

Or, the Magical Mystical Tour

Mysticism: A False Model of the Christian's Communion with God and Sanctification

Brilliant Branding...



Brilliant Anti-Branding

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New Names and Terms Needed

- We're not liberals, we're progressives!

Old Branding

- The Eleusinian Mystery Cult
- Buddhism
- Transcendental meditation
- New age course in miracles
- Oprah/the Beatles/Richard Gere
- Pantheistic absorption into the universe

New Branding

- Contemplative prayer
- Spiritual formation
- Christian Charismatic ecstasies
- “The Holy Spirit told me/led me/showed me”

Definition

- *Oxford English Dictionary*, a mystic is “a person who seeks by contemplation and self-surrender to attain unity with the Deity or the absolute, and so reach truths beyond human understanding.”

Definition

- Mysticism is an ancient and persistent heresy, emphasizing the inward and subjective experience of alleged communion with God, brought about by the effort of the individual, and resulting in the attainment of an unintelligible and indescribable mental state.

Result

- Since it is false communion with God, it is always detrimental to the person who practices it.

The Course of Mysticism

- a misunderstanding of the nature of God and communion with God;
- human initiative and effort as the means in bringing about the false state of communion;
- results in false revelation, fallacious life guidance.

A Sanctification Framework

- As we have seen this week, sanctification is God's plan to set apart of believers in Jesus Christ for His work.
- Sanctification requires communion or fellowship with God, through the acceptance of key doctrines and separation from sin.
- Sanctification is Holy Spirit dependent;
- Sanctification is revelation dependent.

Three Failures Related to Sanctification

- Mystical experience fails to meet the intelligibility test of communion with God;
- mysticism is based on a human system of works,
- mysticism is in opposition to the biblical doctrines of inspiration, illumination, and the completed canon of Scripture.

How to Get from "A" to Zero

- An emptiness of thought and consciousness is sought, usually by intermediate means:
- In Christian circles through music, working up emotions, and meditation.
- Pagan mysticism adds drugs, sex, dance (whirling dervishes!), self-inflicted injury and pain, sleep deprivation, yoga, and a variety of rituals including the blackest of magic.
- In every case, both Christian and pagan, it is human initiative, and human effort that achieves the "emptiness."

The Logical Fallacy of Mysticism

- The mystic experience by its very nature is an ineffable state where the mystics' own consciousness is overridden by the experience. Therefore to claim to be able to articulate the inexpressible is self-contradictory proposition

Did He really?

- Did God really design His vital communion with His own creatures...
- To be completely unable to be understood?

Logical Fallacy II

- The insistence that the self is totally absorbed into the religious infinite, in an ecstatic union that transcends subject–object distinctions, would moreover seem to cancel out the mystic’s ability to give a personal report of the actual state of things. For lapse of self–consciousness can only mean the surrender of any personal knowledge whatever. It is one thing for a person to claim that he has seen a flying saucer, and on that basis to argue—contrary to those who have not—that such weird mechanisms exist, but it is more preposterous for someone to describe a reality which is said to be inherently inexpressible. It simply makes no sense for anyone publicly to claim that he has intuited the inexpressible.
- Carl Ferdinand Howard Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1999) 1:71.

Test One: Communion with God

- The BIG question: do the Scriptures offer mystical rapture as the norm for communion with God?

Communion with God Is...

- Holy
- Conscious and Intelligible
- Revelation-dependent (currently Sola Scriptura)
- Sanctifying
- Enabled by grace

Some Examples of Communion with God

- After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!" And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."" (Gen. 15:1–5)

Psalm 19

- The first section, Psalm 19:1–10, is entirely doctrinal, declaring the greatness and goodness of God in a variety of ways, from creation to revelation and even to salvation
- From revelation, David communes with God, and continues to communication in prayer as a result.

Psalm 19:11–14

- “Moreover by them Your servant is warned,
And in keeping them there is great reward.
Who can understand his errors?
Cleanse me from secret faults.
Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins;
Let them not have dominion over me.
Then I shall be blameless,
And I shall be innocent of great transgression.
Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my
heart
Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and
my Redeemer.

Prophecy, NOT Mysticism

- Peter, in his second epistle, gave us the pattern for how God inspired the Old Testament prophets to preach and write:
- And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:19–21)

Whatever I Command You

- Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations." Then said I: "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth." But the LORD said to me: "Do not say, 'I am a youth,' For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you," says the LORD." (Jeremiah 1:4–8)

Micah Saw...

