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IS THERE A TRUE, CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM?

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NOTHING could be more serviceable at the beginning of an inquiry like this than a definition. Indeed, if we are to avoid losing ourselves in a misty cloud of words, a definition is indispensable. And yet, a definition is practically impossible. There have been so many schools of mystics, there have been so many varieties of mystical teachings, some entirely incompatible with others, that to construct a definition satisfactory to all mystics is a task quite beyond the most acute and ingenious mind. Confronted by this dilemma, what shall we do? This seems to be at least a practical suggestion: let us seize, if possible, upon that which is common to all forms of mysticism, that fundamental doctrine on which all mystical systems have been built, and see if this is not capable of precise definition, of searching criticism, of exact appraisement.

This essential, fundamental doctrine of mysticism may be put into the form of a simple thesis: it is possible for man to have direct, immediate, intuitive knowledge of God. And, as this knowledge cannot be supposed to be barren, there follows the possibility that God can and does directly communicate to men an idea, an emotion or a power not otherwise attainable. To the saying of Tennyson,

We have but faith: we cannot know;
For knowledge is of things we see;

every mystic returns a denial, emphatic, unqualified. He pronounces this antithesis between faith and knowledge untrue to fact, and affirms that knowledge is not confined to what is received through the physical senses. All forms of mysticism are developments of this thesis. If this falls, mysticism has no longer any sure foundation; if this is valid, mysticism rests on solid rock, though some of its superstructure may require reconstruction.

Before we proceed further, let us take careful note of one important distinction. This fundamental thesis of mysticism is by no means the same as the contention of some that the existence of God is a first and necessary truth. This latter is the view set forth in the treatise on *Systematic Theology* by Pres. Augustus H. Strong, D.D., of Rochester. It does not at all concern us now to make examination of this theory, but it does concern us much to see clearly that the existence of God is an idea, a concept, while the thesis of the mystic is based upon a supposed fact of consciousness. Whether the idea of the existence of God belongs, as an idea, in the same category with the axioms of mathematics, is doubtless a very interesting question, but one not at all germane to our present inquiry. The mystic does not greatly concern himself with any of the arguments to prove the existence of God, or to explain the origin of any concept about him; his thesis goes back of all that; he professes to know God as existing, and if his claim can be substantiated, arguments to prove the existence of God are superfluous, or, at any rate, supplementary.

The first question that a Christian will naturally ask concerning this, or any like thesis, is, What have the Scriptures to say about it? Memory will instantly furnish forth a store of passages in which we are said to "know" God, or to have "knowledge" of God, and the concordance will supply a large additional number. But just here let us be cautious. It is safer to set aside at

once all these and like texts as inconclusive, and for this reason: the Bible is not a treatise on psychology and metaphysics. We are now using the words "know" and "knowledge" in their settled philosophical meaning, but we cannot be certain that the Scripture writers ever use them in that sense—or, rather, may we not be reasonably certain that they did not? All separate texts therefore, that seem to support the mystic's thesis we are safer to disregard, and come to a broader interrogation of Scripture. Doing this, we cannot proceed far without discovering that the Christian is necessarily a mystic to a certain extent, to a considerable extent. He cannot be other, without a denial of cardinal facts in his own experience, and a corresponding denial of three distinctive doctrines of the Christian faith: regeneration, union with Christ, sanctification. Each of these doctrines necessarily implies the direct action of God the Holy Spirit upon the human soul. Inexpugnable facts of consciousness confirm the doctrines; they are the deepest, the most sacred, the least questioned and least questionable of all our religious experiences. If these are real facts of consciousness and not mere subjective illusions or delusions—and no Christian has the least doubt or misgiving on this point—then mysticism in some form and to some extent must be true.

The phenomena of prophecy and inspiration necessitate a like conclusion, for they are conditioned upon the possibility of man's having a direct knowledge of God. If there could be a divine revelation to the prophets, not accomplished by a bodily appearance of God or the hearing of audible voices, then the possibility of immediate knowledge of God by all men follows of necessity. If this be not true, how could the prophet be assured that his supposed revelation was genuine? Or granting that in some way he obtained assurance for himself, how can he convey like assurance to us? For, if he had no imme-

diate knowledge of God, if God did not speak directly and unmistakably to his soul, prophecy is reduced to nothing more than those solemn convictions of truth that all of us entertain, with more or less of frequency and certitude. If there was no immediate knowledge of God by the apostles, then the inspiration of the New Testament writers is no more than such religious exaltation as all of us know. That is to say, in the absence of immediate knowledge of God there is no rational proof that the content of prophecy or inspiration is more than this. No man can be certain there is more—the prophets and apostles themselves could not have been certain of possessing more.

