

Mysticism

by Charles Hodge

Mysticism refers to a claim of immediate divine influence or intuition, which can be found in various forms of philosophy and religion.

Scripture: Matthew 6:6, Galatians 5:16, Colossians 2:8, 1 John 4:1

Topics: "Christian Mysticism", "Spiritual Formation"

Description

Charles Hodge preaches about the rise of Mysticism and Quietism during different periods in history, highlighting the pursuit of union with God through various means such as negation, abstraction, and disinterested love. Leaders like Molinos, Madame Guyon, and Archbishop Fenelon promoted these movements, emphasizing the importance of the inner life over external forms of religion. The Quietists sought a state of perfect rest and union with God, often leading to controversial beliefs like sinlessness in the perfect state. Despite facing persecution, these Mystics and Quietists attracted many followers who sought a deeper spiritual connection with God.

Transcript

§ 1. Meaning of the Words Enthusiasm and Mysticism.

IN the popular sense of the word, enthusiasm means a high state of mental excitement. In that state all the powers are exalted, the thoughts become more comprehensive and vivid, the feelings more fervid, and the will more determined. It is in these periods of excitement that the greatest works of genius, whether by poets, painters, or warriors, have been accomplished. The ancients referred this exaltation of the inner man to a divine influence. They regarded persons thus excited as possessed, or having a God within them. Hence they were called enthusiasts (ε;νεοι). In theology, therefore, those who ignore or reject the guidance of the Scriptures, and assume to be led by an inward divine influence into the knowledge and obedience of the truth, are properly called Enthusiasts. This term, however, has been in a great measure superseded by the word Mystics.

Few words indeed have been used in such a vague, indefinite sense as Mysticism. Its etymology does not determine its meaning. A μυστη;ς was one initiated into the knowledge of the Greek mysteries, one to whom secret things had been revealed. Hence in the wide sense of the word, a Mystic is one who claims to see or know what is hidden from other men, whether this knowledge be attained by immediate intuition, or by inward revelation. In most cases these methods were assumed to be identical, as intuition was held to be the immediate vision of God and of divine things. Hence, in the wide sense of the word, Mystics are

those who claim to be under the immediate guidance of God or of his Spirit.

A. The Philosophical Use of the Word.

Hence Mysticism, in this sense, includes all those systems of philosophy, which teach either the identity of God and the soul, or the immediate intuition of the infinite. The pantheism of the Brahmins and Buddhists, the theosophy of the Sufis, the Egyptian, and many forms of the Greek philosophy, in this acceptation of the term, are all Mystical. As the same system has been reproduced in modern times, the same designation is applied to the philosophy of Spinoza, and its various modifications. According to Cousin, "Mysticism in philosophy is the belief that God may be known face to face, without anything intermediate. It is a yielding to the sentiment awakened by the idea of the infinite, and a running up of all knowledge and all duty to the contemplation and love of Him."¹

For the same reason the whole Alexandrian school of theology in the early Church has been called Mystical. They characteristically depreciated the outward authority of the Scriptures, and exalted that of the inward light. It is true they called that light reason, but they regarded it as divine. According to the new Platonic doctrine, the Logos, or impersonal reason of God, is Reason in man; or as Clemens Alexandrinus said, The Logos was a light common to all men. That, therefore, to which supreme authority was ascribed in the pursuit of truth, was "God within us." This is the doctrine of modern Eclecticism as presented by Cousin. That philosopher says, "Reason is impersonal in its nature. It is not we who make it. It is so far from being individual, that its peculiar characteristics are the opposite of individuality, namely, universality and necessity, since it is to Reason we owe the knowledge of universal and necessary truths, of principles which we all obey, and cannot but obey. It descends from God, and approaches man. It makes its appearance in the consciousness as a guest, who brings intelligence of an unknown world, of which it at once presents the idea and awakens the want. If reason were personal, it would have no value, no authority beyond the limits of the individual subject. . . . Reason is a revelation, a necessary and universal revelation which is wanting to no man, and which enlightens every man on his coming into the world. Reason is the necessary mediator between God and man, the Logos of Pythagoras and Plato, the Word made Flesh, which serves as the interpreter of God, and teacher of man, divine and human at the same time. It is not indeed the absolute God in his majestic individuality, but his manifestation in spirit and in truth. It is not the Being of beings, but it is the revealed God of the human race."²

Reason, according to this system, is not a faculty of the human soul, but God in man. As electricity and magnetism are (or used to be) regarded as forces diffused through the material world, so the Logos, the divine impersonal reason, is diffused through the world of mind, and reveals itself more or less potentially in the souls of all men. This theory, in one aspect, is a form of Rationalism, as it refers all our higher, and especially our religious knowledge, to a subjective source, which it designates Reason. It has, however, more points of analogy with Mysticism, because, (1.) It assumes that the informing principle, the source of knowledge and guide in duty, is divine, something which does not belong to our nature, but appears as a guest in our consciousness. (2.) The office of this inward principle, or light, is the same in both systems. It is to reveal truth and duty, to elevate and purify the soul. (3.) Its authority is the same; that is, it is paramount if not exclusive. (4.) Its very designations are the same. It is called by philosophers, God, the Logos, the Word; by Christians, Christ within us, or, the Spirit. Thus systems apparently the most diverse (Cousin and George Fox!) run into each other, and reveal themselves as reproductions of heathen philosophy, or of the heresies of the early Church.

Although the Alexandrian theologians had these points of agreement with the Mystics, yet as they were speculative in their whole tendency, and strove to transmute Christianity into a philosophy, they are not properly to be regarded as Mystics in the generally received theological meaning of the term.

