

Practical Mysticism: the Way of the Future

William Meader

Summary

This article examines the next step in the evolution of mysticism. Its fundamental premise states that because human consciousness is evolving, our mystical relationship to life must also change. Entitled *Practical Mysticism*, this new form of spiritual yearning focuses on the importance of finding practical application to one's mystical insights. It encourages an individual to utilize both the heart and mind in order to find practical solutions to the issues facing the human condition. Unlike the cloistering tendencies of the past, practical mysticism places its emphasis on serving humanity within crucible of culture and civilization. Its emergence is evolutionary, and is related to the dawning Age of Aquarius.

Introduction

For centuries, mysticism has been a major force in our quest to experience God and the spiritual dimension of life. Our yearning to find relationship with the Divine is ancient, and has been an instinctual impulse within us since the dawning hour of humankind. Indeed, this urge is woven into the very fabric of human consciousness. It is a heartfelt desire to establish a deep and abiding union with God's love, and from this, experience a "peace that passeth understanding." Yet our relationship with God is an evolving thing, as is everything else in life. Though mysticism has been the emphasis of the past, it is gradually evolving into a new and more enlightened approach to God and our understanding of spiritual living. This new approach has been called many things, but its most succinct and useful title is Practical Mysticism.

Practical Mysticism is not a spiritual approach that denies the validity of mysticism (as we traditionally understand this term). Instead, it is the next stage in its evolution. Mysticism

has, historically, emphasized the importance of relating to God's love. It is based upon the conviction that God is love, and that to find a deep love within oneself, is to find divinity. A practical mystic would not refute the truth of this notion. Yet in addition to this view, the practical mystic understands that God is not only a representative of love, but also of mind and intelligence.

This is the essential difference between traditional mysticism and the perspective advocated within Practical Mysticism. To the practical mystic, God is love and mind, and equally so. Both represent sacred attributes of divinity seeking expression through humanity. As our mystical understanding of life matures, we are beginning to understand that the use of the mind (higher mind) is a gate to God. It is a portal into the will and intelligence of divinity, just as the heart is the way to divine love.

As an individual's abstract mind is developed (in conjunction with love), s/he begins to realize that God speaks to humanity through lofty and profound ideas. From this, a new understanding of life emerges. It is a recognition that humanity is truly evolving. However, it is not evolution as we typically consider it. Unlike the Darwinian notion that survival of the fittest propels evolutionary change, the practical mystic realizes that humanity evolves through its relationship to progressive ideas and their practical application.

About the Author

William Meader, a resident of Oregon, is an author, teacher and counselor. Much of his work is focused on the subjects of spiritual creativity, the evolution of consciousness and the astrology of the soul. He teaches various meditation practices. Presently he is teaching in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. His website is: www.meader.org.

Practical Mysticism states that service to humanity needs to be centered in compassion, while at the same time expressed with wisdom and intelligence. It demands that we learn to establish a deep connection to the soul's love while simultaneously applying the wisdom of the mind in practical ways. Too often mystics are lovingly compelled, but lack the ability to demonstrate practical skills for living. This must change. Through widespread education in recent years, humanity's ability to think and reason has increased tremendously. We therefore live in a time when love alone will not do. Instead, love must be accompanied by intelligent thought and practical skill in action. This is the mantle of the practical mystic.

Historical Perspective

When we view the historical underpinnings of religion, we see that mysticism is the ground that gives birth to theology. In its early phases, a religion is largely mystical and only later hardens itself with unnecessary creed and dogma. Yet, even with the destructive introduction of dogma, the mystical tendencies of a religion

are still held by some of its exponents. In many ways the orientation found in certain branches of Christianity give evidence to this. The belief in cloistered living is one such indication.

Christian mysticism has been governed by the assumption that to find God (in the deepest sense) requires separation from society, and to live a life of contemplative solitude. Though not denying that there is a measure of truth to this, Practical Mysticism doesn't emphasize this notion. Instead, finding the divine within society is the primary theme. To the practical

mystic, divinity is found within the crucible of culture and civilization. And, it is this conviction that motivates the practical mystic in his/her commitment to serve humanity.

Practical Mysticism and the Dawning Age

The cloistering tendency still found in religion is actually a residual effect of life lived during the Piscean Era. During that great astrological epoch it was believed that rapport

with God is deepened by removing oneself from the doings of the world. From this, monastic theology came into being, and convents and monasteries provided the needed isolation. Indeed, for the last two thousand years this has been the ordained means for finding God. However, humanity is now in transition, astrologically considered. At this remarkable time in history we find ourselves moving between two great ages—Pisces and the emerging sign of Aquarius. A new order is therefore on the horizon, and

with it comes the next step in the evolution of humanity's mystical relationship to life. Indeed, the notion that God is primarily found in seclusion is gradually coming to the end.