One reply sometimes made is: “But it is conceded that prophecy and inspiration are special gifts.” The reply completely misses the point. Special gifts, like ordinary gifts, can be bestowed only upon those capable of receiving them. If there are no means of direct communication between God and man, if man is made in the image of God and yet God cannot speak to man so that man knows God as speaking, then the bestowal of special gifts of prophecy and inspiration was no more possible two thousand years ago than it is now. Or, if the bestowal was possible, it was still impossible that those who received the gifts should certainly know their source. Is not the poet nearer to the truth than many theologians, when he sings:

Speak to him thou for he hears, and Spirit with spirit can meet—
Closer is he than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

There is then a solid Scriptural basis for mysticism, a much stronger basis than could be furnished by any accumulation of mere proof-texts. Its basis is, in fact, the same as the basis of the Scriptures themselves, in so far as these are a revelation from God, unless we are to exhaust the word “revelation” of all real significance.

To deny the fundamental tenet or thesis of the mystic, is to take out of the Bible all that is distinctively Christian, and reduce the Christian religion to a purely naturalistic basis.

What says psychology to the thesis of the mystic? Before answering let us do away with possible misapprehension by noting that psychology returns an emphatic negative to some assumptions of some mystics. There is no separate organ or faculty for the apprehension of religious truth, as distinguished from other truth. "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned" does not imply the possession of such a faculty. Psychology and common sense alike cast suspicion on much vague rhapsody of mystical writers. Real facts of consciousness are capable of precise and definite statement. What is vague and shadowy is, so far, unreal. The ineffable knowledge and ineffable experience of which certain mystics have so much to say are simply ineffable bosh. Nevertheless, the fact that much fanaticism and folly have been mingled with mysticism should not prevent us from discovering whatever truth may be contained in it.

Psychology does recognize the validity of the facts of consciousness to which the mystic appeals. Many who will read these words are perfectly conscious of their experience of regeneration; they know the day and the hour when that great change occurred in themselves, as they know nothing else in all their lives. And what they were conscious of was this: that a mighty spiritual Power came into contact with their spirits and wrought this change. Consciousness testifies with equal clearness to the fact of the change, and to its being wrought by a Power not themselves. This analysis of consciousness is unimpeachable. Christians the world over, in countless multitudes, have testified to these facts. There is no such thing as a successful disputing of their validity,

and any psychology that does not take account of them is a narrow, mutilated, false psychology.

So as to union with Christ, or communion with God, as many mystics prefer to call it. The facts of consciousness are unquestionable also. A cloud of witnesses rises up to testify to the reality of such communion; and to one who has had such experiences there is no other reality of which he can be half so certain. The greatest of the apostles has left on record (2 Cor. 12:2-4) what is easily the most wonderful experience of the Christian ages, but there are modern instances that are sufficiently striking. Here is such an experience:

I stood alone with him who had made me . . . I did not seek him, but felt the perfect union of my spirit with his. The ordinary sense of things about me faded . . . The perfect stillness of the night was thrilled by a more solemn silence. The darkness held a presence that was all the more felt because it was not seen. I could not any more have doubted that he was there than that I was. Indeed, I felt myself to be, if possible, the less real of the two. My highest faith in God and truest idea of him were then born in me . . . Having once felt the presence of God's spirit, I have never lost it again for long. My most assuring evidence of his existence is deeply rooted in that hour of vision.¹

Here is another, quite as typical:

I experienced a feeling of being raised above myself. I felt the presence of God . . . as if his goodness and his power were penetrating me altogether . . . I thanked God that in the course of my life he had taught me to know him . . . I begged him ardently that my life might be consecrated to the doing of his will . . . I felt his reply, which was that I should do his will from day to day, in humility and poverty, leaving him, the Almighty God, to be judge of whether I should some time be called to bear witness more conspicuously. Then slowly the ecstasy left my heart; that is, I felt that God had withdrawn the communion which he had granted. The impression had been so profound that in climbing slowly the slope I asked myself if it were possible that Moses on Sinai could have had a more intimate communication with God . . . God was present, though invisible; he fell under no one of my senses, yet my consciousness perceived him.²

Instances like these might be accumulated to any extent—a volume could easily be made up of testimonies of this sort. Psychology must recognize the existence in many individuals of these mystical states; the only

¹ Quoted by James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 66, 67.

