

Sheets - Back of 2 -
Hebrew Bible

next week: 434-~~447~~ (to spread)
461 - end)

2008 Lecture 8

lecture # 9

worship and mysticism in Christianity

Jewish and Christian worship is centered on God and in it man is believed paradoxically to find his highest self-expression and fulfillment in relating himself to God and making God the center of his life.

there are two general forms: worship in the community as found in the synagoge and church and

individual prayer which finds its highest expression in mysticism.

we will deal with both of these in the christian tradition now just as we did in the Jewish last time.

communal worship

the central act of worship for Christianity is the celebration of the Eucharist, called the ^{liturgy} ~~Mass~~ in the catholic church.

in this service there is a ritual repetition of the last supper which Jesus ate with his disciples on the night he was betrayed.

it is believed that his presenece is experienced again in this act.

from the beginning two things appear to have been held generally concerning it:

1. it involved a real present relationship with the risen Christ and

2. it was instituted by Jesus himself.

from the first centuries it was generally accorded that it brought to the receiver the body and blood of Christ as stated in the words of Jesus quoted in the celebration.

this eucharistic celebration is a public external act of worship which is held to reenact and represent in a non-bloody way the sacrifice of Jesus--his offering of himself as the sacred victim to his Father for the redemption of ~~man~~ humanity

it is supposed to be this public corporate act which provides to the worshiper the occasion for his own deepest subjective interior relation to God.

thus it is both individual and collective, ritualized and eliciting spontaneous participation.

it is the central dramatic expression and fulfillment of the religious response in Western Catholic and eastern orthodox Christianity.

Protestant churches simplified much in the years after the reformation but the meaning of the Eucharistic service remained in some sense central for most of the Reformation churches though the idea that the bread and wine were truly the body and blood of Christ went thru changes.

Luther changed the idea of transubstantiation into consubstantiation meaning that the bread and wine were both bread and wine and the body and blood of Christ coexisting.

other reformers such as Zwingli and Calvin denied the real presence of Christ and said it was symbolic only.

other than the Lutherans and Anglicans, this is the view held

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by most of the protestant churches today.

In the Roman Catholic church attendance at Mass on Sundays and on certain feast days is obligatory.

the tendency for the observance of the first day of the week, or the "Lord's Day" in place of the Jewish Sabbath began in N. T. times and was based upon the commemoration of the Resurrection.

in 321 Constantine put out a decree commanding observance of the Lord's day and forbidding all nonagricultural work. this was increasingly made stricter during the middle ages.

in some places, such as england and scotland, this was enforced strictly and one could not even take a walk on sunday.

As Christians followed Jews in observing one day a week as holy, they also followed the Jewish practice of marking the passage of the year by special days of prayer.

in the Western Church a liturgical year developed characterized by two chief seasons, that of Easter and that of Christmas.

Easter season centers on Easter sunday itself with forty days of penitential preparation called Lent which begins on ash Wednesday. this commemorates Jesus 40 days in the wilderness when he fasted and was tempted by the devil.

The feast of Pentacost which is 50 days after Easter commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit on the followers and is "the birthday of the church". Ten days before this is the feast of the ascension when Jesus was taken into heaven in the

presence of his disciples.

Christmas season begins with the first sunday of advent, which comprises four weeks of penitential preparation commemorating the four thousand years which by traditional reckoning the world waited for Christ's coming and includes the feast of the Nativity or Christmas itself, the feast of Jesus' ^{now a feast of Mary} circumcision, Jan. 1 and the feast of the Epiphany, Jan. 6 when the magi came and gave gifts to Jesus.

Easter is a movable feast, originally connected with passover, and hence is still observed on the lunar calendar showing its link with the Jewish year.

Christmas was fixed on December 25 in the forth Cent. to coincide with the pagan celebration of the solstice and thus follows the solar calendar and is linked with the ancient Roman year. Dec. 25 was also the birthday of Mithra the sun god of Persia which was a very popular religion at this time.

during the year there are also feasts of saints, the most solemn of which are dedicated to the virgin Mary. each has its own special prayers and are incorporated into the Mass.

The Eastern church has a similar liturgical calendar divided into three parts.

1. triodion, the fourth sunday before lent to the saturday before easter.

