

Mystics and Their Little Ways

One Is Nothing, While Two Is—In Reality—One

BY ALEISTER CROWLEY

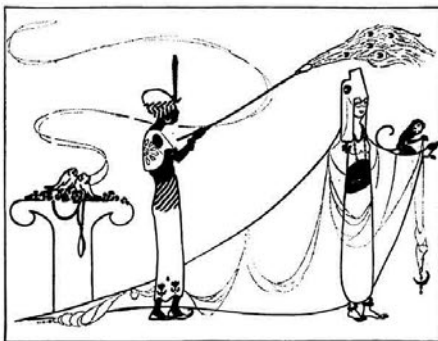
MYSTICISM is really quite simple. It is merely a State of Mind in which all phenomena are regarded as pure illusion. The only reality is what is called by one mystic the *Florama*; by another *Isvara*, or *Parabrahman*, or *Purusha*; by a third, *God*; by a fourth, the *Pure Soul*; by a fifth, *Being*, or the *Absolute*—and so on, more or less indefinitely.

Mysticism is not a belief. It is a matter of direct experience resulting from interior illumination, now and then—though not often—arising spontaneously. More usually it results from persistence in certain religious practices, such as meditation, for instance.

MYSTICISM is entirely a matter for individual, so that mystics rarely form sects, and when they do, the sects are never successful. However, there have been the Gnostics, the Therapeutae, the Cathari, the Essenes, and of course, farther East, the Sufis, the Taoists and various Indian and Indo-Chinese groups. But this is all a sort of accident. Every mystic of any account is really a solitary who, thinking to bring all men to his own perfection, merely succeeds in founding a new cult, or religion.

Most of the original disciples of such a man have had probably some mystic experience. Then arises some worldly, ambitious person who exploits the crude (and, failing to understand them, glosses over the subtle) elements of the Master's teaching. All "teaching" is cardinally false, as nothing matters so much as teaching each man how to destroy the illusion which is keeping him from perfection.

MANY mystics have, of course, realized the fatuity of founding a religion, and so have left



themselves to a small circle of disciples. Such were Porphyry, Plotinus, Joachim of Fiore, Hildegard of Binjen, Elizabeth of Schonau, Ameluc of Bena, Meister Eckhart, Suao, Tauler, van Ruysbroeck, Gerard Groot, Thomas Munser, Nicholas of Cusa, Sebastian Franck, Paracelsus, Valentine Weigel, Jacob Boehme, St. Teresa, Mme. Guyon, John of the Cross, J. G. Gichtel, Henry More, Poirat, Dr. Dee and Sir E. Kelly, William Blake, Bernard of Clairvaux, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, Novalis, Bonaventura, Eliphaz Levi, Victor Benjamin Newburg, and our own Emerson. Of many of these men we have little trace. We can only rely upon their occasional treatises and letters. It would be impossible to give

any account of the Asiatic mystics. In Asia every man realizes that mysticism is the soul of religion, and seeks a direct mystical experience.

OF mystics who have founded or attempted to found cults we have more famous names: Socrates (and Plato), Zoroaster, Dionysus, Ignatius Loyola, St. Francis of Assisi, Apollonius of Tyana, Isaa bin Yusuf, William Law, Claude de St. Martin, George Fox, Swedenborg and H. P. Blavatzky. Perhaps Andrea, and his successors, and many others who have preferred to work through the medium of secret societies, should also be mentioned. Often in such cases their names and deeds are lost, although their work may have secretly revolutionized the spiritual life of whole continents.

The method of a mystic in proclaiming his "Law" is always the same. He takes one single, simple, fundamental, revolutionary remark, and makes the Universe obey it. Thus Mohammed with his "There is one God." The rest is but the harvest of that seed. So also Buddha with his denial of the Atman, the cardinal doctrine of the Hindus; he puts his finger on the one essential of the system which he seeks to destroy, and the whole system explodes. A modern instance is the saying "Do what thou wilt; shall be the whole of the Law. Love is the Law—Love under Will!"

For mysticism at its best may be defined as Genius on a Religious plane. And all genius consists of two parts: one, the capacity to see, hear and feel everything in the world with accuracy; and two, the power to distill this impression to a quintessence, and pour it forth as a perfume. Now the mystic mind can, by definition, do both of (Continued on page 144)



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