² *Ibid.*, p. 68.

possible question is as to the validity of these deliverances of consciousness. As to that, this fact must be taken into consideration: that to those who have had these experiences they are the most real things in their lives, more convincing than any facts witnessed by the senses, more certain than any conclusions that can be established by logic. Necessarily so, for to such these are facts certified by consciousness. To such, these are genuine perceptions of the truth, which no kind of adverse argument can disprove. When you have once known a thing, you can never not know it; what you have clearly seen you can never again not see. All the psychology and theology in the world can never deprive a man of what he has himself experienced and known, and so far as they try to do so they are false psychology and false theology.

Again, with regard to sanctification, there are equally well-attested facts of consciousness. Who has not heard, not once or twice merely, but a score of times, a testimony to this effect? "I was prone to the commission of a certain sin. Again and again I fought against it, and fell. I went to God on a certain day in an agony of soul, and prayed that he would give me the victory over sin, and he heard my prayer. I was distinctly conscious that the desire for that particular sin left me then and there, and I have never since had the slightest inclination towards it." Men have been permanently cured of the appetite for strong drink in this way; some have been completely delivered from a vicious habit of profanity, against which they had long struggled in vain—cured completely and at once, as their lives gave witness afterward. Many readers of these words, though their experiences may have been less marked, less dramatic than those just described, have not the less certainly known themselves progressing in sanctification through the power of God's Spirit. Psychology recognizes the validity of these facts;

it must recognize them, for they are capable of proof by unimpeachable human testimony, and they rest upon states of consciousness that cannot be rejected without invalidating all the deliverances of consciousness.

Then there is prayer. Nobody can pray without being in some sense a mystic. A man can "say prayers" without being anything or believing in anything, but genuine prayer is nothing else than communion with God. It is the most vital element of religion, the one act without which religion is either a mass of dead dogmas or a system of ethical precepts.

By prayer "the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

Religion, said Matthew Arnold, is morality touched by emotion. Mr. Arnold was on the right track, but he did not go far enough. Religion is doctrine and ethics vitalized; and the life essential to genuine religion, as it must be originated by divine power, so it can be sustained only by intercourse with the divine Life through prayer. Such intercourse must be real, not illusory, vital not formal; and that such intercourse can take place without any perception of it by the human consciousness is too absurd a proposition for refutation. Once more: if we are to obtain and maintain a divine life in the soul, we must obtain it from God, and it can be maintained only by conscious communion with God. Every Christian who has learned what prayer really is, whatever he may call himself, whatever theological or philosophical theory he may hold, is so far a mystic. He who has never felt the presence of God in his own soul as an unmistakable reality, has never prayed—he has only uttered words, at most he has only lifted up his soul in vain aspiration. He may have a philosophy, a theology, an ethics, but he has no religion.

You have doubtless noticed how hymnologists have solved many a problem over which theologians endless-

ly dispute, and in a way as efficient as simple have brought about a union of warring schools. So soon as the Arminian essays Christian song and takes as his theme man's salvation, he instinctively falls into the idiom of the Calvinist; while the Calvinist, so soon as he sings of the gospel and its invitations to sinners, as inevitably and naturally adopts the vocabulary of the Arminian. And so our Christian hymn-writers of all schools, though they may be railers at mysticism when they speak in the terms of theology or metaphysics, the moment they begin to sing of the soul's highest experiences, of the life that is hid with Christ in God, of human fellowship with the divine, of the soul drawing near to God in prayer, by their deeds they make unanimous confession that there is no adequate vehicle for their thoughts but the language of the mystic.

We have still to consider the philosophical objection to mysticism. There are those who admit substantially all that has been thus far said, namely, that these witnesses of mystics to their experiences are valid facts of consciousness, but nevertheless insist that the mystic misinterprets the testimony of consciousness. He knows a certain change in himself that we call regeneration, but he does not know God as causing that change. He has certain spiritual states that he perhaps rightly attributes to union with Christ as a cause, but he does not actually know himself as united to Christ. He can trace in himself a gradual increase in holiness of character, and he is doubtless right in ascribing this to the action of the Holy Spirit, but this is an inference, not a fact of consciousness—he does not actually know the Holy Spirit in the act of sanctifying him. If this objection is valid, the thesis of the mystic is refuted.