B. The Sense in which Evangelical Christians are called Mystics.

As all Evangelical Christians admit a supernatural influence of the Spirit of God upon the soul, and recognize a higher form of knowledge, holiness, and fellowship with God, as the effects of that influence, they are stigmatized as Mystics, by those who discard everything supernatural from Christianity. The definitions of Mysticism given by Rationalists are designedly so framed as to include what all evangelical Christians hold to be true concerning the illumination, teaching, and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Thus Wegscheider³ says, "Mysticismus est persuasio de singulari animae facultate ad immediatum ipsoque sensu percipiendum cum numine aut naturis coelestibus commercium jam in hac vita perveniendi, quo mens immediate cognitione rerum divinarum ac beatitate perfruatur." And Bretschneider⁴ defines Mysticism as a "Belief in a continuous operation of God on the soul, secured by special religious exercise, producing illumination, holiness, and beatitude." Evangelical theologians so far acquiesce in this view, that they say, as Lange,⁵ and Nitsch,⁶ "that every true believer is a Mystic." The latter writer adds, "That the Christian ideas of illumination, revelation, incarnation, regeneration, the sacraments and the resurrection, are essentially Mystical elements. As often as the religious and church-life recovers itself from formalism and scholastic barrenness, and is truly revived, it always appears as Mystical, and gives rise to the outcry that Mysticism is gaining the ascendancy." Some writers, indeed, make a distinction between Mystik and Mysticismus. "Die innerliche Lebendigkeit der Religion ist allezeit Mystik" (The inward vitality of religion is ever Mystik), says Nitsch, but "Mysticismus ist eine einseitige Herrschaft und eine Ausartung der mystischen Richtung" That is, Mysticism is an undue and perverted development of the mystical element which belongs to true religion. This distinction, between Mystik and Mysticismus, is not generally recognized, and cannot be well expressed in English. Lange, instead of using different words, speaks of a true and false Mysticism. But different things should be designated by different words. There has been a religious theory, which has more or less extensively prevailed in the Church, which is distinguished from the Scriptural doctrine by unmistakable characteristics, and which is known in church history as Mysticism, and the word should be restricted to that theory. It is the theory, variously modified, that the knowledge, purity, and blessedness to be derived from communion with God, are not to be attained from the Scriptures and the use of the ordinary means of grace, but by a supernatural and immediate divine influence, which influence (or communication of God to the soul) is to be secured by passivity, a simple yielding the soul without thought or effort to the divine influx.

C. The System which makes the Feelings the Source of Knowledge.

A still wider use of the word Mysticisim has to some extent been adopted. Any system, whether in philosophy or religion, which assigns more importance to the feelings than to the intellect, is called Mystical. Cousin, and after him, Morell, arrange the systems of philosophy under the heads of Sensationalism, Idealism, Skepticism, and Mysticism. The first makes the senses the exclusive or predominant source of our knowledge; the second, the self, in its constitution and laws, as understood and apprehended by the intellect; and Mysticism, the feelings. The Mystic assumes that the senses and reason are alike untrustworthy and inadequate, as sources of knowledge; that nothing can be received with confidence as truth, at least in the higher departments of knowledge, in all that relates to our own nature, to God, and our relation to Him, except what is revealed either naturally or supernaturally in the feelings. There are two forms of Mysticism, therefore: the one which assumes the feelings themselves to

be the sources of this knowledge; the other that it is through the feelings that God makes the truth known to the soul.⁷ "Reason is no longer viewed as the great organ of truth; its decisions are enstamped as uncertain, faulty, and well-nigh valueless, while the inward impulses of our sensibility, developing themselves in the form of faith or of inspiration, are held up as the true and infallible source of human knowledge. The fundamental process, therefore, of all Mysticism, is to reverse the true order of nature, and give the precedence to the emotional instead of the intellectual element of the human mind."⁸ This is declared to be "the common ground of all Mysticism."

Schleiermacher's Theory.

If this be a correct view of the nature of Mysticism; if it consists in giving predominant authority to the feelings in matters of religion; and if their impulses, developing themselves in the form of faith, are the true and infallible source of knowledge, then Schleiermacher's system, adopted and expounded by Morell himself in his "Philosophy of Religion," is the most elaborate system of theology ever presented to the Church. It is the fundamental principle of Schleiermacher's theory, that religion resides not in the intelligence, or the will or active powers, but in the sensibility. It is a form of feeling, a sense of absolute dependence. Instead of being, as we seem to be, individual, separate free agents, originating our own acts, we recognize ourselves as a part of a great whole, determined in all things by the great whole, of which we are a part. We find ourselves as finite creatures over against an infinite Being, in relation to whom we are as nothing. The Infinite is everything; and everything is only a manifestation of the Infinite. "Although man," says even Morell, "while in the midst of finite objects, always feels himself to a certain extent free and independent; yet in the presence of that which is self-existent, infinite, and eternal, he may feel the sense of freedom utterly pass away, and become absorbed in the sense of absolute dependence."⁹ This is said to be the essential principle of religion in all its forms from Fetichism up to Christianity. It depends mainly on the degree of culture of the individual or community, in what way this sense of dependence shall reveal itself: because the more enlightened and pure the individual is, the more he will be able to apprehend aright what is involved in this sense of dependence upon God. Revelation is not the communication of new truth to the understanding, but the providential influences by which the religious life is awakened in the soul. Inspiration is not the divine influence which controls the mental operations and utterances of its subject, so as to render him infallible in the communication of the truth revealed, but simply the intuition of eternal verities due to the excited state of the religious feelings. Christianity, subjectively considered, is the intuitions of good men, as occasioned and determined by the appearance of Christ. Objectively considered, or, in other words, Christian theology, it is the logical analysis, and scientific arrangement and elucidation of the truths involved in those intuitions. The Scriptures, as a rule of faith, have no authority. They are of value only as means of awakening in us the religious life experienced by the Apostles, and thus enabling us to attain like intuitions of divine things. The source of our religious life, according to this system, is the feelings, and if this be the characteristic feature of Mysticism, the Schleiermaeher doctrine is purely Mystical.

D. Mysticism as known in Church History.

This, however, is not what is meant by Mysticism, as it has appeared in the Christian Church. The Mystics, as already stated, are those who claim an immediate communication of divine knowledge and of divine life from God to the soul, independently of the Scriptures and the use of the ordinary means of grace. "It despairs," says Fleming, "of the regular process of science; it believes that we may attain directly, without the aid of the senses or reason, and by an immediate intuition, the real and absolute principle of all truth, -- God."¹⁰

Mystics are of two classes; the Theosophists, whose object is knowledge, and with whom the organ of communication with God, is the reason; and the Mystics proper, whose object is, life, purity, and beatitude; and with whom the organ of communication, or receptivity, is the feelings. They agree, first, in relying on the immediate revelation or communication of God to the soul; and secondly, that these communications are to be attained, in the neglect of outward means, by quiet or passive contemplation. "The Theosophist is one who gives a theory of God, or of the works of God, which has not reason, but an inspiration of his own for its basis."¹¹ "The Theosophists, neither contented with the natural light of reason, nor with the simple doctrines of Scripture understood in their literal sense, have recourse to an internal supernatural light superior to all other illuminations, from which they profess to derive a mysterious and divine philosophy manifested only to the chosen favorites of heaven."¹²

Mysticism not identical with the Doctrine of Spiritual Illumination.

