

MYSTICISM OF COLONIAL AMERICA



Manly P. Hall

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by Manly P. Hall

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Johannes Kelpius (1673-1708), a German Pietist and mystic.

PART I

THE SOCIETY OF THE MUSTARD SEED
Mystical Foundations in Colonial America

The rise of a Protestant mysticism in Europe and America is a matter that has been generally neglected. Mysticism, *per se*, is a world-wide phenomenon. Everyone, everywhere, has experienced some influence of mysticism in religion, philosophy, and even science. We want to touch upon a few of the outstanding aspects of a situation that has parallels in our present world religious problem; however, without some background the motion of this mysticism to the Western hemisphere is impossible to orient correctly.

European mysticism developed along the lines of the Greek mystics at a comparatively early date. There were always mystics within the structure of classical philosophy and in early Christianity, but certain changes in the political structure of society brought marked modifications upon the old mystical concepts and doctrines. In 1530 the diet of Saxony considered what is now called the *Augsburg Confession*, a document based upon the seventeen principles as set forth by Martin Luther and intended primarily to establish the spiritual sovereignty of the Protestant states of Europe. The document was favorably accepted, and ten years later reissued with modifications by the great scholar, Philipp Melanchthon. The *Augsburg Confession* was actually a profession of faith. It established a new approach to Christian doctrine and dogma.

The roots of the Protestant Reformation can be traced to the Crusades and the opening of a broader world concept in Europe as the result of the return of the Crusaders. It was also strongly influenced by the Renaissance, a great cultural motion arising in Byzantium and developing in Southern Europe, then moving northward into the German and Scandinavian areas. This cultural motion led to a number of philosophical institutions of which perhaps the most

prominent is the Platonic Academy of Lorenzo de' Medici. The attitude was toward a more humanistic approach to the problems of society. Even in Florence, however, the social problem was not directly approached, but there was a movement, especially among intellectuals, toward a greater liberalism of thought and a broader foundation of education.

Earlier minds of a pioneer character, such as that of Paracelsus, brought back from Constantinople and North Africa valuable scientific knowledge. Gradually the curricula of the various ancient universities and Carolingian schools were modified to meet the increasing knowledge that was moving into Europe, including that of the Arabic nations and the Moslem domination of Spain. Many of the old prejudices were broken down and the way was prepared for a major change in European attitude. By the end of the sixteenth century it was obvious that Europe was in the throes of a major intellectual revolution. This revolution was exemplified by the rise of the Anglican church in England and the rise of Lutheranism in Northern Europe.

In many instances in various countries, the trend was supported by two distinct groups. One of these groups was a rising intellectual leadership on the part of savants, teachers, professors, and scholars. The other was the liberating of a *folk mysticism* through the people.

It is this folk mysticism that is most interesting to us at the present moment. By the end of the sixteenth century the Utopians had emerged as a major part of the new social motion in Europe. The first outspoken Utopian was More in his book *Utopia*. This was followed shortly after by Bacon's *New Atlantis* which was definitely a Utopian fable; also by a later worker, a Lutheran divine, Andreae, in his book *Christianopolis*. Campanella's *City of the Sun* was a Catholic contribution to the Utopian motion. The Utopias were built upon a certain basic premise, namely, a strong religious foundation among the people. The Utopians did not represent themselves as politically oriented nor as representing any intellectual class. It was a direct motion within the structure of the proletariat to develop its own spiritual convictions. It intended to accomplish much of this without benefit of clergy.

By the beginning of the seventeenth century the undercurrent broke through in many places and produced amazing groups of interrelated mystical organizations. These had originated at an earlier time, but until a more liberal atmosphere developed they were submerged and subjected to a great number of persecutions. In the early seventeenth century a group of Christian mystics, basing their philosophy upon the Old Testament, developed a group of prophets, seers, and elders of a patriarchal nature who in turn formulated themselves into some well-organized social bodies.