As to the validity of this objection, there is only this to be said: theology divides into two great schools over this problem, just as philosophy divides over the problem

of knowledge in general. As to the general theory of knowing, the idealist declares that what we know is nothing else than a series of sensations, purely subjective. Something is going on which we are compelled to refer to matter as a cause. The existence of an external universe is therefore purely a hypothesis, and all that we can really assert of matter is that it is a permanent possibility of sensation. The realist, on the contrary, insists that consciousness bears testimony to something more than sensation; we are conscious of contact with something not ourselves that is the source of the sensation. The Ego does not merely *think* the non-Ego, it *knows*. The external universe is not a mere hypothesis, it is an object of knowledge. Just so is it in theology, which has to solve a similar problem, the knowledge of God. The theological idealist says: You do not really know God, but certain religious emotions, states of consciousness, which you refer to God as a cause. This is inference, hypothesis, faith, call it what you will, only you must not call it knowledge. Not so, says the mystic, the theological realist; consciousness testifies not merely to religious emotions, but to the contact of the human spirit with a Spirit, not ourselves, who is the cause of those emotions. It is a question as to the true interpretation of the religious consciousness, and to the end of time men will differ regarding the problem of religious knowledge, precisely as they differ in the theory of knowing in general. Christian thinkers will continue to range themselves on the one side or the other of this question, less because of the logical force of the arguments advanced pro and con, than in accordance with their temperamental susceptibility or insusceptibility to spiritual realism. One man is born an aristocrat and another a democrat; one has a natural bias towards radicalism, another towards conservatism. Reason, argument has less to do than is commonly supposed with determining these fundamental re-

relationships of any of us. So one man is born a mystic and another a rationalist.

But, it may be further objected, is it not true that mystics have often been misled by their supposed knowledge? Have they not been betrayed into all manner of vagaries, into enthusiasm, into fanaticism? And does not this show that mysticism involves dangerous error? The objection does indeed point out a serious danger. Every truth is dangerous, in the sense that it may be, has been, misunderstood, misinterpreted, misapplied. Most mystics have not been trained psychologists and metaphysicians, and because they did not know how to analyze their own spiritual states and evaluate them correctly, they may have made grave errors in the practical use of their great truth. Not all our states of consciousness having to do with religion are the result of God's contact with the soul. Some of these states have a perfectly naturalistic explanation, some may be inexplicable, most of them are curiously complex. Too many Christians, who would not be classed as mystics, at once ascribe to the agency of the Holy Spirit every religious sensation, thought, impulse; but experience (to say nothing of Scripture) teaches the folly of this. Men say, "The Spirit prompts me to say this," "The Spirit led me to do that." But in many cases this is demonstrably untrue. There are well authenticated instances such as the following: A minister was powerfully impressed as he passed a house, that it was his duty to speak to the inmates about the welfare of their souls. He passed on, but became so uncomfortable because of refusing to hearken to what he took for the voice of the Holy Spirit that he turned back, rang the bell and—found the house empty. A Christian worker was greatly impressed with his duty to speak to a man on a ferry-boat, and, believing this to be the voice of the Spirit, he obeyed, and after talking to the man earnestly several minutes was in-

formed that his labors were useless, for the man was stone deaf. These interpretations of consciousness were ludicrously incorrect.

The analysis of our spiritual processes proves that in relatively few cases are we actually conscious of contact with the divine. What is often mistaken for such contact is really a very complex state, made up in part of memory of previous genuine experiences, partly of association of general religious ideas, of inferences from the supposed meaning of texts of Scripture, and the like. You are incredulous, perhaps. The analogy of sense perception again offers an illustration. When a psychologist says that in looking about a room the sense of sight tells one nothing of the relative distances of objects, that they are all seen in a flat plane, and that recognition of distance is not a visual percept but a complex mental process, so habitual that we are not conscious of it, the result of innumerable former perceptions through the sense of touch—hearing this for the first time one would possibly laugh him to scorn. But if one knows anything of psychology, he knows this to be an elementary truth. Our perceptions of the external world through the senses are as few and simple as the bits of glass and buttons that we put into a kaleidoscope, and the ideas that we combine from them are as marvellous in their complexity as the images that once delighted us in that toy. Our spiritual processes are of like character, so like that one is tempted to say identical. In the few great crises of life, in the rare golden moments, we come face-to-face with God and see the King in his beauty. And afterward, remembering these experiences, and mingling with them a thousand other memories, emotions and inferences, we too often mistakenly refer these complex states to a single cause, the direct agency of God.