Mysticism, then, is not to be confounded with the doctrine of spiritual illumination as held by all evangelical Christians. The Scriptures clearly teach that the mere outward presentation of the truth in the Word, does not suffice to the conversion or sanctification of men; that the natural, or unrenewed man, does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them; that in order to any saving knowledge of the truth, i. e., of such knowledge as produces holy affections and secures a holy life, there is need of an inward supernatural teaching of the Spirit, producing what the Scriptures call "spiritual discernment," This supernatural teaching our Lord promised to his disciples when He said that He would send them the Spirit of truth to dwell in them, and to guide them into the knowledge of the truth. For this teaching the sacred writers pray that it may be granted not to themselves only, but to all who heard their words or read their writings. On this they depended exclusively for their success in preaching or teaching. Hence believers were designated as pneumatikoi,, a Spiritu Dei illuminati, qui reguntur a Spiritu. And men of the world, unrenewed men, are described as those who have not the Spirit. God, therefore, does hold immediate intercourse with the souls of men. He reveals himself unto his people, as He does not unto the world. He gives them the Spirit of revelation in the knowledge of himself. (Eph. i. 17.) He unfolds to them his glory, and fills them with a joy which passes understanding. All this is admitted; but this is very different from Mysticism. The two things, namely, spiritual illumination and Mysticism, differ, firstly, as to their object. The object of the inward teaching of the Spirit is to enable us to discern the truth and excellence of what is already objectively revealed in the Bible. The illumination claimed by the Mystic communicates truth independently of its objective revelation. It is not intended to enable us to appreciate what we already know, but to communicate new knowledge. It would be one thing to enable man to discern and appreciate the beauty of a work of art placed before his eyes, and quite another thing to give him the intuition of all possible forms of truth and beauty, independent of everything external. So there is a great difference between that influence which enables the soul to discern the things "freely given to us of God" (1 Cor. ii. 12) in his Word, and the immediate revelation to the mind of all the contents of that word, or of their equivalents.

The doctrines of spiritual illumination and of Mysticism differ not only in the object, but secondly, in the manner in which that object is to be attained. The inward teaching of the Spirit is to be sought by prayer, and the diligent use of the appointed means; the intuitions of the Mystic are sought in the neglect of all means, in the suppression of all activity inward and outward, and in a passive waiting for the influx of God into the soul. They differ, thirdly, in their effects. The effect of spiritual illumination is, that the Word dwells in us "in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col. i. 9). What dwells in the mind of the Mystic are his own imaginings, the character of which depends on his own subjective state; and whatever they are, they

are of man and not of God.

It differs from the Doctrine of the "Leading of the Spirit."

Neither is Mysticism to be confounded with the doctrine of spiritual guidance. Evangelical Christians admit that the children of God are led by the Spirit of God; that their convictions as to truth and duty, their inward character and outward conduct, are moulded by his influence. They are children unable to guide themselves, who are led by an ever-present Father of infinite wisdom and love. This guidance is partly providential, ordering their external circumstances; partly through the Word, which is a lamp to their feet; and partly by the inward influence of the Spirit on the mind. This last, however, is also through the Word, making it intelligible and effectual; bringing it suitably to remembrance. God leads his people by the cords of a man, i.e., in accordance with the laws of his nature. This is very different from the doctrine that the soul, by yielding itself passively to God, is filled with all truth and goodness; or, that in special emergencies it is controlled by blind, irrational impulses.

It differs from the Doctrine of "Common Grace."

Finally, Mysticism differs from the doctrine of common graces as held by all Augustinians, and that of sufficient grace as held by Arminians. All Christians believe that as God is everywhere present in the material world, guiding the operation of second causes so that they secure the results which He designs; so his Spirit is everywhere present with the minds of men, exciting to good and restraining from evil, effectually controlling human character and conduct, consistently with the laws of rational beings. According to the Arminian theory this "common grace" is sufficient, if properly cultured and obeyed, to lead men to salvation, whether Pagans, Mohammedans, or Christians. There is little analogy, however, between this doctrine of common, or sufficient grace, and Mysticism as it has revealed itself in the history of the Church. The one assumes an influence of the Spirit on all men analogous to the providential efficiency of God in nature, the other an influence analogous to that granted to prophets and apostles, involving both revelation and inspiration.

§ 2. Mysticism in the Early Church.

A. Montanism.

The Montanists who arose toward the close of the second century had, in one aspect, some affinity to Mysticism. Montanus taught that as the ancient prophets predicted the coming of the Messiah through whom new revelations were to be made; so Christ predicted the coming of the Paraclete through whom further communications of the mind of God were to be made to his people. Tertullian, by whom this system was reduced to order and commended to the higher class of minds, did indeed maintain that the rule of faith was fixed and immutable; but nevertheless that there was need of a continued supernatural revelation of truth, at least as to matters of duty and discipline. This supernatural revelation was made through the Paraclete; whether, as was perhaps the general idea among the Montanists, by communications granted, from time to time, to special individuals, who thereby became Christian prophets; or by an influence common to all believers, which however some more than others experienced and improved. The following passage from Tertullian¹³ gives clearly the fundamental principle of the system, so far as this point is concerned: "Regula quidem fidei una omnino est, sola immobilis et irreformabilis. . . . Hac lege fidei manente, cetera jam disciplinae et conversationis admittunt novitatem correctionis; operante scilicet et proficiente usque in finem gratia Dei. . . . Propterea Paracletum misit Dominus, ut, quoniam humana mediocritas omnia semel capere non poterat, paulatim dirigeretur et

ordinaretur et ad perfectum perduceretur disciplina ab illo vicario Domini Spiritu Sancto. Quae est ergo Paracleti administratio nisi haec, quod disciplina dirigitur, quod Scripturae revelantur, quod intellectus reformatur, quod ad meliora proficitur? . . . Justitia primo fuit in rudimentis, natura Deum metuens; dehinc per legem et prophetas promovit in infantiam; dehinc per evangelium efferbuit in juventutem; nunc per Paracletum componitur in maturitatem."

