Protestant theology"?[1] But even this description is hardly adequate to the extraordinary display at Sheffield.

For practical conclusion, bearing in mind the history of Ambrose Phillips de Lisle, devoted and fervent but for a time misled, and the movement with which he was associated (singularly resembling the present one), we may well adopt the words of the late Father Clarke, S.J.:

> Most Catholics have encountered from time to time Anglicans who have sought to fraternise with us on the common ground of dogmatic belief. They urge us to take part with them against the common foe who is threatening to sweep away all religion whatsoever. .... It seems a little hard to tell these well-intentioned. well-meaning people, acting in good faith, that between us and them there is a great gulf fixed, that they really belong to the ranks of the enemy whom they desire th repel, *that they are, however unwillingly, his allies and friends, -promoting his interest and furthering his cause.* Yet it is no true kindness to put this antagonism in the background, and, though we ought to guard against any uncourteous or offensive rejection of their advances, yet we should never forget the fundamental opposition which exists between our religion and theirs; that we are as Catholics the children of light, while they are as non-Catholics the children of darkness; that as regards principles they are our enemies no less than the open unbeliever, and though we are glad to recognize in them a happy inconsistency, which causes them to profess a dogmatic belief where a dogmatic belief is logically untenable, yet to ally ourselves with them would be no less a treachery to our Faith, than a certain method of involving ourselves in the destruction impending over them.[2]

These grave words are as true now as they were thirty-seven years ago, although Anglicanism has been wonderfully Catholicized in the meantime. For it has not crossed the gulf which yawns between Authority and Private Judgment, between a living infallible Teacher and doctrinal independence.

h. e. g. rope.

[1] **Dr. Aveling in *Dublin Review,* Oct. 1905, p. 339.**
[2] **The Month, Sept. 1885, p. 1.**

MYSTICISM, FALSE AND TRUE

FOR some years past mysticism has been in great vogue. According to Miss Underhill this was to be expected and is quite natural. The nineteenth century was a period of great expansion and progress in science, the arts, literature and politics; and after such a period it was to be expected that a period of renewed interest in mysticism would succeed. For mysticism is humanity's finest flower, it is the product at which all the great creative epochs of the race have aimed.

A Catholic holds that true mysticism is not a product of nature but of grace. Nature may indeed furnish the occasion for the manifestation of grace. And so he would prefer to explain the modem interest in mysticism as a revolt of the spiritual nature of man aided by grace against the secularism and materialism of the age. He would consider that the fact that mysticism also flourished in the sixteenth century confirmed his contention. Undoubtedly the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were periods of great expansion, but they were also periods of great religious and moral depravity. But God did not leave Himself without witnesses then; it may be that He does not wish to leave Himself without witnesses now, and on this account has inspired the renewed interest in mysticism.

However this may be, Catholics are always interested in the spiritual life, a term which they prefer to mysticism'. They are interested to see how St. Augustine, Dionysius the Areopagite, Richard of St. Victor, St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, and innumerable other heroes of theirs, are studied and quoted by modem non-Catholic writers on mysticism. Many of these writers display abundant industry and learning. Although they generally give the pre-eminence to great Catholic mystics like St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, yet they class with them, as belonging to the same category, pagan philosophers such as Plato and Plotinus, eastern sages of China and India, and men like Jacob Boehme and XVilliam Blake. They usually show want of insight into Catholic doctrine, and detect similarity of teaching where little or none exists. I will quote one or two instances of what I mean. Professor Rufus M. Jones writes:

Mysticism in its narrow and exact historical significance is a doctrine of union with the Absolute. It implies a certain metaphysical conception of God and of the soul, and it implies further a mystic way of obtaining union with the Absolute. The fundamental metaphysics in which the doctrine of Christian mysticism is grounded is Greek rationalistic metaphysics formulated by Socrates, and his great successors, Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus. God, according to this Greek interpretation, is Absolute Reality, Pure Being, Perfect Form, with no admixture of matter, *i.e.,* with no potentiality or possibility of change. God is That which absolutely is, one, permanent, immutable, and free of everything that implies process or becoming. He cannot therefore be found in finite things, or in transitory happenings, or in passing states of mind. He is utterly beyond the *here* and the *none,* He is for ever above all that can be seen or felt or known or named. There is, however, something in the human soul which is unsundered from the Absolute, something which essentially is that Reality. There are many names for this unsundered something in the soul, "pure reason,*' "active reason," "creative reason," I"recollective faculty," "apex of mind," "abyss of mind," "ground of consciousness," "synteresis," "divine spark," "word of God," "inward light," "uncreated centre." "However it may be named, it is conceived as an original ground or junction of soul with God, an unlost and inalienable soul-centre, the source and basis of all real knowledge of absolute truth, of the idea of the Good, and of all ideas of universal significance. The soul can know super-empirical reality only because when it sinks to its deepest centre, it is one with that reality, it is identical with what it knows.1