2. Pentacostarion, Easter to the sunday after Pentacost inclusive and

3. Octoechos, the remainder of the year.

Both the western and eastern churches also use the Divine Office which is required of priests and may others in formal religious life.

it is recited or sung at various times during the day and various witha the seasons of the year.

basically the Psalms which make up the presnet psalter in the Jewish Scriptures are basically liturgical prayers and the book of Psalms has often been called the "hymnal of the second temple". the Christians have put it to similar use from the earliest times.

Psalms are also a favorite with protestant churches as well tho not used formally except in the anglican church.

the Rosary has been the most popular prayer among Roman Catholics since the late middle ages.

this prayer was introduced by Dominic, the founder of the Domnican order, in the 13th cent, but actually it seems to have developed gradually under the influence of both Dominican preachers and Cistercian monks.

it consists of saying three sets of five "mysteries" composed of the recitation of 10 ave marias preceded by the Lord's prayer and followed by a doxology praising the Trinity.

these mysteries commemorate important events in the salvation

history of man from the annunciation of the angel to Mary thru the resurrection of Jesus, to Mary's own assumption and coronation as "Queen of Heaven."

this form of devotion was rejected by the reformation as a pious accretion but it has remained popular with catholics. it is said privately or in a semi-public setting.

Like kJewish prayer the prayer of Christians receives its specific characteristic form from the belief in a God at once transcendent and personal, one who is wholly other yet can have a profound personal relationship to humans.

in Christian prayer this relationship is centered upon the redemptive and mediating figure of Christ who comes to them as God and who as fellow man leads them to the Father.

official prayer of the church in the Mass is Christocentric as is the Divine office which means prayer is offered through

Prayer to the saints possesses a different character than prayer addressed to the Godhead. It represents rather a communion between the members of the church in heaven (the church triumphant) and the church on earth (the church militant, in which the former intercedes for the latter before the Divine presence.

The Lord's Prayer is used by all protestant and catholic services and contains the basic elements of prayer--adoration and praise together with petition for earthly and spiritual needs,

including the penitential request for forgiveness.

Christian prayer is meant to be an activity of the entire person--of mind, will and affection. but prayer is not simply a spontaneous expression, it is a duty, and an art about which much has been written.

two distinct kinds of prayer were made early by St. John of Damascus of the Eastern church. these were vocal and mental prayer.

he said prayer is the ascent of the mind to God.

by mental prayer is meant practices of meditation and contemplation which though rejected by many Protestant groups are of tremendous significance in catholic and orthodox religious life.

Mental prayer is often classified as ordinary and extraordinary. the first refers to discursive meditation, affective prayer, and finally contemplation --a more advanced, nondiscursive mode of lifting up the whole person to God.

extraordinary prayer refers to such prayers when they are marked by authentic mystical elements culminating in true mysticism

MYSTICISM

is the name given to a profound personal relationship between humans and God in which a human achieves a real experience of the relation--a vision or union with God in this life.

just as in the Jewish faith, this union does not lead to the

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annihilation of the individuality of the human person. the ontological gulf between the creator and creature remains

what is involved is a relationship in which God gives himself to man and man aided by God gives himself to God . it is a relationship of love.

it is a relationship which is achieved fully only by a few, and if achieved at all, only after long and rigorous preparation involving difficult mental prayer and ascetic exercises.

in all true mysticism a difficult state of purification precedes the achievement of understanding and enlightenment and it is a long process.

in Christian mysticism the genuineness of the mystical experience is seen by the mystics themselves as attested to by its effects in the attitudes and actions of those involved--an increase in such virtues as humility, patience and love (Teresa: Way of Perfection is good example.

what is basic is the relation to God, the experience of God's presence as ineffable love, imageless goodness, measureless light." (Jacopone da Todi). the fruit one brings back is the mark of authenticity of a vision.

institutional religion has often suspected mysticism as a kind of religious individualism outside its sphere of effectiveness. when the church has faltered then often mysticism arises to fill man's needs.

the latest of these phenomena is seen in the charismatic movement which swept the church both protestant and catholic from 1965 to about 1977.

mysticism is feared also because tho it offers the most profound fulfillment of the religious experience it is a difficult path and its demands and attendant strains can give rise to various illusions and to dangerous temptations.

today many protestant theologians (Brunner and Niebuhr) have considered mysticism to be Neo-platonic and unchristian. others, such as Dean Inge and anglican, and Berdyaev and orthodox, see it to be the essence of Christian religiousity. this is true in the Roman tradition also, but in all cases it is realized that there is need for caution and direction.

the great mystics are to the religious life what the great artists are to the life of the senses and the great philosophers to the life of the mind.

the Biblical tradition is one of both morality and a personal relation to God as part of an undivided religious attitude so the mystical tradition has deepened the first side of this unity to the immense enrichment of the second.