The points of analogy between Montanism and Mysticism are that both assume the insufficiency of the Scriptures and the ordinances of the Church for the full development of the Christian life; and both assert the necessity of a continued, supernatural, revelation from the Spirit of God. In other respects the two tendencies were divergent. Mysticism was directed to the inner life; Montanism to the outward. It concerned itself with the reformation of manners and strictness of discipline. It enjoined fasts, and other ascetic practices. As it depended on the supernatural and continued guidance of the Spirit, it was on the one hand opposed to speculation, or the attempt to develop Christianity by philosophy; and on the other to the dominant authority of the bishops. Its denunciatory and exclusive spirit led to its condemnation as heretical. As the Montanists excommunicated the Church, the Church excommunicated them.¹⁴

B. The so-called Dionysius, the Areopagite.

Mysticism, in the common acceptation of the term, is antagonistic to speculation. And yet they are often united. There have been speculative or philosophical Mystics. The father indeed of Mysticism in the Christian Church, was a philosopher. About the year A. D. 523, during the Monothelite controversy certain writings were quoted as of authority as being the productions of Dionysius the Areopagite. The total silence respecting them during the preceding centuries; the philosophical views which they express; the allusions to the state of the Church with which they abound, have produced the conviction, universally entertained, that they were the work of some author who lived in the latter part of the fifth century. The most learned investigators, however, confess their inability to fix with certainty or even with probability on any writer to whom they can be referred. Though their authorship is unknown, their influence has been confessedly great. The works which bear the pseudonym of Dionysius are, "The Celestial Hierarchy," "The Terrestrial Hierarchy," "Mystical Theology," and "Twelve Epistles." Their contents show that their author belonged to the school of the New Platonists, and that his object was to propagate the peculiar views of that school in the Christian Church. The writer attempts to show that the real, esoteric doctrines of Christianity are identical with those of his own school of philosophy. In other words, he taught New Platonism, in the terminology of the Church. Christian ideas were entirely excluded, while the language of the Bible was retained. Thus in our day we have had the philosophy of Schelling and Hegel set forth in the formulas of Christian theology.

New Platonism.

The New Platonists taught that the original ground and source of all things was simple being, without life or consciousness; of which absolutely nothing could be known, beyond that it is. They assumed an unknown quantity, of which nothing can be predicated. The pseudo-Dionysius called this original ground of all things God, and taught that God was mere being without attributes of any kind, not only unknowable by man, but of whom there was nothing to be known, as absolute being is in the language of the modern philosophy, -- Nothing; nothing in itself, yet nevertheless the du,namij tw/n pa,ntwn.

The universe proceeds from primal being, not by any exercise of conscious power or will, but by a process or emanation. The familiar illustration is derived from the flow of light from the sun. With this difference,

however. That the sun emits light, is a proof that it is itself luminous but the fact that intelligent beings emanate from the "ground-being," is not admitted as proof that it is intelligent. The fact that the air produces cheerfulness, say these philosophers, does not prove that the atmosphere experiences joy. We can infer nothing as to the nature of the cause from the nature of the effects.

These emanations are of different orders; decreasing in dignity and excellence as they are distant from the primal source. The first of these emanations is mind, nou/j, intelligence individualized in different ranks of spiritual beings. The next, proceeding from the first, is soul, which becomes individualized by organic or vital connection with matter. There is, therefore, an intelligence of intelligences, and also a soul of souls; hence their generic unity. Evil arises from the connection of the spiritual with the corporeal, and yet this connection so far as souls are concerned, is necessary to their individuality. Every soul, therefore, is an emanation from the soul of the world, as that is from God, through the Intelligence.

As there is no individual soul without a body, and as evil is the necessary consequence of union with a body, evil is not only necessary or unavoidable, it is a good.

The end of philosophy is the immediate vision of God, which gives the soul supreme blessedness and rest. This union with God is attained by sinking into ourselves; by passivity. As we are a form, or mode of God's existence, we find God in ourselves, and are consciously one with him, when this is really apprehended; or, when we suffer God, as it were, to absorb our individuality.

The primary emanations from the ground of all being, which the heathen called gods (as they had gods many and lords many) the New Platonists, spirits or intelligences; and the Gnostics, aeons; the pseudo-Dionysius called angels. These he divided into three triads: (1.) thrones, cherubim, and seraphim; (2.) powers, lordships, authorities; (3.) angels, archangels, principalities. He classified the ordinances and officers and members of the Church into corresponding triads: (1.) The sacraments, -- baptism, communion, anointing, -- these were the means of initiation or consecration ; (2.) The initiators,-- bishops, priests, deacons; (3.) The initiated, -- monks, the baptized, catechumens.

The terms God, sin, redemption, are retained in this system, but the meaning attached to them was entirely inconsistent with the sense they bear in the Bible and in the Christian Church. The pseudo-Dionysius was a heathen philosopher in the vestments of a Christian minister. The philosophy which he taught he claimed to be the true sense of the doctrines of the Church, as that sense had been handed down by a secret tradition. Notwithstanding its heathen origin and character, its influence in the Church was great and long continued. The writings of its author were translated, annotated and paraphrased, centuries after his death. As there is no effect without an adequate cause, there must have been power in this system and an adaptation to the cravings of a large class of minds.

Causes of the Influence of the Writings of the pseudo-Dionysius.

To account for its extensive influence it may be remarked: (1.) That it did not openly shock the faith or prejudices of the Church. It did not denounce any received doctrine or repudiate any established institution or ordinance. It pretended to be Christian. It undertook to give a deeper and more correct insight into the mysteries of religion. (2.) It subordinated the outward to the inward. Some men are satisfied with rites, ceremonies, symbols, which may mean anything or nothing; others, with knowledge or clear views of truth. To others, the inner life of the soul, intercourse with God, is the great thing. To these this system addressed itself. It proposed to satisfy this craving after God, not indeed in a legitimate way, or by means of God's appointment. Nevertheless it was the high end of union with him that it proposed, and which it

professed to secure. (3.) This system was only one form of the doctrine which has such a fascination for the human mind, and which underlies so many forms of religion in every age of the world; the doctrine, namely, that the universe is an efflux of the life of God, -- all things flowing from him, and back again to him from everlasting to everlasting. This doctrine quiets the conscience, as it precludes the idea of sin; it gives the peace which flows from fatalism; and it promises the absolute rest of unconsciousness when the individual is absorbed in the bosom of the Infinite.¹⁵

§ 3. Mysticism during the Middle Ages.

A. General Characteristics of this Period.

The Middle Ages embrace the period from the close of the sixth century to the Reformation. This period is distinguished by three marked characteristics. First, the great development of the Latin Church in its hierarchy, its worship, and its formulated doctrines, as well as in its superstitions, corruptions, and power. Secondly, the extraordinary intellectual activity awakened in the region of speculation, as manifested in the multiplication of seats of learning, in the number and celebrity of their teachers, and in the great multitude of students by which they were attended, and in the interest taken by all classes in the subjects of learned discussion. Thirdly, by a widespread and variously manifested movement of, so to speak, the inner life of the Church, protesting against the formalism, the corruption, and the tyranny of the external Church. This protest was made partly openly by those whom Protestants are wont to call "Witnesses for the Truth;" and partly within the Church itself. The opposition within the Church manifested itself partly among the people, in the formation of fellowships or societies for benevolent effort and spiritual culture, such as the Beguines, the Beghards, the Lollards, and afterwards, "The Brethren of the Common Lot;" and partly in the schools, or by the teachings of theologians.