Dean Inge writes:·

Greek Christianity remained predominantly Neoplatonic; Gregory of Nyssa and Basil are full of echoes of Plotinus and his school. With Augustine Latin theology follows the same path. Plotinus, read in a Latin translation, was the schoolmaster who brought Augustine to Christ. There is therefore nothing startling in the considered opinion of Rudolf Eucken, that Plotinus has influenced Christian theology more than any other thinker (since St. Paul, he should no doubt have added). From the time of Augustine to the present day Neoplatonism has always been at home in the Christian Church.2

These extracts give expression to the current view with tolerable accuracy and fulness. That view maintains that Catholic spiritual teaching is derived rather from Plato **and**

* ***Hastings' Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,*** **ix. 84.**
* ***The Philosophy of Plotinas,*** **i. II.**

Neoplatonists than from Christ. The subject is a large one, but I propose to treat here of only a small portion of it. The aim of mysticism or of the spiritual life is to attain to union with God, as Mr. Rufus M. Jones says. Let us see what this union implied in the doctrine of Plotinus, and what it implies in Catholic teaching. It will then be clear whether Catholic teaching on the point is derived from Neoplatonism.

It may be admitted at once that some of the terminology of the subject was borrowed by St. Augustine and by Dionysius the Areopagite from the Neoplatonists. They found it ready made to their hands, and it was suitable for their purpose. With great insight, Plato and the Neoplatonists discerned the soul's longing for the Source of its being, and they expressed those natural desires of the soul in very beautiful language. But their ideas of God, of the human soul, and of their relations to each other, were quite different from the teaching of the Catholic Church on the same subjects. The terms used by Neoplatonist mystics received a quite different meaning when they were used by St. Augustine and others to describe the spiritual teaching of the Catholic Church. In much the same way the term Logos is used by the Alexandrian Jew Philo and by St. John, but with very different meanings.

Making large use of the labours of Dean Inge, I will first of all state briefly the views of Plotinus on the Absolute Godhead, on human nature and on their relations to each other.

The philosophy of Plotinus is often obscure, arbitrary, and inconsistent with itself, but his opinions on the subjects just mentioned may be summarized as follows.

The whole of Reality is spiritual, knowable and single. There is a hierarchy of Being gradually sloping from the lowest to ihe highest. In this hierarchy there are no gaps and chasms, there is no absolute barrier between the human and divine, between the natural and the supernatural. There is one universal substance.

There are two fundamental trinities in the hierarchy of Being, the Absolute (the One, the Good), Spirit and Soul; and in man, Spirit, soul and body.

The One Absolute Being is Jbeyond existence, beyond Spirit, and life, ineffable. He does not think, is not conscious, but He knows Himself by direct intuition, He abides in a state of wakefulness beyond being. We must not attri-

bute will to the One, but we may say that He is what He willed to be, for He posited Himself. As the source and goal of revelation He cannot be revealed, as the source and goal of knowledge He cannot be known.

The One is the First Cause, but as the spiritual and phenomenal worlds are coeternal with the One, causality means little more than a hierarchy in Reality, leading up to the all-embracing Absolute, in which everything is contained. In fact, the Plotinian philosophy is a sort of spiritualistic pantheism.

The One generates Spirit. The One turned towards Himself and looked, and this seeing is Spirit. Where Spirit energizes in itself the objects of its activity are other spirits, but where it energizes outside itself, soul. There is nothing to prevent soul becoming spirit, nor is there any barrier between spirit and the One.

The ineffable Godhead is supra-personal. In Heaven the Godhead is an atmosphere rather than a person.

Matter is a mere abstraction. It is immaterial, it is the bare receptacle of forms, the subject of energy, that intangible, impalpable, all but nothing, which remains when we abstract from an object of thought all that makes it an object of thought.

The universal soul casts upon matter a reflection of the forms which it has received from above and the material world springs into being.

Before our birth we existed as pure souls and spirits attached to the universal soul. We neither come into being nor perish. At death a soul that has sinned may be sent for punishment into another body, even that of a beast. Good souls return to the universal soul, but they retain their separateness potentially. Soul by discipline may become spirit, the highest part of man's nature. Spirit is the self-consciousness or the self-contemplation of the Absolute.

We can know God by the discursive reason, but we are also capable of attaining a much more perfect knowledge of Him and of intimate union with Him. We come from the One, we are part of the One, we can return to and, contemplating, be absorbed in the One. The beatific vision is natural to man, all have the faculty, but few use it. The soul must free itself from earthly desires, withdraw its attention from earthly objects, and becoming Spirit, concentrate its gaze on the contemplation of the One. We will now let

Plotinus speak for himself in Dean Inge's translation: the beauty of thought and language is manifest, but no less evident is the essential Pantheism.