The truth is, there is a great difference among Christians in the depth of their spiritual insight and the vivid-

ness of their emotional experiences, as in the clearness of their intellectual perceptions of the truth. This is to be expected, and should be allowed for, but such is seldom the case. The pity is that members of either class have so little tolerance for the deficiency of the others. The spiritually minded are very prone to suspect lack of true knowledge of Christ in those whose intellectual power overshadows and keeps more or less dormant their emotional nature; while the keenly intellectual are liable to look with something very like scorn or contempt upon those to whom religion is chiefly an affair of the heart, and scarcely at all a subject for thought. But somehow a *modus vivendi* must be found for these two types of Christian character, for both are legitimate and both are needed.

What are the criteria then by which we shall distinguish the true mysticism from the false? There are at least two, one human, the other divine. The human test is experience. There are illusions of the senses that must be corrected by experience; that is to say, carefully repeated and carefully observed perceptions of things must be compared until error is eliminated and the facts of consciousness are accurately apprehended and interpreted. All this is familiar. What is not so familiar, but quite as necessary, is the careful observation and comparison of religious states of consciousness, in which interpretation is ordinarily synchronous with sensation, until error has been eliminated. When we wrongly interpret perceptions of sight, we can correct the error by the sense of touch or of hearing, and *vice versa*. So one set of spiritual perceptions may be corrected by another, or by comparison with fact. If in the experience of any it should be found that a strong impression of duty corresponds to objective fact, and if an inward impulse to do a certain thing were invariably accompanied by some peculiar fitness of external conditions for the doing of that

precise thing, it would be a rational conclusion that the Holy Spirit originated the impulse and divine Providence prepared the conditions. If there were no such correspondence between inward impulse and outward conditions, some other hypothesis would be necessitated.

Take, for example, what is known as a call to the ministry. A young man is conscious of a strong inward impulse to preach the gospel. As the months go by, this impulse, possibly faint in the beginning, is strengthened and deepened until it becomes a moral conviction—he knows something of the intensity of feeling that drew from the Apostle the words, “Woe is me if I preach not the gospel.” Some of the best ministers living never had so overmastering a conviction as this; the experience is purposely described in its most vivid and striking form. And in this form, are we all bound to accept such a call as unmistakably genuine? By no means, for there have been cases where even such a “call” turned out to be not from God. We recognize that no young man’s conviction of his duty to preach the gospel is enough, in itself, to qualify him for that office. Such a conviction must be submitted to rational tests, such as, Has the young man any such gifts, physical, mental, moral, as give reasonable assurance that he would be a useful minister? This question satisfactorily answered, another follows, Has he such training, or can he secure such training, as will fit him for the work to which he feels himself called? Favorable reply being made to this question, it is next asked, Do others, judicious men and women, recognize in him abilities and qualities suitable to the ministry—are his brethren as surely called to hear as he deems himself called to preach? When this question also has received an affirmative answer, there is good ground to believe that the Holy Spirit has called the young man to preach—and not till then.

This fairly illustrates the method of testing the valid-

ity of our religious impulses and emotions. They are not to be credulously received as certainly of divine origin, nor unceremoniously dismissed as mere illusions, but are to be rationally and rigorously tested by such means as individual and combined Christian experience suggests. It is only when, as has too often happened, the mystic refuses to test his states of consciousness by fact and reason, but accepts all of them as of unquestionable validity, and interprets these facts in one invariable way, that he becomes an enthusiast and fanatic.

