with God. However, mystics deny that there is any need for justification since they deny a devil and deny personal iniquity.

The sinner needs to be made righteous and declared forgiven in heaven. This is the key result of the atonement of Christ; it leads to justification, whereby Christ's righteousness is imputed to the sinner and the sinner's sin is imputed to Christ, who died for it. None of this is necessary for the mystic who seeks to delve into his soul to find God and commune with him with no external work involved.

Many supposed Christian mystics ignored, denied or castigated justification by faith [e.g. the inspirationist Caspar Schwenkfeld].

Justification by faith is the bedrock of Christianity (as Luther observed). If a person or group denies or opposes it then you have a ready-made test of deception, which they have failed.

Mysticism: no justification necessary. Scripture: justification is crucial.

Irresistible grace

The beginning of Christian conversion (the application of salvation by the Spirit in the individual) is the calling of God through the Gospel preached. This is God reaching out to the chosen sinner with grace (unmerited kindness). Through no good work of his own, the sinner is called by God, given grace to believe and repent and is converted.

The beginning of the mystical journey to find God is the work of the sinner striving by his own protracted efforts to gain union. Mysticism is works salvation; Christianity is salvation by grace.

Mysticism: the beginning of union is the work of man. Scripture: the beginning of salvation is the work of God.

Denial of the word of God

God's own word says that Scripture alone is the key resource for men to know God and to grow in grace:

The Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Tim 3:15-17

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures. Rm 16:25-26

The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes. Ps 19:7-8

Mysticism: God's word is either ignored, downplayed, twisted or denied in favour of the inner light. Scripture: God's objective word (Scripture) is vital in salvation and growth in grace.

Denial of the mediatorial role of Christ

God has provided a Mediator to enable man to have fellowship with him. Without this Mediator there is no covenant between man and God,

There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom. 1 Tim 2:5-6

The Bible tells us that if one does not have Christ then one has no spiritual life at all, This is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 1 Jn 5:11-12

Most mystics do not seek to know Christ and they ignore the Gospel by which he is known. Instead they seek to discover the depths of their own self-life searching for God. Consequently, mystics have no life and their experiences are a lie. Of them Jesus said, You are not willing to come to me that you may have life. Jn 5:40

Mysticism: man needs no mediator since he is god. Scripture: salvation is dependent upon a Mediator between man and God.

Denial of the devil and evil

Because mystics deny a personal devil (since the lying doctrinal basis of mysticism was promoted by the devil for centuries) they fail to see that the experiences they gain are deceptions based upon seeing the devil pretend to be God. The Bible warns about this,

Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness. 2 Cor 11:14-15

The experiences and ecstasies of mysticism are not God and do not lead to God; instead they lead towards the devil. By denying the very existence of the devil, mystics open themselves up to terrible danger.

Mysticism: there is no devil. Scripture: the devil is real and a threat that must be resisted.

Denial of the creaturehood of man

Mystics teach that God is in man, all men, and many 'Christian' mystics claim the same. At the very least they claim that a divine spark is in all men. Thus during the Reformation Servetus and Osiander claimed that in the creation of the human soul by God's breath, the very spirit and substance of God was conveyed into man. This is absurd, since the essence of God is incommunicable; the infinite cannot be placed in the finite. Scripture is at pains to state that man is dust and to dust he returns (Job 34:15; Ps 22:29, 104:29; Eccles 3:20, 12:6-7); hardly anything infinite about that.

Mysticism: man is god. Scripture: man is a created being.

Denial of what union with God is

The goal of the mystic is union with God. Though this is variously expressed and some mystics avoid personal names for the supreme force in the cosmos, the goal is still the same – personal union so that the individuals become God, or a little god. Indeed, most mystics teach that man is God in that God is within all men. Just a moment's logic will show that this is foolish.

God (by any standard) is infinite. All his attributes are infinite as well as perfect and self-dependent. It is impossible that man, as a mere created being, can sustain infinity in any capacity. God cannot be restricted to the size of a man and man cannot reach the infinite capacity of God. Therefore, whatever the mystic communes in his soul with – it is not God but something pretending to be God.