It was the avowed aim of the theologians of this period to justify the doctrines of the Church at the bar of reason; to prove that what was received on authority as a matter of faith, was true as a matter of philosophy. It was held to be the duty of the theologian to exalt faith into knowledge. Or, as Anselm¹⁶ expresses it: "rationabili necessitate intelligere, esse oportere omnia illa, quae nobis fides catholica de Christo credere praecipit." Richard a St. Victore still more strongly asserts that we are bound, "quod tenemus ex fide, ratione apprehendere et demonstrativae certitudinis attestazione firmare."

The First Class of Mediaeval Theologians.

Of these theologians, however, there were three classes. First, those who avowedly exalted reason above authority, and refused to receive anything on authority which they could not for themselves, on rational grounds, prove to be true. John Scotus Erigena (Eringeborne, Irish-born) may be taken as a representative of this class. He not only held, that reason and revelation, philosophy and religion, are perfectly consistent, but that religion and philosophy are identical. "Conficitur," he says, "inde veram philosophiam esse veram religionem conversimque veram religionem esse veram philosophiam."¹⁷ And on the crucial question, Whether faith precedes science, or science faith, he decided for the latter. Reason, with him, was paramount to authority, the latter having no force except when sustained by the former. "Auctoritas siquidem ex vera ratione processit, ratio vero nequaquam ex auctoritate. Omnis autem auctoritas, quae vera ratione non approbatur, infirma videtur esse. Vera autem ratio, quum virtutibus suis rata atque immutabilis munitur, nullius auctoritatis adstipulatione roborari indiget."¹⁸ His philosophy as developed in his work, "De Divisione Naturae," is purely pantheistic. There is with him but one being, and everything real is thought. His system, therefore, is nearly identical with the idealistic pantheism of Hegel;

yet he had his trinitarianism, his soteriology, and his eschatology, as a theologian.

The Second Class.

The second and more numerous class of the mediaeval theologians took the ground that faith in matters of religion precedes science; that truths are revealed to us supernaturally by the Spirit of God, which truths are to be received on the authority of the Scriptures and the testimony of the Church. But being believed, then we should endeavor to comprehend and to prove them; so that our conviction of their truth should rest on rational grounds. It is very evident that everything depends on the spirit with which this principle is applied, and on the extent to which it is carried. In the hands of many of the schoolmen, as of the Fathers, it was merely a form of rationalism. Many taught that while Christianity was to be received by the people on authority as a matter of faith, it was to be received by the cultivated as a matter of knowledge. The human was substituted for the divine, the authority of reason for the testimony of God. With the better class of the schoolmen the principle in question was held with many limitations. Anselm, for example taught: (1.) That holiness of heart is the essential condition of true knowledge. It is only so far as the truths of religion enter into our personal experience, that we are able properly to apprehend them. Faith, therefore, as including spiritual discernment, must precede all true knowledge. "Qui secundum carnem vivit, carnalis sive animalis est, de quo dicitur: animalis homo non percipit ea, quae sunt Spiritus Dei. . . . Qui non crediderit, non intelliget, nam qui non crediderit, non experietur, et qui expertus non fuerit, non intelliget."¹⁹ "Neque enim quaero intelligere, ut credam, sed credo, ut intelligam. Nam et hoc credo, quia, nisi credidero, non intelligam."²⁰ (2.) He held that rational proof was not needed as a help to faith. It was as absurd, he said, for us to presume to add authority to the testimony of God by our reasoning, as for a man to prop up Olympus. (3.) He taught that there are doctrines of revelation which transcend our reason, which we cannot rationally pretend to comprehend or prove, and which are to be received on the simple testimony of God. "Nam Christianus per fidem debet ad intellectum proficere, non per intellectum ad fidem accedere, aut si intelligere non valet, a fide recedere. Sed cum ad intellectum valet pertingere, delectatur, cum vero nequit, quod capere non potest, veneratur."²¹

A third class of the schoolmen, while professing to adhere to the doctrines of the Church, consciously or unconsciously, explained them away.

B. Mediaeval Mystics..

Mystics were to be found in all these classes, and therefore they have been divided, as by Dr. Shedd,²² into the heretical, the orthodox, and an intermediate class, which he designates as latitudinarian. Much to the same effect, Neudecker,²³ classifies them as Theosophist, Evangelical, and Separatist. Ullmann²⁴ makes a somewhat different classification. The characteristic common to these classes, which differed so much from each other, was not that in all there was a protest of the heart against the head, of the feelings against the intellect, a reaction against the subtleties of the scholastic theologians, for some of the leading Mystics were among the most subtle dialecticians. Nor was it a common adherence to the Platonic as opposed to the Aristotelian philosophy, or to realism as opposed to nominalism. But it was the belief, that oneness with God was the great end to be desired and pursued, and that that union was to be sought, not so much through the truth, or the Church, or ordinances, or Christian fellowship; but by introspection, meditation, intuition. As very different views were entertained of the nature of the "oneness with God," which was to be sought, so the Mystics differed greatly from each other. Some were extreme pantheists; others were devout theists and Christians. From its essential nature, however, the tendency of Mysticism was to pantheism. And accordingly undisguised pantheism was not only taught by some of the

most prominent Mystics, but prevailed extensively among the people.

Pantheistic tendency of Mysticism.

It has already been remarked, that the system of the pseudo-Dionysius, as presented in his "Mystical Theology" and other writings, was essentially pantheistic. Those writings were translated by Scotus Erigena, himself the most pronounced pantheist of the Middle Ages. Through the joint influence of these two men, a strong tendency to pantheism was developed to a greater or less degree among the mediaeval Mystics. Even the associations among the people, such as the Beghards and Lollards, although at first exemplary and useful, by adopting a system of mystic pantheism became entirely corrupt.²⁵ Believing themselves to be modes of the divine existence, all they did God did, and all they felt inclined to do was an impulse from God, and therefore nothing could be wrong. In our own day the same principles have led to the same consequences in one wing of the German school of philosophy.