EASTERN TRADITION

The tradition of the desert fathers and early monasticism were eastern in their origin the hysachist tradition which sees one going to union with the Godhead through repetition of the Jesus Prayer is also part of the Eastern Orthodox contribution to spirituality.

The Jesus Prayer is a short prayer which goes: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Have mercy on me, a sinner".

this was meant to be said in rhythm with ones breathing much in

the Eastern way. In fact, this is basically a "Christian mantra" and is still widely used in the east. A book The Way of a Pilgrim came out of Russia in the mid nineteenth cent. which shows how this was revered in the Russian Orthodox church showing it as a means to come to "prayer without ceasing" which Paul advocated in his letters.

Dionysius the Pseudo-areopagite (c. 500 c.e.)

was probably a Syrian monk who wrote in Greek, between 480 and 530 c.e. treatises on the Divine Names, Mystical theology, and the Celestial Hierarchy and the Ecclesiastical hierarchy as well as ten epistles.

He claimed to be the Dionysius converted by St. Paul in the Areopagus (Acts 17:34) and addressed his writings to St. Timothy and St. John. but these all are a literary device.

His Christology is post-Chalcedonian (451 was the council) and he depended on a Neo platonist philosopher Prolus (d. 485) so he is accurately placed at the end of the fifth century.

He was probably a coiner of the word Hierarchy which he defined as "a sacred order and knowledge and operation tending to the analogous imitation of God according to the enlightenment given by him. It is correlative with 'thearchy' which means God is the source of our sanctification.

As a neo-platonist he is concerned with the 'divine progression' from the Godhead to the world, the chain which links ordinary mortals to God.

There are three orders of angelic beings. In the highest are the "great intelligences" who stand at the vestibule of the Godhead. they act as prisms conveying the Divine FLIGHT in such intensity as those below can stand. for it is impossible that the beams of the Divine Source can shine upon us unless they are shrouded in the manifold texture of sacred veils.

these great intelligences are the Seraphim, cherubim and Thrones.

the second order are Dominions, virtues, powers and in the third Principalities, archangels and Angels.

the divine light is carried on from the Heavenly Hierarchy to the Ecclesiastical hierarchy, another nine-fold order of symbols and ministers headed by Christ.

so in one sense God is all.

all is not God (he is not pantheistic) he has a celestial ladder which leads souls back to God which must be climbed. the paradox is as one thinks he/she is climbing it they are really being drawn back to God.

the goal is unity with the divine "to be made divine is to be made like God, as far as may be, and to be made one with him."

Dionysius follows through the principle of the Via Negativa, that is the idea that no predicates attach to God and no words may properly be used to describe him.

He speaks of God as the Divine Darkness, or says that God has made DARKNESS beyond LIGHT, the super-essential darkness.

One can only come to God in "unknowing" for as he says:

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...for while applying affirmations or negations to those orders of being that come next to It (ie, God), we are not applying to It either affirmation or negation, inasmuch as It transcends all affirmation by being the perfect and unique Cause of all things, and transcends all negation by the preeminence of its simple and absolute nature." (from the Mystical theology)

however, as a Christian Dionysius finds it impossible to escape entirely from an account of God in terms of LOVE, righteousness, wisdom.

In the Divine Names he tries to reconcile his Christian Biblicism with his mystical understanding.

his answer is that God is in Himself unknowable, and every affirmation about Him is false in absolute terms. But we may loosely attribute qualities to God because He is the cause and origin of those qualities in the empirical world.

thus, it is misleading to speak of the goodness of God but He is the source of goodness in others.

Dionysius is very important because, tho ignored in the east he was the basis for most of the western developed mysticism and theology with influence on Aquinas (hierarchys of angels, creation, theology of evil, and his respect for 'negative

theology"). The Cloud of Unknowing and St. John of the Cross relied heavily on him.

Joachim da Fiore (1131-1202)

when the end of the age did not come as expected in 1000 C. E., there were attempts to explain why.

Joachim was a Cistercian mystical prophet who took the doctrine of the Trinity as the basis of a historical analysis.

in the first age, symbolized by the nettle, or brass, or water, or starlight, the Father worked through the patriarchs by the Law.