The dawning Age of Aquarius represents the next step in the development of our understanding of God and humanity's relationship to the divine. This zodiacal sign symbolizes the importance of intelligent and practical approaches to life. Aquarius is known as the sign of service, and is profoundly related to the development of the higher mind. In addition, it encourages us to realize that there is no place

Gradually we are realizing that God is not just love, but is also mind. Practical mystics understand that the heart and the mind are equally divine, and both must be utilized in service to humanity's betterment. Such people advocate the importance of bringing spiritual wisdom into practical expression. They seek to build a new civilization where humanity's oneness is recognized and outer societal structures evidence this recognition.

where God is not. As such, God is equally present in the hectic circumstances of urban life as in the isolation offered in remote places. A religious monastery, places of science and the arts, or even the ghetto are all gates that lead to the divine. This sign hearkens to the cultivation of lofty thought and the need to find practical methods that support the evolution of culture and the upliftment of civilization. Our future largely depends upon this. The sign of Aquarius is the force that urges us toward Practical Mysticism. Even so, it is we who must rise to the occasion.

One of the perceptual differences between the mystic and the practical mystic has to do with belief about the nature of creation and its relationship to the Creator. Historically, Western theologies have held the view that there is a gulf between God and creation. This is the root assumption in the mind of the Western mystic, and has led to a sense of isolation from God. Indeed, this is why some scholars have referred to Western theologies as religions of exile. Yet, practical mysticism sees this in a different manner. It is not God and creation, but God as creation that the practical mystic holds true. This is the deeper reason why the practical mystic sees God within every facet of civilization. Every societal institution is understood as an aspect of divinity struggling to evolve toward a perfected expression. Spiritual service, therefore, has relevance in all places.

The Measure of Good and Evil

A key distinction between the mystic of old versus the practical mystic has to do with the question of good and evil, right and wrong. Over the centuries, Western theologies have strongly delineated these two things. The view has been that there is good and evil and a choice must be made. The notion of hell and the devil emerge as tools used to define evil and to prompt people (usually through fear) to make a choice in favor of goodness. However,

the practical mystic does not see it this way. Instead, there is an understanding that everything in the world is an expression of both darkness and light, of good and evil.

Every human being, life event and social institution hold measures of truth and distortion. Indeed, this is one way (of many) to understand evil. Simply stated, evil is the distortion of truth. We can easily see this when we consider the fact that a vice is often a virtue that has been distorted or misapplied. All things are imperfect, and therefore have measures of distortion and impurity (evil) in their expression. This is true for the criminal and the saint alike. The simplistic notion that darkness is due to origin sin, as Western theology suggests, is being superseded by a more enlightened understanding of evil. Evil is a dynamic characteristic found in the physics of creation itself, and is naturally a part of the evolution of all things. To the practical mystic, the question is not what is good and what is evil. Rather, it is to see all things as manifestations of both, and to facilitate the transformation of the lesser (evil) on behalf of the greater (goodness).

Mysticism has been governed by the belief that love is the only road that leads to God. Yet, we are entering a new and dynamic phase in the evolution of mystical yearning—the era of Practical Mysticism. Gradually we are realizing that God is not just love, but is also mind. Practical mystics understand that the heart and the mind are equally divine, and both must be utilized in service to humanity's betterment. Such people advocate the importance of bringing spiritual wisdom into practical expression. They seek to build a new civilization where humanity's oneness is recognized and outer societal structures evidence this recognition. This is done by inwardly aligning with the soul while simultaneously keeping one's feet planted on the ground. Such is the formula for bringing heaven to earth, and is the mandate of the practical mystic.

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Kathy Newburn

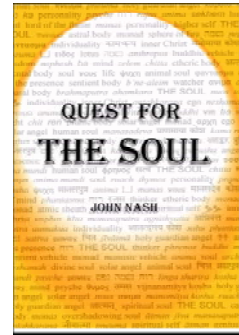
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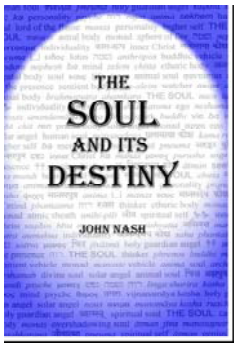
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