About the same time we observe the rise of the Rosicrucian mystics. The Rosicrucians, according to the best information available, were definitely of the Lutheran persuasion. They were following the Lutheran Protestant motion, but they also had ideas of their own, centering upon a *universal reformation* of human society. This universal reformation was Utopian, and the original manuscripts and documents of the society were probably prepared by a Lutheran minister in Wittenberg, Johann Valentin Andreae. Andreae was very much impressed by the society of Switzerland, but he was not anxious to become involved in the Calvinistic religious doctrines of the Swiss, so he simply transposed their concept and built it into a Protestant Lutheran Utopia.

The Universal Reformation deals with a great many subjects rather adroitly, but insistently it was moving toward a strong liberality, almost in the direction of humanism, but highly idealistic. It is now assumed that various benevolent labor organizations originated from foundations established by Andreae. He was one of the first European thinkers to prepare protective measures for guilds and trade unions and to recommend that these guilds and unions set aside funds to be used by distressed members or the widows and the fatherless of union members. I think we can say safely that the whole concept of unionism developing from the medieval guilds moved in upon this seventeenth century pattern and established the beginnings of many of the institutions that we now cherish.

During this same period a number of societies of intellectuals began to contemplate the establishment of permanent organizations. In England, the Royal Society was under the patronage of the king.

In France a similar society almost immediately afterwards developed, strongly patronized by both royalty and the church. These societies were the first associations of savants, men devoted to many different arts and sciences—researchers, scholars, classifiers of knowledge, and they gradually developed periodicals, pamphlets, and publications as contributions to the increase of knowledge.

Some of the earliest of the Royal Society of England's publications dealt with East Indian botany, for example. Men of the calibre of Newton were associated with this Royal Society.

In the middle years of the seventeenth century, a distinguished scholar, antiquarian, and connoisseur, Sir Elias Ashmole who had been knighted by the King of Sweden, was the first gentleman to be initiated into the building guilds. Up to that time architecture and constructional engineering had been regarded as a guild and trade secret. With the introduction of a new order of things, as in the case of the English Royal Academy, it became important to consider the inclusion of idealistic architecture. The building of character, the advancement of society, the ennoblement of man became a great architectural project, and in honor of this Ashmole was initiated into the trade masons' guild, laying the foundation for the freemasonry of today. In the same general pattern of things, the guilds, at the time they were initiating Ashmole, met in an inn where on another evening the guild of astrologers held their meetings. The astrologers began to think of organizing and to consider the possibility of at least a loose relationship in which they could advance their projects with greater personal security, having strength of number and strength of patronage to assist them to survive.

On the continent of Europe we find also the coming forth of the alchemists, one of the most extraordinary phenomena in world history. There are very few significant publications of alchemy earlier than the time of the Augsburg Confession. The alchemists had existed earlier—their tradition went back to Egypt and even Asia—but their publications, until the beginning of the seventeenth century, were almost completely chemical. They did not dare to expound their idealistic overtones for fear of persecution and because of the general repressive atmosphere of the times, but in the seventeenth

century we find an explosion of alchemical literature. Hundreds of beautifully published works with magnificent symbolic illustrations appeared both in Europe and in England, and these publications went directly to the heart of alchemy. Alchemy was transformed from a science of transmuting metals to a science of transforming society, and this tremendous motion was toward the liberation of man from social injustice, from poverty, unemployment, and underprivileged. All of these motions were a definite part and the consequence of the Protestant Reformation.

An additional group of scholars led by men of the calibre of Knorr von Rosenroth began the exploration of Cabalistic literature, making available the first Latin translation of the *Zohar*, the great book of Hebrew mysticism, and publishing an important series of commentaries and expositions of his monumental work, *The Kabbala Denudata*. Others followed in his way, and not long afterwards publications on a Christian Cabala began to appear.

All over Europe things were breaking through. The individual was searching for meaning. He wanted to change from visible allegiances to orthodoxies to the development of an internal religious strength, a strength in which he had the right to conceive of a direct communion with Deity. This was largely the consequence of the Protestant Revolution which eliminated the authority of the priesthood as interpreters of the divine will and as custodians of salvation. It followed that the average person had to work out his own salvation with diligence. No one knows just how many groups emerged during this period, but it would probably exceed a hundred. Some of them are remembered only by their names; others had such limited memberships that they gradually faded away. Several of them continued, endured, enlarged, grew, and became powerful forces in European thinking, and from Europe these attitudes were gradually transferred to the Western hemisphere.