The Christian does have the hope of partaking in the nature of God:

... exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature. 2 Pt 1:4

The word 'partaker' here means, 'a partner, associate, sharer, comrade, companion'; it does not mean to possess the same being. Christians share the nature of God in a delegated way that involves no infinitude. Some quotes may be helpful here:

[Partaking in the divine nature] is not by identity or union with the divine essence, but by a transformation into the divine likeness. Thus you see how God differs from other spirits, angels and souls of men. He is a Spirit of transcendent excellence, the 'Father of spirits.'¹⁰

This union does not involve any mysterious confusion of the person of Christ with the persons of his people.¹¹

[Not] a union of essence, which destroys the distinct personality and subsistence of either Christ or the human spirit — as held by many of the mystics.¹²

[The Christian is] still a separate person, a responsible free agent, and a man, not a God. The idea of a personal or substantial union would imply the deification of man, which is profane and unmeaning.¹³

¹⁰ Thomas Watson; *Body of Divinity*, on The Being Of God.

¹¹ AA Hodge; *The Confession of Faith*, Union of Believers in Christ; question 5.

¹² Augustus Strong; *Systematic Theology*, Union with Christ: B Direct statements, 2, A, c

¹³ RL Dabney; *Lectures in Systematic Theology*; C38, Union to Christ, 4. The Union Illustrated.

So, the basic premise of the mystics is entirely false. Furthermore, the promise of sharing in the nature of God is only addressed to born-again believers, not to the whole world (which is the claim of the mystics).

Mysticism: union with God within is through mystical disciplines. Scripture: Christians are united to God in Christ; God is their Father but they never share the infinite being of God.

Denial of the uniqueness of Christianity

Mystics follow what has been called 'the Perennial Truth'; that is, mysticism has been around since the beginning of man's rebellion against God in one guise or another. The pagan principles of mysticism simply get morphed from one sect to another and from one religion to another, sometimes changing slightly in the process in external disciplines. Thus Christian mysticism is nothing but pagan mysticism dressed up. Sometimes this is done deliberately;

The endeavours to introduce Oriental forms of meditation in Christian spirituality... deserve sympathetic attention and encouragement.¹⁴

Whether or not Christian mystics accept this, secular philosophers certainly do, The Christian [mystical] experience is basically the same as that which is described in the Mandukya Upanishad.¹⁵

Thus the extreme effects produced by the recent mystical phenomena in the Toronto Blessing are exactly the same as that produced by Hindu Kundalini yoga.

Mysticism is syncretistic and denies the Christian revelation of God; the uniqueness of Christ, the uniqueness of his atonement; the uniqueness of the Scriptures and the uniqueness of the church.

Mysticism: is essentially the same everywhere at all times in all religions. Scripture: Christianity is unique; there is only salvation in Christ alone.

Effects of mysticism

Because mysticism is a satanic lie, in fact it is the regurgitation of the original satanic lie in Eden that man can be like God through his own effort, then the effects of adopting mysticism will be the furthering of the devilish plan. Make no mistake; mysticism is a central plank in the devil's war against God.

It will lead to ecumenism

Note that the basic principles of mysticism are universal. Throughout history all branches of religion have formed mystical disciplines. As time went on so new movements copied earlier mystical features and amended them to their own design.

¹⁴ *The New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Vol XIV, p1117.

¹⁵ WT Stace; *Mysticism and Philosophy*, Collins, 1960, p100. Zen Buddhist, DT Suzuki, in *Mysticism: Christian & Buddhist* (Pelican), equates Zen Buddhism with Meister Eckhart's ideas.

Thus the mysticism that prevailed in Medieval Romanism was merely the adoption of mystical principles that had been earlier evidenced in Hinduism, Eastern mystical sects, Greek philosophy, Gnosticism and so on.

It is noteworthy that modern 'evangelical' mystics, such as John Wimber, began by commending historical mystics and ended by forming alliances with the Roman Church. The common link was the mystics, such as Teresa of Avila and Ignatius Loyola.

Satan wants to develop a unified world religion that will support a global dictatorship at the end. Part of the means of doing this is promoting mysticism, which breaks down barriers between formally antagonistic groups.

It leads to subjectivism and demonic control

The mystic determines his truth by his subjective experiences rather than external knowledge. This is contrary to the Christian position which centres truth in apprehension of God's objective word revealed in the Bible.

The mystic develops his theology around experiences; the Christian develops a theology from understanding Scripture and uses that to judge experiences.

The more a person falls into subjectivism, the more passive and suggestible he is. When a company all become passive then Satan can influence the whole group with little effort. The more companies adopt mysticism, the more Satan can manipulate society.

It promotes selfishness

Mystics spend their time naval gazing. As such, apart from a very few examples, they are not contributors to a better society but are fixated on their own inner lives. In history most mystics survived by receiving alms from other people (often poor people).