In the second age, symbolized by the rose, or silver, or wine, or dawn, the Son worked through the Apostles by grace.

In the third age (just beginning) symbolized by the lily, or gold, or oil, or daylight, the Spirit will work through the religious orders by liberty.

He was given credit with prophecying the two new orders which came a few years later, the Franciscans and the Dominicans, as being heralds of the new age of the Holy Spirit.

Joachim's prophetic visions were immensely influential throughout the Middle Ages and Dante praised him as one endowed with the spirit of prophecy.

Johann (Meister) Eckhart (1260-1328)

novice of the Dominican order sent to Cologne to study theology where he became involved with scholasticism of Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas.

He was able to combine both mystical experience and ability to express and write about it in an intelligent manner.

his thought comes from the two above mentioned scholastics on the one hand, and from mystical neo-platonism of Plotinus, Augustine and Dionysius on the other.

He was tried for heresy, but died before they post-houously convicted him.

Like most Dominicans, he was mainly a preacher. His basic themes of teaching are as follows:

1. knowing God there were two stages.

a. what he calls knowing kGod "in a mirror and mystery" and

b. knowing God "by a mirror and light"

knowledge of God type a. is the result of pursuing the method of the via negativa as defined by augustine and Dionysius.

knowledge of God type b. is given to those who as the result of a process of discipline they are freed from the extravagances of self-refference and attain union with God and know him "face to face."

2. The Nature of God is the 2nd theme.

Eckhart comed down heavily in the belief that God is to be conceived as primarily Mind or Intellect rather than Being.

God is because he knows. Ex. 3:14 (I am that I am) is not a revelation of the nature of God but to the fact that what God is can only be duduced from what he wills and does, so he is closer to the Hebrew original in his understanding than Aquinas who

argued for nature of God as perfection of Being.

Being can be used of creatures not because they truly are but because they are related to God, who alone truly is. Through creation creatures participate in the divine being.

God is spoken of by Eckhart from two points of view.

a. there is God as he is, this is the ineffable mystery above Being. Here Ex. 3:14 is interpreted as concealing the divine name.

b. there is God as He is known. he contains all perfection that he creates in creatures, especially Being. here Ex. 3:14 is interpreted as in Augustine to mean the revelation of the divine name.

3. the unity of God

for Eckhart, God is ineffable perfection of oneness in contrast with the multiplicity of phenomena, and he relates this belief to the Christian doctrine of the unity of God in trinity.

he distinguishes between Godhead and God. by Godhead he means the ineffable unity, the Godhead, which lies behind the revealed Trinity (God), and we must not identify God as he is revealed to us, known to us, and responded to by us in the Trinity with God in the perfection of his being, the One.

4. Creation involves God conferring himself on his creatures. he has been seen as pantheistic and in Otto's Mysticism east and west has been compared to Shankara of Advaita Vedanta.

He speaks of creatures as being absolutely nothing, or of

existence as being identical with God. what he means is that in comparison with the being of God the existence of creatures is so incommensurate that one can say God exists and they do not.

5. the Incarnation the historical birth of Christ is not important to Eckhart but rather the birth of Christ in the individual eternal soul.

6. the Divine Spark is in every human being and is uncreated and eternal. this is the root of the spiritual life.

it was his speaking uncompromisingly on occasions about the definitely uncreated character of this divine spark of the soul that he was arraigned for heresy and condemned in Cologne in 1326.

he suggest that the beginning of the Son in the human soul is strictly like the incarnation, so just as there is in the son no human personality, in the human he seems to have taken thje view that the seat of personality is the divine spark.

Not only Otto, but D. T. Suzuki wrote a book Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist which used Eckhart's views to compare to the Buddhist view (zen).

might end here

Juan de la Cruz (1542-1591):

part of the counter reformation he became a Carmelite and at age 25 joined Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) in her attempts to reform that order.

he was imprisoned for 6 months because of his reform attempts by the regular carmelites and it was at this time he began to write poetry, which later served as the basis for his prose works. He must be seen as a poet and is still considered one of the greatest Spanish poets ever.

He was trained at Salemnaca and was greatly influenced by Dionysius and Thomas Aquinas.

His poem "The Dark Night" forms the basis of his works involving the purging of a person before union with God and his concept of The Dark Night of the Soul which is his contribution to mystical theology.

Johns path

God is simple, first cause, everything and nothing-

God is substantially present in every person and in all creation, if he withdrew they would cease to be.