At the same time these groups were developing, there was a strong motion of Adventism arising in Europe. A number of groups that can be gathered together under the general heading of millennialists were predicting the second coming of Christ with various dates decided on. Altogether, as a result of religious visions, dreams, trances,

and psychic phenomena, there was a tremendous upheaval in the direction of a reconciliation of human conduct with the divine will so that those of a living generation might face the last judgment with a good hope

At the end of the first millennium of the Christian era there had been a very definite development in Adventism. About the year one thousand it was assumed that the end of the world had come. As a result of this there was what might be called a religious panic throughout most of the civilized world of the time, the Western world, in which individuals, recognizing their own guilts and spiritual shortcomings, desperately attempted to prepare themselves for the inevitable judgment which was at hand. Out of this movement arose the Penitent Orders of Europe, and these Penitent Orders were later moved to the Western hemisphere where we have survivors of them now in the Penitents of New Mexico and Northern Mexico.

This idea of the immediate appearance of the Messiah gradually faded away after the passing of the millennial point and no marked occurrences. Actually, however, the idea of the second coming did not fade away. It was gradually incorporated into the idea of the development of a new civilization. It came to be believed that the universal reformation of society was the prologue to the second advent. Man must prepare his world for this important occasion. He must be able to prove that he had begun to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth. Nearly all of the reformists of the seventeenth century had this as a part of the underlying motivation of their various pronouncements.

It is interesting to observe that in nearly all of the seventeenth century Utopians we find the emphasis upon an individual going to a far place. More's *Utopia* was located somewhere far away, and after the publication of the book, the ships' captains along the coast were deluged with requests for passage to *Utopia*. Of course no one ever got there because the island was imaginary; it was somewhere out beyond the corruption of the times. The same was true of Bacon's *New Atlantis*. It is now assumed that it was based in part upon reports of travellers concerning the empires of Central America. Here was a world so remarkable that Cortez remarked, when he first saw

Mexico City, that it was more beautiful than any city in Europe. Based upon this concept of a great civilization in the West, Bacon moved his *House of Solomon* into a mysterious region reached by shipwrecked sailors.

Actually, of course, Bacon's work, while unfinished, clearly sets forth most of the Utopian purposes. His ideal was that there should be established in this distant land a place devoted to essential learning, and here there would be great universities; there would be observatories; there would be all kinds of research laboratories, everything necessary to explore the mysteries of nature according to the formula which he had set forth in the *Instauratio Magna*, or *the Great Restitution of Learning*, Bacon was very definitely humanistic in his approach to this problem. He insisted that the end of all of this work to be done "in the house of the many days' work" was to be applied to the benefit of man and was to be used primarily for the good of all persons in every walk of life, so that all knowledge available to man would be made immediately applicable in human affairs.

This vision of a land beyond is also present in Andreae's *Christianopolis* and Campanella's *City of the Sun*. This millennial world was somewhere, and as the development of European mysticism intensified, a very interesting group of circumstances occurred. William Penn, impelled by inner vision and searching for a refuge for his fellow religionists, received the grant of land in Pennsylvania upon which he built his community for Quakers, friends, and related groups.

By this time a situation was developing in Europe or, rather, two situations were developing, which were casting a heavy shadow upon the hopes and spiritual aspirations of the various Adventist mystics. One was a continual state of war Nation after nation, county after county, and state after state became locked in civil strife, and this extended into the oceans where ships of various countries pillaged each other. The second problem that arose was that Protestantism fell into the very dilemma which it was established to relieve: it became deeply involved in orthodoxy. Nearly all of the Protestant groups were very defensive in their relationships with each other. Nearly all of them finally turned upon those who sought to transcend all

material concerns, such as the mystics and the Adventists, declaring them to be heretical.