Conversely the Christian is commanded to do good to all and to make a positive contribution to society, such as in preaching the Gospel and giving alms.

It leads to weakness and instability

Jesus told us that it is the truth which sets us free; thus the believer is to magnify the truth and study it always. It is the means of growth for the believer being like food for his soul. Therefore, those who reject the word of God, and look for their truth elsewhere, will have no food for their soul and no freedom either.

Without the truth there is always bondage. The mystic is in bondage to the devil, the originator of mystical doctrines. Thus any Christian who falls into the temptation of mysticism will become unstable by virtue of failing to feed on God's word alone. But he will also be brought into bondage since he is following a lie.

This is often evidenced in contemporary Charismatics who have fallen into modern mystical experiences (such as the Toronto Blessing). Those who went headlong into the fleshly experiences of this madness tended to become unstable, filled with doubts and fears.

It leads to sin

Any movement which follows the devil will be led into sin, since following the enemy is rebellion against God. The further one proceeds in mysticism the further one falls away from Christ.

Conclusion

The devil's original temptation was to get man off the ground of faith in God's word and seek to gain salvation by self-effort. This is the basis for all mysticism. The many variations found in different religions are superficial; the ground is essentially trying to find God by subjective human effort and discipline.

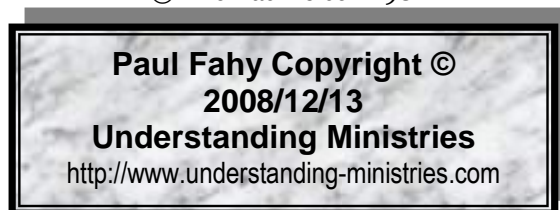
That any Christian could have adopted these methods is staggering and my view is that the vast majority was not Christian at all. The devotion of some mystics to Christ (such as Mme. Guyon) is so obvious that, although steeped in error, they appear to be misguided but genuine believers. Like the Galatians, such were adding fleshly works to salvation and thus grieving the Spirit.

Now the literary, poetic and imaginative flourishes of some Christian mystics can be attractive to certain minds, but they will do no good, being unbiblical in fundamental areas of the faith. There is a type of person that enjoys the subjectivity, emotionalism, passivity and attempt at mystical union with God but this must be rejected as an anti-Scriptural approach. The true believer needs no subjective attempt to mystical union; he has it already in Christ by faith.

The phenomena, and resulting casualties, of the Toronto Blessing have given us a good idea of what occurred in similar mystical revivals in history and we are much more able to comment as a result. Sentimental, wistful looking back to past ages where many fell to the floor after a sermon previously led some people (like Martyn Lloyd-Jones¹⁶) to support what we now clearly understand to be mystical false fire.¹⁷ This sort of behaviour has accompanied many false movements throughout history in the ecclesiastical and secular world. Thus we should be wise about attempts to bring mysticism into the church.

Mysticism is a multi-faceted delusion that emerged from man's rebellion at Babel, developed in Babylonian false, occult religion and then subsisted within many other religious systems. Its continual incursions into Christian teaching and practice is heretical and downright dangerous. It is demonic in essence and must be rejected in all forms.

Scripture quotations are from The New King James Version
© Thomas Nelson 1982



¹⁶ Tauler once preached in a cathedral and forty people fell to the floor in the churchyard and could not be raised up for some time. This was considered by MLJ and others to be a sign of powerful preaching and it was just assumed that the fallen were converted. Toronto has shown us that many can fall to the floor and not one be converted because it is just the utilisation of mystical techniques.

¹⁷ This sort of mysticism was evident, for example, in the 1904 Welsh Revival and the 1859 Irish Revival, to say nothing of Methodism and Azusa Street.

Appendix One

The pendulum effect in history

Emotionalism	Biblical balance	Intellectualism
Montanism [2 nd c]	←	
	→	Gnosticism [2 nd – 3 rd c]
Monasticism [3 rd – 10 th c]	←	
	→	Scholasticism [11 th – 14 th c]
Medieval mysticism [13 th -15 th c]	←	
	→	The Reformation [16 th – 17 th c]
Pietism, Quietism, Quakerism, Shakerism & Methodism [17 th –19 th c]	←	
	→	Liberalism [19 th – 20 th c]
Pentecostalism & Charismaticism [20 th –21 st c]	←	

Scripture quotations are from The New King James Version
© Thomas Nelson 1982

Paul Fahy Copyright © 2008/12
Understanding Ministries
<http://www.understanding-ministries.com>