We always move round the One, but we do not always fix our gaze on it; we are like a choir of singers who stand round the conductor, but do not always sing in time because their attention is diverted to some external object; when they look at the conductor they sing well and are really with him. So we always move round the One, if we did not, we should be dissolved and no longer exist; but we do not always look towards the One. When we do, we attain the end of our existence, and our repose, and we no longer sing out of time, but form in very truth a divine chorus round the One. In this choral dance the soul sees the fountain of life and the source of Spirit, the source of Being, the Cause of Good, the root of Soul. . . . . In it our soul rests, out of reach of evil; it has ascended to a region which is free from all evil; there it has spiritual vision, and is exempt from passion and suffering; there it truly lives. For bur present life without God is a mere shadow and mimicry of the true life. - - - -

We must then hasten to depart hence; to detach ourselves as much as we can from the body to which we are unhappily bound, to endeavour to embrace God with all our being, and to leave no part of ourselves which is not in contact with Him. Then we can see God and ourselves, as far as is permitted; we see ourselves glorified, full of spiritual light, or rather we see ourselves as pure, subtle, ethereal light; we become divine, or rather we know ourselves to be divine. Then indeed is the flame of life kindled, that flame which when we sink back to earth, sinks with us. - - - .

Dean Inge has told us that with St. Augustine Latin theology became predominantly Neoplatonic. St. Augustine read Plotinus in a Latin translation, and hence from his time to the present day Neoplatonism has always been at home in the Christian Church.

We cannot do better than let St. Augustine speak for himself. In his voluminous works he makes his attitude towards Plato and the Neoplatonists quite clear.

He found much to admire in them. Before he read them he was given to sensual pleasures and found it impossible to form a clear concept of spirit. The Platonists furnished him with a spiritual philosophy of great elevation and beauty. It was the pedagogue that brought him to Christ, as Dean Inge says. St. Augustine understood Plato to teach that the

end of life is to live according to virtue, and that only he can do this who knows and imitates God. The Platonists are nearer than other philosophers to us Christians because they teach that the supreme and true God is the author of all created things, the light of all intellect, the good of all action, the beginning of our nature, the truth of all learning, and the felicity of life.[1] Without doubt St. Augustine liked the Platonists and showed a tendency to interpret them in a Christian sense. Their philosophy contained much truth, which he thought that Plato had learned from the Old Testament writers. But when he began to read the Christian Scriptures, St. Augustine confesses that he found in them all the truth that he had learned from the Platonists, together with the grace of God by which human passion is subdued.[2]

This those writings contain not [he says]. Those pages present not the image of this piety, the tears of confession, Thy sacrifice, a troubled spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, the salvation of the people, the bridal City, the earnest of the Holy Ghost, the cup of our Redemption. No man sings there "Shall not my soul be submitted unto God? for of Him cometh my salvation. For He is my God and my salvation, my guardian, I shall no more be moved." No one there hears Him call, "Come unto Me all ye that labour." They scorn to learn of Him because He is meek and humble of heart, for these things hast Thou hid from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to little ones. For it is one thing from the mountain's shaggy, top to see the land of peace and to find no way thither, and another to keep on the way that leads thither, guarded by the host of the heavenly General.

So St. Augustine made use of the language of the Platonists to expound Christian doctrine; he found in it the terms that he needed to express the spiritual truths of Christianity. He notes that St. Paul had a habit of appealing to pagan writers and using their language as when he preached the Gospel to the Athenians. St. Augustine did the same. During the first few years of his conversion, and, as he confesses, before he knew Christian theology, he occasionally wrote things which afterwards caused him displeasure. In the *Retractations,* written at the end of his life, he laments that he gave too much praise to the Platonists in his earlier writings, bad men, he says, against whom it is necessary to de-

* *De Civ. Dei,* viii. c. 9 ff.
1 Conference, VII. c. 31.

fend Christian doctrine. He corrects several errors of importance which he had unwarily imbibed from them.

St. Augustine recognized that the Platonic doctrine concerning God and man's true happiness was nearer to Christianity than that of other philosophers, but he also admitted that there was a long distance between them. As a matter of fact, there are profound differences between the two systems.

Such fundamental terms as God and Creation have different meanings in Plotinus and in St. Augustine.