It was not only among the people and in these secret fellowships that this system was adopted. Men of the highest rank in the schools, and personally exemplary in their deportment, became the advocates of the theory which lay at the foundation of these practical evils. Of these scholastic pantheistical Mystics, the most distinguished and influential was Henry Eckart, whom some modern writers regard "as the deepest thinker of his age, if not of any age." Neither the time nor the place of his birth is known. He first appears in Paris as a Dominican monk and teacher. In 1304 he was Provincial of the Dominicans in Saxony. Soon after he was active in Strasburg as a preacher. His doctrines were condemned as heretical, although he denied that he had in any respect departed from the doctrines of the Church. From the decision of his archbishop and his provincial council, Eckart appealed to the Pope, by whom the sentence of condemnation was confirmed. This decision, however, was not published until 1329, when Eckart was already dead. It is not necessary here to give the details of his system. Suffice it to say, that he held that God is the only being; that the universe is the self-manifestation of God; that the highest destiny of man is to come to the consciousness of his identity with God; that that end is to be accomplished partly by philosophical abstraction and partly by ascetic self renunciation.

"Although union with God is effected mainly by thinking and consciousness, still it also requires a corresponding act of the will, something practical, such as self-denial and privation, by which man rises above all that is finite. Not only must he lay aside all created things, the world and earthly good, and mortify desire, but more than all he must resign his 'I,' reduce himself to nothing, and become what he was before he issued forth into this temporal state. Nay, man must rise above the chief good, above virtue, piety, blessedness, and God himself, as things external and superior to his spirit, and it is only when he has thus annihilated self, and all that is not God within him, that nothing remains except the pure and simple divine essence, in which all division is brought into absolute unity."²⁶

Another distinguished and influential writer of the same class was John Ruysbroek, born 1293, in a village of that name not far from Brussels. Having entered the service of the Church he devoted himself to the duties of a secular priest until his sixtieth year, when he became prior of a newly instituted monastery. He was active and faithful, gentle and devout. Whether he was a theist or a pantheist is a matter of dispute. His speculative views were formed more or less under the influence of the writings of the pseudo-Dionysius and of Eckart. Gerson, himself a Mystic, objected to his doctrines as pantheistic; and every one acknowledges that there are not only forms of expression but also principles to be found in his writings which imply the pantheistic theory. He speaks of God as the super-essential being including all beings. All creatures, he taught, were in God, as thoughts before their creation. "God saw and recognized

them in himself, as somehow, but not wholly, different from himself, for what is in God, is God." "In the act of self-depletion, the spirit loses itself in the enjoyment of love, and imbibes directly the brightness of God, yea, becomes the very brightness which it imbibes. All who are raised to the sublimity of this contemplative life are one with deifying (deifica) brightness, and become one and the same light as that which they behold. To such a height is the spirit elevated above itself, and made one with God, in respect that in the oneness of that living original in which, according to its uncreated being, it possesses itself, it enjoys and contemplates boundless treasures in the same manner as God himself." Ullmann, who quotes these and similar passages, still maintains that Ruysbroek was a theist, because, as he says, Ruysbroek "distinctly recognizes not only the immanence of God, but what no pantheist can do, his transcendence." Moreover, he "too frequently and too solicitously avers that, in the oneness of the contemplative man with God, he still recognizes a difference between the two, to permit us to ascribe to him the doctrine of an absolute solution of the individual into the Divine substance."²⁷ A man may aver a difference between the waves and the ocean, between the leaves and the tree, and yet in both cases assert a substantial unity. It is true that no one can intelligently affirm the transcendence of God, and still hold the extreme form of pantheism which makes the world the existence-form of God, his whole intelligence, power, and life. But he may be a Monist. He may believe that there is but one Being in the universe, that everything is a form of God, and all life the life of God. Pantheism is Protean. Some moderns speak of a Christian Pantheism. But any system which hinders our saying "Thou," to God, is fatal to religion.

Evangelical Mystics.

Bernard of Clairvaux, Hugo and Richard of St. Victor, Gerson, Thomas a Kempis and others, are commonly referred to the class of evangelical Mystics. These eminent and influential men differed much from each other, but they all held union within God, not in the Scriptural, but in the mystical sense of that term, as the great object of desire. It was not that they held that "the beatific vision of God," the intuition of his glory, which belongs to heaven, is attainable in this world and attainable by abstraction, ecstatic apprehension, or passive reception, but that the soul becomes one with God, if not in substance, yet in life. These men, however, were great blessings to the Church. Their influence was directed to the preservation of the inward life of religion in opposition to the formality and ritualism which then prevailed in the Church; and thus to free the conscience from subjection to human authority. The writings of Bernard are still held in high esteem, and "The Imitation of Christ," by Thomas a Kempis, has diffused itself like incense through all the aisles and alcoves of the Universal Church.²⁸

§ 4. Mysticism at, and after the Reformation.

A. Effect of the Reformation on the Popular Mind.

Such a great and general movement of the public mind as occurred during the sixteenth century, when the old foundations of doctrine and order in the Church, were overturned, could hardly fail to be attended by irregularities and extravagancies in the inward and outward life of the people. There are two principles advanced, both Scriptural and both of the last importance, which are specially liable to abuse in times of popular excitement.

The first is, the right of private judgment. This, as understood by the Reformers, is the right of every man to decide what a revelation made by God to him, requires him to believe. It was a protest against the authority assumed by the Church (i. e. the Bishops), of deciding for the people what they were to believe. It was very natural that the fanatical, in rejecting the authority of the Church, should reject all external

authority in matters of religion. They understood by the right of private judgment, the right of every man to determine what he should believe from the operations of his own mind and from his own inward experience, independently of the Scriptures. But as it is palpably absurd to expect, on such a subject as religion, a certainty either satisfactory to ourselves or authoritative for others, from our own reason or feelings, it was inevitable that these subjective convictions should be referred to a supernatural source. Private revelations, an inward light, the testimony of the Spirit, came to be exalted over the authority of the Bible.

Secondly, the Reformers taught that religion is a matter of the heart, that a man's acceptance with God does not depend on his membership in any external society, on obedience to its officers, and on sedulous observance of its rites and ordinances; but on the regeneration of his heart, and his personal faith in the Son of God, manifesting itself in a holy life. This was a protest against the fundamental principle of Romanism, that all within the external organization which Romanists call the Church, are saved, and all out of it are lost. It is not a matter of surprise that evil men should wrest this principle, as they do all other truths, to their own destruction. Because religion does not consist in externals, many rushed to the conclusion that externals, -- the Church, its ordinances, its officers, its worship, -- were of no account. These principles were soon applied beyond the sphere of religion. Those who regarded them themselves as the organs of God, emancipated from the authority of the Bible and exalted above the Church, came to claim exemption from the authority of the State. To this outbreak the grievous and long-continued oppression of the peasantry greatly contributed, so that this spirit of fanaticism and revolt rapidly spread over all Germany, and into Switzerland and Holland.