An outstanding example of this was Jakob Boehme, the great German mystic, one of the outstanding visionaries of his time. As a shoemaker in Goerlitz, he wrote a number of books, and these books were condemned by the Lutheran Church although Boehme himself was a member of the church and attended it regularly to the end of his life. There was, however, considerable rising opposition to mysticism, and this opposition probably was very much in the same spirit as problems we face today. If you talk with someone about practicing idealism, you will probably be reminded that if you do this you will be an economic failure. I know at one time, not too many years ago, an effort was made to introduce a certain modified idealism into the Los Angeles public school system. Sponsored by a friend of mine, it received favorable attention from the school board, but there was a mass meeting of parents who insisted that if idealism were introduced into the curriculum, they would take their children out of the schools. They told the board very frankly that they wished their young people to be economic successes, and too much integrity was dangerous to this end.

A similar situation appears to have existed in Asia and in several other parts of the world, for wherever monastic orders grew too numerous, political leaders began to assail them because, as in the case of Korea, the monks simply refused to go to war. The first militant emperor closed the entire institution.

So it was in Europe that political strife, social changes, and the ambitions of petty princes were to a degree inconsistent with the great desire of the people, as a group, to prepare themselves for the second advent. They wanted to live simple, honest, peaceful lives, and this was extremely difficult with the contending neighbors, with a great deal of persecution and intolerance, and with the continual inflaming of political difficulties through national and international strife.

About the year 1665 there arose in Pennsylvania, another of the interesting areas under consideration, an extraordinary mystic. His name was Johannes Kelpius, and he migrated to Germany where he spent most of his active life in Europe in the southern provinces of

Bavaria and Wurtemberg. Kelpius was definitely convinced of the reality of the second advent. He was an Adventist. He was also a person of extraordinary humility, of a strange inwardness. He was completely dedicated to God as he understood God. He humbled himself in every way for the glory of God. He renounced all worldly goods. He never at any time actually taught disrespect for law and order, but he held that there were those who did not escape from it, but who lived so completely above it that it was no longer an equation in their lives. He would not have broken any civil law, but he lived on a level of personal integrities which would not and could not come in conflict with civil laws. Kelpius became a moving spirit in a group of highly miscellaneous mystical thinkers. The group included alchemists, Hermetic philosophers, Platonic mystics, Christians, Protestant and Catholic mystics, two or three seeresses who had extraordinary visions, a number of scientific minds, students of comparative religion, astronomers, and the like. All of these persons in their own way of life were Adventists. Each was using knowledge for the primary purpose of advancing the spiritual state of man. They were brought together not because all their ideas were identical, but in common defense against a rising tide of pressures from political sources.

As time went on, and the situation grew more and more difficult, a large number of mystical organizations were threatened with extinction. In Germany they were declared to be illegal, and those who followed them, accepted them, met with them, or published any publications for them or concerning them were subject to fine and imprisonment. One thing helped a bit, however, in this rather difficult emergency, and that was the smaller principalities and countries of Germany were quite highly specialized feudal states, and an individual who was too heavily persecuted simply crossed the border into another community where he might find comparative peace and security, at least for a while.

So there was considerable motion among these mystics. They were forced to leave their homes; they were forced to leave their worldly goods behind (which they did cheerfully), seeking the most tolerant atmospheres that they could discover in their migrations. One leader,

for example, of a Lutheran communion congregation who was expelled from his congregation and excommunicated, went across the border and became a professor in a Lutheran university. So the situation was extremely complicated. A great deal depended upon the natures and personalities of these various mystical leaders. Some were rather dogmatic themselves, and they were always in trouble. Some were too violent in their opposition and attacked too directly the dominant factors, and these were open to punishment accordingly.

Under the leadership of Johannes Kelpius and others of his more intimate associates, there gradually developed a plan of moving the mystical community from Europe to America. To accomplish this, a spearhead of some kind had to be established, and there were three areas in American colonization where such a process could be rather successfully carried on. One was an area under control of the Dutch, Another was an area under control of the Germans, and a third was under control of the British. These atmospheres seemed to be comparatively open and far away from the strifes of the old country. So we find gradually arising a loosely integrated organization of persons who wanted a new and clean atmosphere for the development of their religious convictions.

