

A Mystical Encounter

Pulse of Spirit

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I suppose the word *mystical* could mean many different things to different people. When I use the word, I am speaking about a dimension beyond what is usually apparent in the culture in which we live. It is mystical because it has been largely unknown. But that doesn't mean it can't be touched, explored, loved, and known. It is a realm of essence and Being where the powers of Creation are born.

Religion, and all that comes with it, sometimes offers a window into the mystical. Most often, it began with someone who had a mystical encounter. The stories of them are usually told in terms of physical events. Moses saw an angel in a burning bush. Ezekiel describes his mystical encounter this way:

And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as

the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.
Ezekiel 1:4

The Buddha's enlightenment is simply described as sitting under a tree and entering a profound understanding of the way things are.

Mohammed was hugged by the Archangel in a cave and given words to recite.

Even though religion usually begins with a mystical encounter, all too often that isn't the experience of religious people. The icons, beliefs, and traditions aren't giving them access to what the original founder of the tradition encountered. The window into the Unseen that once opened closes, and what is left is only a view of the windowsill, trim, and sash of the window, without vision through the transparent glass to the hidden reality behind all things.

For Christians, the mystical encounter Jesus invited people to know can be lost, covered over by the superstitious beliefs of the ancient world that invaded Early Christianity and grew with the Church over the ages. And still, we have a clear record of his call to people to explore the mystical:

*But rather seek ye the kingdom of God...
Luke 12:32*

As is said of Buddha's enlightenment, this is a profound encounter with the reality of things. It is not a flight of fancy to a separate world. It is an experience of the inner reality of *this world*. Without that experience, and the knowledge that comes with it, humankind is bumping around in the dark, creating human culture as we generally know it today, with all its war, division, and reckless disregard for the natural world.

Without the mystical, people experience separation and isolation. They are out of touch with the fuel for their own creative fire. They don't feel loved, and they lose the capacity to love, for love is born from the Unseen. And so, we have an epidemic of loneliness around the globe. There are many secondary causes of that loneliness—social media, a loss of face-to-face social interaction, the breakdown of community and family, and more. At the root of it all is a lack of spiritual intimacy and a disengagement from the mystical.

As farmer Joel Salatin says, commenting on contemporary society, *Folks, this ain't normal*. Science tells us that there are barriers to moving from separation to participation in a

reality of a higher order. For a human life to be conceived, the enzymes surrounding the male DNA have to break down the shell surrounding the female DNA. Only as that happens can the DNA join to create new life. Under normal circumstances, hydrogen atoms do not fuse to create helium. But at the core of the sun, extraordinary heat and gravitational pressure break down the resistance to fusion. Hydrogen joins hydrogen to create helium. And in the process, the entire solar system is lit up and warmed. What is it in the human experience that breaks down the terrible tendency toward isolation? What breaks down the human shell to allow for an encounter with the mystical? What is the gravity that draws us to the Unseen and allows us to know spiritual intimacy? And what is the heat that transforms and brings fusion?

We could give names to these things. But we might be left with only names and not the experience. It is good to remember that any name, any outer experience, could be only that. Or it could be a window to the mystical. *Love* could be an idea regarding a human experience. Or we could touch it with our intuitive spiritual awareness and be changed by it. *God* could be an old man with a beard. Or *God* could be the hovering presence of the Divine, with us always.

At this time of year, there are all the icons of Christmas. Santa Claus could be a fairy tale for the kids. Or a symbol that reminds us of the beneficence of life itself. A Christmas tree could be a glittery relic of a pagan tradition. Or it could be a reminder of the mystical

dimension of a human being, lit up and sparkly.

The images of Jesus' birth can become tiring year after year. But if we recall that a man walked the earth to remind us how profoundly we are loved, we are moving into the mystical. If we entertain the thought that he had a mortal dimension to who he was, but also an eternal reality, as we all do, perhaps we move into a mystical connection with the Spirit of Love that is the nature of eternal reality.

I invite you to let that mystical reality into your heart this Christmastime. Perhaps it has the power to break down our human shell and our aversion to fusion. Perhaps we will participate in a new spiritual birth. Perhaps we will enter the mystical reality of Christmas.

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