The Popular Disorders not the Effects of the Reformation.

The extent to which these disorders spread, and the rapidity with which they diffused themselves, show that they were not the mere outgrowth of the Reformation. The principles avowed by the Reformers, and the relaxation of papal authority occasioned by the Reformation, served but to inflame the elements which had for years been slumbering in the minds of the people. The innumerable associations and fellowships, of which mention was made in the preceding section, had leavened the public mind with the principles of pantheistic Mysticism, which were the prolific source of evil. Men who imagined themselves to be forms in which God existed and acted, were not likely to be subject to any authority human or divine, nor were they apt to regard anything as sinful which they felt inclined to do.

These men also had been brought up under the Papacy. According to the papal theory, especially as it prevailed during the Middle Ages, the Church was a theocracy, whose representatives were the subjects of a constant inspiration rendering them infallible as teachers and absolute as rulers. All who opposed the Church were rebels against God, whom to destroy was a duty both to God and man. These ideas Munzer and his followers applied to themselves. They were the true Church. They were inspired. They were entitled to determine what is true in matters of doctrine. They were entitled to rule with absolute authority in church and state. All who opposed them, opposed God, and ought to be exterminated. Munzer died upon the scaffold: thus was fulfilled anew our Lord's declaration, "Those who take the sword, shall perish by the sword."

B. Mystics among the Reformers.

Few of the theologians contemporary with Luther took any part in this fanatical movement. To a certain extent this however was done by Carlstadt (Bodenstein), archdeacon and afterwards professor of theology

at Wittenberg. At first he cooperated zealously with the great Reformer, but when Storch and Stubener claiming to be prophets, came to Wittenberg during Luther's confinement at Wartburg, and denounced learning and Church institutions, and taught that all reliance was to be placed on the inward light, or supernatural guidance of the Spirit, Carlstadt gave them his support and exhorted the students to abandon their studies and to betake themselves to manual labor. Great disorder following these movements, Luther left his place of seclusion, appeared upon the scene, and succeeded in allaying the tumult. Carlstadt then withdrew from Wittenberg, and ultimately united himself with Schnwenkfeld, a more influential opponent of Luther and who was equally imbued with the spirit of Mysticism.

Sckwenkfeld.

Schwenkfeld, a nobleman born 1490, in the principality of Lignitz, in Lower Silesia, was a man of great energy and force of character, exemplary in his conduct, of extensive learning and indefatigable diligence. He at first took an active part in promoting the Reformation, and was on friendly terms with Luther, Moiancthon, and the other leading Reformers. Being a man not only of an independent way of thinking, but confident and zealous in maintaining his peculiar opinions, he soon separated himself from other Protestants and passed his whole life in controversy; condemned by synods and proscribed by the civil authorities, he was driven from city to city, until his death, which occurred in 1561.

That Schwenkfeld differed not only from the Romanists, but from Lutherans and Reformed on all the great doctrines then in controversy, is to be referred to the fact that he held, in common with the great body of the Mystics of the Middle Ages, that union or oneness with God, not in nature or character only, but also in being or substance, was the one great desideratum and essential condition of holiness and felicity. To avoid the pantheistic doctrines into which the majority of the Mystics were led, he held to a form of dualism. Creatures exist out of God, and are due to the exercise of his power. In them there is nothing of the substance of God, and therefore nothing really good. With regard to men, they are made good and blessed by communicating to them the substance of God. This communication is made through Christ. Christ is not, even as to his human nature, a creature. His body and soul were formed out of the substance of God. While on earth, in his state of humiliation, this substantial unity of his humanity with God, was undeveloped and unrevealed. Since his exaltation it is completely deified, or lost in the divine essence. It followed from these principles, First, That the external church, with its ordinances and means of grace, was of little importance. Especially that the Scriptures are not, even instrumentally, the source of the divine life. Faith does not come by hearing, but from the Christ within; i. e. from the living substance of God communicated to the soul. This communication is to be sought by abnegation, renunciation of the creature, by contemplation and prayer. Secondly, as to the sacrament of the supper, which then was the great subject of controversy, Schwenkfeld stood by himself. Not admitting that Christ had any material body or blood, he could not admit that the bread and wine were transubstantiated into his body and blood, as Romanists teach; nor that his body and blood were focally present in the sacrament, in, with, and under the bread and wine, as Luther held; nor could he admit the dynamic presence of Christ's body, as taught by Calvin; nor that the Lord's Supper was merely a significant and commemorative ordinance, as Zwingle taught. He held his own doctrine. He transposed the words of Christ. Instead of "This (bread) is my body," he said, the true meaning and intent of Christ was, "My body is bread;" that is, as bread is the staff and source of life to the body, so my body, formed of the essence of God, is the life of the soul.

A third inference from Schnwenkfeld's fundamental principle was that the redemption of the soul is purely subjective; something wrought in the soul itself. He denied justification by faith as Luther taught that doctrine, and which Luther regarded as the life of the Church. He said that we are justified not by what

Christ has done for us, but by what He does within us. All we need is the communication of the life or substance of Christ to the soul. With him, as with Mystics generally, the ideas of guilt and expiation were ignored.

Later Mystics.

The succession of mystical writers was kept up by such men as Paracelsus, Weigel, Jacob Boehme, and others. The first named was a physician and chemist, who combined natural philosophy and alchemy with his theosophy. He was born in 1493 and died in 1541. Weigel, a pastor, was born in Saxony in 1533, and died in 1588. His views were formed under the influence of Tauler, Schwenkfeld, and Paracelsus. He taught, as his predecessors had done, that the inner word, and not the Scriptures, was the source of true knowledge, that all that God creates is God himself, and that all that is good in man is of the substance of God. The most remarkable writer of this class was Jacob Boehme, who was born near Gorlitz in Silesia, in 1575. His parents were peasants, and he himself a shoemaker. That such a man should write books which have proved a mine of thoughts to Schelling, Hegel, and Coleridge, as well as to a whole class of theologians, is decisive evidence of his extraordinary gifts. In character he was mild, gentle, and devout; and although denounced as a heretic, he constantly professed his allegiance to the faith of the Church. He regarded himself as having received in answer to prayer, on three different occasions, communications of divine light and knowledge which he was impelled to reveal to others. He did not represent the primordial being as without attributes or qualities of which nothing could be predicated, but as the seat of all kinds of forces seeking development. What the Bible teaches of the Trinity, he understood as an account of the development of the universe out of God and its relation to him. He was a theosophist in one sense, in which Vaughan²⁹ defines the term, "One who gives you a theory of God or of the works of God, which has not reason, but an inspiration of his own for its basis." "The theosophists," says Fleming,³⁰ "are a school of philosophers who mix enthusiasm with observation, alchemy with theology, metaphysics with medicine, and clothe the whole with a form of mystery and inspiration."³¹

§ 5. Quietism.