This motion led finally to a small migration, a migration that centered in the German and Dutch communities at first, although the German community around Germantown and Philadelphia was at that time under British control. There was no evidence, however, of any particular interference with the rights of these Germanic and Dutch peoples. In accord with his primary convictions, Kelpius began to develop what was later to be called the "Fraternity of the Woman in the Wilderness." This organization was based upon the part of the *Book of Revelation* which described the woman in the wilderness going forth away from the world into a desert region to bear her child. To the Adventists this child was Christ, and the woman in the wilderness represented the motion of true Christianity into a distant and foreign place away from the pressures and circumstances of life. The Woman in the Wilderness was never the official name of the organization but was given to it by those who had partial contact with its activities.

The Kelpius community recognized three forms of wilderness: the barren land, the fruitful land, and the God-possessed kingdom. All of these were far away from the conflicts and pressures of European life. So about 1694 a group of forty of these Adventists under the general leadership of Kelpius took the ship, *Sara Maria*, and sailed for the new world. On the way across they were twice attacked by French frigates who tried to claim them as prizes, but the prayerful passengers are supposed to have been preserved by divine intercession. They finally arrived in the new world, and here they were met by a group of former refugees—the Quakers. These former refugees were a bit surprised to see forty men, strangely robed and completely unworldly, get off the ship and march through their town. For a time there was some agitation and anxiety concerning this sudden appearance, but after a little while the German people began to realize that there was no hazard whatever; these individuals were seeking only one thing, and that was absolute isolation; they wanted to be completely alone; they wanted to give up their lives entirely to prayer and meditation. On the other hand, they were not lazy, for they believed in the labors of the six days' work. They labored, however, only for the purposes of God and for purposes of charity—to help not only their own community, but all in the area that were in need. They even extended their benevolence to the Indian tribes.

Finally securing a tract of land suitable for their needs, these people built what has been called the “Kelpius Community.” The group built its original place of meeting in what is now Fairmount Park, Philadelphia, and for a long time some of their buildings survived, including the anchorite cell in which Kelpius himself lived. This Order of the Woman in the Wilderness went forth with the purpose of preparing itself to receive the advent which they firmly believed would occur in a wilderness. Therefore, they were properly supposed to be ever alert for the signs of this precious event. When they built their meetinghouse they placed on the roof of it a little watchtower, and there they set up a small telescope. This telescope was used every day to survey the stars, to study the heavens, and to contemplate all types of celestial phenomena. These people believed that there would be signs in the heavens to announce the new dawn—what Boehme called “The Aurora,” or the dawn's light, the coming of the advent.

Carefully, patiently, for over periods of years, they progressed with their simple experiments, mingling a whole group of diverse factors, beliefs, and opinions into one great piety, and becoming known as the Pietists of Pennsylvania.

A number of years ago I had the pleasure of visiting in the home of Miss Emma Saxy, daughter of Dr. Julius Saxy, the principal historian of the provincial German Pietistic movement. He wrote a work on this subject which, unfortunately, was issued only in a number of five hundred copies and is practically unobtainable. We have a copy here in the library if anyone wishes to consult it. Dr. Saxy made a life-time study of the Penitent Orders of Pietists of Pennsylvania and had quite a personal library of books dealing with the subject. Many of his treasures are now in the Pennsylvania Historical Society. Through his daughter I was able to examine the large manuscript which we described in our work on the *Codex Rosae Crucis*. Dr. Saxy gathered together examples of the books, manuscripts, and documents which this old community gradually accumulated. As might be expected, it had a number of the writings of Jakob Boehme; it had early editions of the Augsburg Confession; it had the writings of a great many German theologians who had written on various phases of Adventism and German mysticism. It also included a number of scientific works and brought up most of the sciences of the time to their contemporary positions in the life of the period between 1675 and 1700.