- Micah 1:1: “The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.”

Summary

- In every case, the prophet does not initiate, nor does he do any works, and his reception of the prophecy involves no empty-headed ecstasy.

Jesus Communes with God

- Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, “Sit here while I go and pray over there.” And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.” He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”
(Matthew 26:36–39)

No Mysticism Here – Romans 8:26-27

- “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself (*auto to pneuma*) makes intercession (*huperenugchanei*) for us (*huper hemon*) with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”

Real Meditators Have Thought Content...

- Colossians 2:6–7, "6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. "

What a LOT of Work!

- In Christian circles through music, working up emotions, and meditation.
- Pagan mysticism adds drugs, sex, dance (whirling dervishes!), self-inflicted injury and pain, sleep deprivation, yoga, and a variety of rituals including the blackest of magic.
- In every case, both Christian and pagan, it is human initiative, and human effort that achieves the “emptiness.”

Typical Pagan Nonsense... Works!!!

- So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, "O Baal, hear us!" But there was no voice; no one answered. **Then they leaped about the altar** which they had made. And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened." So they cried aloud, **and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them.** And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention." (1 Kings 18:26–29)

In Sanctification, Works are Foolish

Galatians 3:1-3

- O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?"

Sanctification is Revelation-Dependent, and...

- We believe in a closed system of revelation
- In the knowledge of truth, the ultimate question is: on what authority is truth claimed? On the authority of human reason, human experience, human insight, or the external, objective revelation of God?
- For the mystic, the authority is the claim of immediate, direct communication from God to man independent of the Scriptures.

The Contrasts

- “Religious mysticism depicts intuition as a way of knowing that contrasts with both reason and sensation, and therefore also with intelligible divine revelation. Mystics claim that direct insight into the invisible world is available through personal illumination as a means of access to the Divine allegedly transcending all ordinary levels of human experience.”
- Henry, 1: 70-71.

Prior Revelation or New?

- that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Colossians 2:1–3)

It's not a mystery any longer...

- Colossians 1:26, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

Faith=Prior Revelation

- Colossians 2:6–7, As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

Completely Outfitted for the Journey of Life

- 2 Timothy 3:16–17, "16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete (ἄρτιος), thoroughly equipped for every good work."

“all things...”

- 2 Peter 1:3, "as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue"

A dangerous rejection of divine provision

- Scripture is sufficient for every believer in every circumstance. Truly, it is abundant. Whenever a mystic seeks additional insight by emptying of his mind he does so in opposition and rejection of the provision of the Lord.

What the prophets longed for...

- 1 Peter 1:10–11, "10 Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. "

What angels long to see...

- 1 Peter 1:12, "12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into. "

More Dangerous Than Rejecting the Law of Moses...

- Hebrews 2:2–4, "2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, 4 God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will? "

Rejection of revelation skews reason

- because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts (dialogismois, thought-process), and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds, and four-footed animals and creeping things. (Romans 1:21–23)

The Content of the Holy Spirit's Guidance is Truth

- John 16:13, "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide (ὁδηγήσει) you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come."

Careful about Mixing Providence and Mystical “Revelation”

- God’s intervention into time and space

To Summarize

- Mysticism is an ancient and persistent heresy, emphasizing the inward and subjective experience of false communion with God, brought about by the effort of the individual, and resulting in the attainment of an unintelligible and indescribable mental state. Since it is false communion with God, it is always detrimental to the person who practices it.

Summary, II

- True communion with God never diverts from scriptural principles, nor does it add to given revelation in the completed canon; it is conscious and intelligible, and depends on the purity of the creature–participant through grace. The results of true communion with God are synonymous with the fruits of the Spirit and much more: every good thing in life.

Christian Mysticism is Like...

- The Great Depression...
- Acting natural
- Virtual reality
- Liquid gas
- Jumbo shrimp
- Plastic glasses
- Genuine Imitation

So don't blend your branding!

Make a Choice

- “We may be mystics, or we may be Christians. We cannot be both. And the pretension of being both usually merely veils defection from Christianity.”
- The Works Of Benjamin B. Warfield, Volume IX, page 666 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991).