A. Its general character.

Tholuck³² says "There is a law of seasons in the spiritual, as well as in the physical world, in virtue of which when the time has come, without apparent connection, similar phenomena reveal themselves in different places. As towards the end of the fifteenth century an ecclesiastical-doctrinal reformatory movement passed over the greater part of Europe, in part without apparent connection; so at the end of the seventeenth a mystical and spiritual tendency was almost as extensively manifested. In Germany, it took the form of Mysticism and Pietism; in England, of Quakerism; in France, of Jansenism and Mysticism; and in Spain and Italy, of Quietism." This movement was in fact what in our day would be called a revival of religion. Not indeed in a form free from grievous errors, but nevertheless it was a return to the religion of the heart, as opposed to the religion of forms. The Mystics of this period, although they constantly appealed to the mediaeval Mystics, even to the Areopagite, and although they often used the same forms of expression, yet they adhered much more faithfully to Scriptural doctrines and to the faith of the Church. They did not fall into Pantheism, or believe in the absorption of the soul into the substance of God. They held, however, that the end to be attained was union with God. By this was not meant what Christians generally understand by that term; congeniality with God, delight in his perfections, assurance of his love, submission to his will, perfect satisfaction in the enjoyment of his favour. It was something more than all this, something mystical and therefore inexplicable; a matter of feeling not something to be understood or

explained; a state in which all thought, all activity was suspended; a state of perfect quietude in which the soul is lost in God, -- an "ecoulement et liquefaction de l'ame en Dieu," as it is expressed by St. Francis de Sales. This state is reached by few. It is to be attained not by the use of the means of grace or ordinances of the Church. The soul should be raised above the need of all such aids. It rises even above Christ, insomuch that it is not He whom the soul seeks, nor God in him; but God as God; the absolute, infinite God. The importance of the Scriptures, of prayer, of the sacraments, and of the truth concerning Christ, was not denied; but all these were regarded as belonging to the lower stages of the divine life. Nor was this rest and union with God to be attained by meditation; for meditation is discursive. It implies an effort to bring truth before the mind, and fixing the attention upon it. All conscious self-activity must be suspended in order to this perfect rest in God. It is a state in which the soul is out of itself; a state of ecstasy, according to the etymological meaning of the word.

This state is to be reached in the way prescribed by the older Mystics; first, by negation or abstraction; that is, the abstraction of the soul from everything out of God, from the creature, from all interest, concern, or impression from sensible objects. Hence the connection between Mysticism, in this form, and asceticism. Not only must the soul become thus abstracted from the creature, but it must be dead to self. All regard to self must be lost. There can be no prayer, for prayer is asking something from self; no thanksgiving, for thanksgiving implies gratitude for good done to self. Self must be lost. There must be no preference for heaven over hell. One of the points most strenuously insisted upon was a willingness to be damned, if such were the will of God. In the controversy between Fenelon and Bossuet, the main question concerned disinterested love, whether in loving God the soul must be raised above all regard to its own holiness and happiness. This pure or disinterested love justifies, or renders righteous in the sight of God. Although the Mystics of this period were eminently pure as well as devout, they nevertheless sometimes laid down principles, or at least used expressions, which gave their enemies a pretext for charging them with Antinomianism. It was said, that a soul filled with this love, or reduced to this entire negation of self, cannot sin; "sin is not in, but outside of him:" which was made to mean, that nothing was sin to the perfect. It is an instructive psychological fact that when men attempt or pretend to rise above the law of God, they sink below it; that Perfectionism has so generally led to Antinomianism.

B. Leaders of this Movement.

The principal persons engaged in promoting this remarkable religious movement were Molinos, Madame Guyon, and Archbishop Fenelon. Michael Molinos, born 1640, was a Spanish priest. About 1670 he became a resident of Rome, where he gained a great reputation for piety and mildness, and great influence from his position as confessor to many families of distinction. He enjoyed the friendship of the highest authorities in the Church, including several of the cardinals, and the Pope, Innocent XI., himself. In 1675 he published his "Spiritual Guide," in which the principles above stated were presented. Molinos did not claim originality, but professed to rely on the Mystics of the Middle Ages, several of whom had already been canonized by the Church. This, however, did not save him from persecution. His first trial indeed before the Inquisition resulted in his acquittal. But subsequently, through the influence of the Jesuits and of the court of Louis XIV., he was, after a year's imprisonment, condemned. Agreeably to his principle of entire subjection to the Church, he retracted his errors, but failed to secure the confidence of his judges. He died in 1697. His principal work, "Manuductio Spiritualis," or Spiritual Guide, was translated into different languages, and won for him many adherents in every part of the Catholic world. When he was imprisoned, it is said, that twenty thousand letters from all quarters, and many of them from persons of distinction, were found among his papers, assuring him of the sympathy of their authors with him in his

spirit and views. This is proof that there were at that time thousands in the Romish Church who had not bowed the knee to the Baal of formalism.

Madame Guyon.

The most prominent and influential of the Quietists, as they were called, was Madame Guyon, born 1648 and died 1717. She belonged to a rich and noble family; was educated in a cloister, married at sixteen to a man of rank and wealth and of three times her age; faithful and devoted, but unhappy in her domestic relations; adhering zealously to her Church, she passed a life of incessant labour, and that, too, embittered by persecution. When still in the cloister she came under the influence of the writings of St. Francis de Sales, which determined her subsequent course. Enthusiastic in temperament, endowed with extraordinary gifts, she soon came to regard herself as the recipient of visions, revelations, and inspirations by which she was impelled to write, and, in the first instance, to devote herself to the conversion of Protestants. Failing in this, she considered it her vocation to become the mother of spiritual children, by bringing them to adopt her views of the inner life. To this object she devoted herself with untiring energy and great success, her adherents, secret and avowed, being numbered by thousands, or, as she supposed, by millions. She thus drew upon herself, although devoted to the Church, the displeasure of the authorities, and was imprisoned for seven years in the Bastille and other prisons in France. The latter years of her life she spent i

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