Actually, the development of the Pietist community in the Eastern part of the United States was strengthened by a diverse group of speculations. As more literature and more migrants began to assemble, we find that this community practiced horoscopes, that it cast nativities, dabbled in alchemy; it worked with various kinds of medicinal herbs, and sustained itself partly by the concoctions of herbal medicines. It taught, and in some of the areas it is stated that followers of this group were able to preach in both German and English. They were not ignorant people, but literate people who had come to the conclusion that knowledge, as we know it, is a detriment to the spirit. Like the Ignorantian Friars of earlier dates, they renounced knowledge except such as was necessary for the consolation and security of themselves and their neighbors. They had no interest in

intellectualism, as such. They used their sciences only as these would advance the hope of the millennium. We have, therefore, in Pennsylvania (or did have until very recently) many examples of natural magic, of the divining rod, and all kinds of mystical apparatus that had been brought into Europe, including astrolabes for the calculation of right ascension of stars, various seals, pentagrams, and magical figures. Among the early books that these people had were the writings of Jakob Boehme and other European mystics, and some of the publications of Paracelsus. They were a studious but strangely detached people, and their place in the development of religion in the Western hemisphere is almost unique.

After they had been established for a number of years in this country, a series of further episodes occurred which are of interest to us. The community, according to Miss Emma Saxy, had a series of mystical, internal structures that are not even referred to by Dr. Saxy in his books. One of these organizations was represented as the "Society of the Mustard Seed." This was based upon the parable of the mustard seed in the Bible, the smallest of all seeds, from which a great tree shall grow. Now these Pietists regarded themselves as mustard seeds, and Miss Saxy had an interesting locket-like piece of jewelry—somewhat resembling a decoration of some government. In a little glass container within the locket was hidden a group of mustard seeds. This was their essential symbol.

The study of the idea of the Order of the Mustard Seed gives us another angle in the life of these rather simple but extremely dedicated people. The mustard seed, to them, represented the seed of salvation in every being, in every human being, in every soul, such as in the mysticism of Boehme. The mustard seed is the seed of God in man. It is that which is planted in his heart at the time he is born. It is the equivalent in his religious life to the very pulsation which keeps him physically alive, a warmth, a mysterious fire. The Persian mystics had the same idea. This mustard seed might remain throughout life without sprouting, without revealing any of its contents. If this mustard seed fell on barren soil, then nothing happened. The worldly human being was the barren ground. If, however, the mustard seed fell on good soil, then it might sprout, and good soil was the God-fearing human being dedicated to good works.

These Pietists had no creeds, no actual denominations, and they did not believe in indoctrination by words. To them the whole mystery of Christ was in the life of Christ, and the only sermon that the just man could preach was his own life as an example of dedication. Therefore, they avoided all creedal denominations, and in the charities which they performed they avoided all compensation. They wanted nothing but the privilege of allowing the mustard seed of God to grow within themselves. They gave thanks whenever an opportunity came which, by service, by consecration, by penance, by meditation and modification, they would be able to encourage the growth of this little plant. Boehme has the tree of the soul among his symbols. He used a palm tree to represent a tree growing in the oasis and signifying the presence of water in the desert. The Pietists regarded themselves as streams of living water in the desert of waiting. All they could actually do was to wait, to hope, to believe, to have faith, and to prepare themselves for what they considered to be the inevitable appearance of the Messiah.

One of the problems that beset this community was the one that has beset clergies for a long time, namely, that all of them had taken the oath of celibacy. The result was that the community could not grow from the births of its members. In fact, in this respect they were like the Essenes whose body of membership was sustained only by new members, or by new recruits, or the Essene community of Northeast Egypt which died out simply because it was too isolated to attract new members. There was no replenishment from within the community itself. There were one or two backsliders, however, in the Kelpius community, and soon after they arrived, one of them married. This, however, does not seem to have upset the community to any degree, and the new family was accepted into their life on the grounds that if the marriage was according to Christ, and if they lived according to the will of God, those were the important things.

The community began to show weakness as a result of not enough new persons being drawn into the extremes of the austerity of their way of life. Austerity was almost a perpetual prayer, meditation, and mortification of the flesh. In this strange, wild land there were no available physicians of virtue or value. The community was prob-

ably not inclined to depart from the simple herbal medicines it had practiced or to transform itself from the belief that God and the spirit ruled all things. Patience under death was one of the virtues. As a result of the general situation, the rate of mortality in the Kelpius community was quite high. One by one the brothers went to rest and were buried in the little community cemetery. One of the enemies of health in those days and in that region was tuberculosis, and among those who contracted it was Kelpius. Living in his damp cell in the side of a hill probably aggravated the condition. In any event, Kelpius passed out of this life, having reached only the age of thirty-five years.