The supreme God of Plotinus, the One, Absolute Godhead, is beyond existence, beyond life, beyond Spirit, He is ineffable. He is not conscious of Himself although he abides in a state of wakefulness. We may not attribute Will to Him. He cannot be revealed. He is beyond personality and is impersonal. He may be called Creator and the First Cause, but in a special sense. From all eternity He contemplates Himself, and His contemplations are the universe. The spiritual and phenomenal worlds are coetemal with Himself, and everything is contained in the all-embracing Absolute. Hence the creation is necessary. With St. Augustine God is and exists in the fullest and truest sense. He is Spirit, Life, Truth, Goodness, infinite Intellect and omnipotent Will, in reality and in truth. Personality is predicated of Him in the fullest and most proper sense. These and similar terms are applied to creatures only in an analogous sense. Their being is essentially dependent, potential, finite. Thus there is the widest chasm between the.Creator and the creature, the Divine and the human, the supernatural and the natural. God can be known, though not comprehensively, by reason, by revelation and faith, and by intuitive vision. God has created all things out of nothing in the beginning of time. Before anything was created God existed alone, self-sufficient and supremely happy. He willed to create of His own free Will and infinite Goodness.'

Plotinus' doctrine concerning the nature of man is not less in strong contrast with that of St. Augustine.

According to Plotinus, man is made up of three constituent parts, spirit, soul and body. Spirit is neither bom nor dies, it has existed as a portion of the One from all eternity, and at death it returns to him. It remains distinct from the One and can be separated from him again, but in the meantime there is no difference between them, the whole spiri-

tual world is one Absolute and single being. Plotinus held not only the pre-existence of souls, but their transmigration also. Spirit is sinless as becomes a portion of the Absolute. .Why it should be imprisoned in earthly bodies is not clear in the system of Plotinus.

St. Augustine teaches that man is composed of soul and body, and that both have been created mediately or immediately in time out of nothing by God. In his earlier writings he had said something which favoured the doctrine of pre-existence, but he corrected this in his *Retractations.* In the same work he also corrects another phrase which he had let drop. He had said that the soul at death returns to God; it would be better, he says, to say simply that it goes to God. He has learnt, he says, from Scripture that sin separates from God. He has no such illusion as the sinlessness of the soul, nor did he dream of imagining that the soul or the spirit were a portion of the Absolute.

. . Platonists placed man's supreme happiness in the intuitive vision of God. According to them the immediate and intuitive vision of God is natural to man. All men have the faculty but few use it. This is quite in keeping with the main tenets of their philosophy. They held, as we have seen, that man's spirit is divine. His body, of course, cannot enter into Heaven, but the spirit is at home there, and when released from the body it returns home and becomes one with the One.. .

St. Augustine did not quarrel with the Platonists for placing man's supreme happiness in the intuitive vision of God. But the beatific vision had quite a different meaning for him· It was not natural for man, it was the crowning reward *of* thé supernatural order of grace, as a general rule, to be enjoyed only in the fatherland, in Heaven after death. After the resurrection the body will share in this supernatural privilege. While on earth we can see God by the light of reason and by the light of faith; the light of glory by which we hope to see God face to face is reserved for the life to come. This teaching St. Augustine drew from Holy Scripture. John i. 18,1 John iv. 12,1 Tim. vi. 16, and numerous other texts, declare that man in this life has not and cannot see God. *We see now through a glass darkly but then face to face. Now I know in -part, but then I shall know even as 1 am known.1* In spite, however, of this general rule, St.

• **1 Cot. xiii. ia.**

Augustine was prepared to admit some exceptions to the contrary. The express assertions of Holy Scripture seemed to him to require that we should say that Moses and St. Paul, during their lifetime, in ecstasy, had seen God face to face, and he thought it probable that the same rare privilege had been granted to other saints. In well-known passages in his early work, *On the quantity of the Soul,* in his *Confessions,* and elsewhere, there are obvious reminiscences of Plotinus and Neoplatonism, but they should be interpreted by the light of his dogmatic teaching, which they certainly do not contradict. If we want instances of Neoplatonism affecting the teaching of Christians we must go to heretics like Arius and Eunomius. Eunomius asserted that man knows God as clearly and fully as He knows Himself, and he was refuted by the great Cappadocian Fathers, St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Gregory of Naziansus.

Enough has been said to show what truth there is in such assertions as I have quoted from Professor Jones and Dean Inge. The union of the soul with God in mystical contemplation was believed to be physical, founded on identity of nature, by the Neoplatonists, as by all Pantheists, ancient and modern. This doctrine is quite untenable for Christians. The creature can only enter into a moral union with the Creator, founded on a harmony of mind, will and heart with Him. In Heaven, indeed, we shall see Him face to face, but even then there will be an infinite distance between the seer and the seen. On earth we can only enjoy a mediate vision of God either through reason or through faithï The assurance and heightened conviction of the mystic that he has seen God comes from himself, sometimes from the devil, sometimes from an interpretation of the action of God, who then works in the soul by the infused virtues of Faith and Charity, helped by the gifts of the Holy Ghost.l

T. SLATER.

* **Benedict XIV.,** ***On the Beatification and Canonization of Sainit,*** **HI. c. a6.**