And one of the prime teachings of experience is that direct communication by God to man of religious ideas, emotions, powers, while always possible, is not the usual divine method. The notion that because this is peculiarly the dispensation of the Spirit, therefore the Holy Spirit is continually communicating to men spiritual power not otherwise attainable, is one of the mischievous distortions of truth for which the Keswick movement is mainly responsible. Experience directly contradicts this idea. Experience confirms the Scripture teaching that the Spirit usually operates upon our spirits through the truth. It does not follow that because we can speak directly to God, God will always speak directly to us. He can, he may—no bounds can be set to his grace—but he probably always has spoken and he probably always will speak to us through the truth. The Spirit, in response to our prayers, can, may and doubtless will (if those prayers are genuine) endue us with new power; but probably he will do so by illumination of our spirits to receive and appropriate truth already revealed, not by any direct communication of spiritual energy. He will rather teach us to make the most of endowments and opportunities already ours, but not fully possessed, not fully utilized, than impart any new and wonderful abilities. The experiences related by such men as Campbell Morgan and F. B. Meyer have misled not a few into

supposing that there is some way by which a special endowment of the Spirit can be obtained that will make of any man such preachers as they. But this is altogether a delusion, likely to do much harm if it gains acceptance among ministers and ministerial students. Submit this notion to rational tests, suggested by experience, and what is the result? These were men of peculiar and remarkable gifts, native and acquired, whom the Spirit has indeed made wonderfully successful, precisely because they were extraordinary men. All their successes have been along the direct line of their individual capacities. The Spirit has simply taken what they were and raised it to the *nth* power. That Spirit, it may be presumed, will do a like work for any who will permit; that is to say, he will take men with their several individualities, powers and acquirements, and make each the best preacher of the gospel he is capable of becoming. But if men delude themselves, or suffer themselves to be deluded, into the belief that the Spirit will make of them a Morgan, a Spurgeon, a Brooks, purely by divine power, without reference to what a man is by nature and what he may become by training, there is a painful disillusionment to come.

And what has just been said furnishes the only satisfactory explanation of another observed fact, namely, that some of the most devout and saintly souls have had none of the special experiences described in the earlier part of this paper. Many of the choicest Christians have not only not known God in regeneration, but have no remembrance whatever of their conversion. The testimony of their consciousness no more tells them when they were born again than when they were first born. That they were once born they know, for they know themselves as living men and women; that they were born again they know, for they know themselves to be Christ's; but of the when and how and where they know no more in the one

case than in the other. And there are others who have never been conscious of any hour of exalted communion with God, some who have never enjoyed any special vision of God, some who have never had any exceptionally strong conviction or impulse that they thought came from God. And the more genuinely Christian such people are, the more prone are they to torment themselves with such questions as: Since I do not have these experiences of which others speak, is there not something wrong in me? Why does not the Spirit speak to me as he does to others? Why does not God reveal himself to me as to others? Can I be right with God and lack these experiences?

To the last question, Yes, most emphatically, Yes. And on this ground: these are not the normal and usual methods by which God communicates with men, but the wholly unusual and exceptional. If all enjoyed them they would cease to be exceptional and become normal. If a Christian finds himself deficient in some normal experience, he may perhaps have good reason to ask himself if he is right with God. But rightness with God has nothing to do with experiences that are exceptional; these are within the sphere of God's special grace, which he bestows upon whom he will—gifts to be gratefully received if he bestows them, but not an occasion for unhappiness or distrust when they are withheld. It is no part of God's plan that we should all be cast in one spiritual mould, or that a single type of experience should be universal.

The other test is recognition of the fact that the Holy Spirit has spoken to others also; and since God is the author of truth and of order, not of confusion and falsehood, it follows that no genuine utterance of the Spirit can contradict any other. But the Spirit has spoken in an especial manner to and through the prophets and apostles, so that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments have been rightly accepted by Christians of all ages as the supreme and authoritative voice of the Spirit.

Therefore, whatever spiritual states, emotions, experiences, are not in accordance with Scripture are *ipso facto* invalid and untrustworthy. But, as we have seen, it is not really the deliverances of consciousness that contradict or outrun Scripture, but the erroneous interpretations of these facts that we unconsciously make. Our interpretations are therefore to be continually challenged and compared with the Scriptures. On the one hand, these personal experiences will help us to a better exegesis of Scripture; on the other hand Scripture, correctly interpreted, will keep us from misunderstanding the testimony of consciousness, and when at length the voice of the Spirit, speaking through the Scriptures, witnesses with the Spirit in our hearts, we may be certain that we have the truth.

If these criteria are fully recognized and faithfully applied, there is no danger in mysticism, but great gain. It founds the Christian life on the solid rock of personal knowledge, while efficient safeguards are provided against fanaticism. Such a mysticism is true, because its ultimate principle is that which validates all truth, namely, trust in the testimony of consciousness. It is Christian, because it subordinates the experience of the individual to the Scriptures and the Christian consciousness of the ages.