God can't have competitors.

Union is a union of likeness--one is conformed in every way to His will, the greater our love the greater communion with God we will have.

we become by grace what God is by nature through Christ.

John thinks of union with God in terms of marriage--uses the Song of Songs for imagery. Christ is the bridegroom and the soul the bride.

He believes one need a spiritual director to help objectify the

experiences and also to discern whether they are of God or the Devil.

no one experience brings one through the transformation experience but takes a long time.

Mediocrity is the minimum starting point, this is not apathy. this means for him one is already a Christian who loves the Lord and is a good servant but not real friend.

one must have experienced the love of the Lord to be willing to abandon oneself which is necessary for the path.

the cause of mediocrity is that we want God but we also want the world and its things; thus ambivalence is problem.

solution is complete abandonment and surrender to God--you must have grace to do this.

NADA, NADA, NADA (nothing) is the only way.

one must become naked and detached before one can come to union with God.

a 2nd conversion is necessary this involves two steps.

1. self-acceptance which means accepting our REAL self which isn't pretty. and

2. Let God Be God. ie, accept Him/her as is, not our image of him.

to start:

1. must try to imitate christ habitually.
2. don't indulge desires
3. incline to things that mortify the self since we tend to be self-indulgent.
4. think of yourself as lowly, don't be self serving.

If you engage in this seriously you will enter the Dark night of the sense which is both active and passive.

this is sort of a "creative depression" one realizes their poverty, aloneness, and creaturehood so learn to depend on God.

causes dryness and aridity, anxiety, think God is not there, can't use senses even to meditate.

PURE FAITH is the goal which is the only way to union with God.

the person must be detached from receiving everything through the senses and this is God's doing in Contemplation

when one gets thru this initial dark night one becomes a proficient and contemplation is habitual. then Infused contemplation begins which is pure gift of God and passive for the person.

after some time the Dark night of the Spirit commences which is a further detaching of the person and authenticates the love of God for Himself rather than for the gifts and consolations given.

if one survives this than spiritual betrothal takes place when God is present nearly constantly and later, spiritual marriage which as John says the soul "burns sweetly in God, is on fire constantly".

transformation in God is the final step and he uses the analogy of a window with sun coming thru. Person and God retain their own identity, an "I-Thou" relationship. God possess one so totally that the only thing that remains is our personhood. One is totally transparent.

basic difference between the two dark nights

first night has to do with overcoming wrong relationships (dusk to midnight)

second night is movement into true reality--consists of casting oneself onto the Lord in pure Faith, hope and love (the 3 theological virtues). and the process of casting ourselves by emptiness of memory, intellect and will which have to be purged in the second night.

when totally free one is without limits which is a state of being in God.

Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) used the same basic theology as Juan but her imagery differed and she was more emotional.

Her most mature work was The Interior Castle in which she

visualized the soul with 7 mansions each one leading closer to union with God, which was in the 7th one.

she did not herself experience the "Dark nights" which John talks about but sees the path in terms of progressive spiritual experiences.

Mansions 1 and 2 are purgative, one does through their own efforts what you can using mental prayer and effort at moral things.

3rd mansion is the state of mediocrity where most christians live thier lives.

4th mansion is the beginning of infused contemplation which is strictly the Lord's doing. this includes passive recollection and the "prayer of quiet" which meant passive. at this level perseverance is needed as one has to learn that you can't go by feelings but by faith.

5th and 6th mansions are where one experiences the spiritual betrothal, union, ecstasy (which is a weakness which ends with the spiritual marriage.

7th mansion is the spiritual marriage-a plateau of union tho there can still be times when a person must be humbled.

Nature of experience for her was highly emotional with many visions and voices. raptures, which she later realized were a sign of not being purged as the body reacted to the Lord physically. One must get past this to receive the Lord spiritually.

she had the experience of being inflamed with love but not

sexual.

she felt that the Sacred Humanity Of Jesus was the only safe way to come to Union with God and that no matter how high one went, one should never leave that way.

also taught that raptures, union, visions, etc. were pure "gustos" of God and one could never strong arm God into giving them but ones attitude must be acceptance when they come.

for most christian mystics then, the ultimate concern is union with God

the highest reality is God but different mystics see differently, some emphasizing his transendence and some his imminence.

the problem for most is ambivalence. one has to want this union and work at it.

the solution is begin wanting God more than the world.