Shortly before his death Kelpius, still convinced in his own heart and soul of the Messianic mystery, prayed that he might be translated into the other world without death. Coming to the realization that this was not going to occur, he accepted the will of God, and said that he would rest in the earth according to the law governing Adam and all men. However, a peculiar circumstance occurred which has been preserved in the literature of the Pietist movement. We find occasional references to it in books dealing with Pennsylvania, and this is that Kelpius had a little casket. What it contained no one knew. No one ever saw the inside of it, but shortly before his death he handed this casket to one of his closest followers and told him to go out and throw it in the Schuylkill River. The casket was locked, of course. The follower who did not like to dispose of it, and who was very curious as to the contents of the casket, did not throw it into the river but hid it in some clumps of trees near the edge of the river and returned to Kelpius. The dying magistrate immediately said, "You have not thrown the casket into the river. Do it as I told you to do." Frightened, his friend went back to the edge of the river and threw the casket in. As it hit the water, it exploded, and a tremendous light played over the area for several hours. What happened no one seems to really know, but this is one of the better documented Stories relating to the Kelpius community. These people practiced a kind of spiritual healing by the laying on of hands, but as the community diminished, this practice was more or less discontinued. They simply drifted along until they finally ceased to exist. Having exhausted

their membership, they were absorbed by degrees into the general motion of Germanic-American and Dutch-American mysticism in Pennsylvania.

Now out of this story and its various implications, which could be extended at great length, certain points seem to stand out as perhaps applicable to our times, or having meaning now. Europe in the seventeenth century, having lost clear spiritual leadership, began to be broken up into a vast number of idealistic groups, many of them under curious or obscure leadership. These groups tried to become self-sustaining spiritually in the wilderness of human affairs. They were not willing to go back to the old orthodoxies, but they still held firmly to the scriptures. They believed definitely in Deity, and they believed in the mystery of the Pentecost and all of the important doctrines promulgated in the early centuries of the church. They were, therefore, a devout people, but they were divided by differences in interpretations. They had various ways of looking at the same thing, and each of them became defensive of his own point of view.

In the present generation we have several parallels to this. The modern world has very largely lost its spiritual leadership. The individual is no longer able to accept many of the beliefs of the past, and these beliefs themselves, in order to survive, have been forced to modify their programs. Yet man is in tremendous and continuing need of strength, of strong leadership of some kind. Viewing it from the framework of evolution, it appears as though the Divine Purpose intended that the individual should gradually become the leader of his own spiritual life, not to be forever a believer, but an *experienter*. This was what these older peoples believed: that leadership had to move inside of the person, to be placed there in a core which became a symbol of God. To attain this type of leadership they explored the mysteries of their own inner lives in every way possible, but the time in which they lived was disturbed. Their own convictions were partly still in allegiance to old ways, from which they were attempting to depart but had no clear direction for the future. They were moving from the security of orthodoxy truly into a wilderness. In this wilderness they built their tabernacle, and many persons are doing this in our modern way of life. New religious groups are arising almost

every day, some of them native to this country, others imported, but all of them becoming important in the lives of persons who are in need of spiritual directives. Most of these persons will not go back to the powerful directives of orthodoxy. They will not accept the general programs or platforms which are available in the more conservative denominations. What they are seeking for is the mystical goal of inner communion with God.

Somewhere along the line the Kelpius group seems to have taken on certain early alchemical doctrines, and these may have been imported from Asia. We know that among the Pietists there were several who were aware of the Zoroastrian mysteries of Persia, and we even find an occasional mention of the Far East. Many of these men were educated, and they were renouncers of knowledge rather than lackers of it. So that here and there, through their various teachings, we find examples that are almost *Zen-like*, such as: I want nothing; I am nothing; I seek nothing; I am not ambitious for anything; I want nothing of any kind except God. Now this was a concept which seems to have led to the stripping of the soul of all involvement and attitudes. These persons were without ambition, without self-centeredness, without egoism of any kind. They had to turn away from every inducement and temptation of mortal life in order to become internally complete Quietists. Quietism, by the way, also is rising, this particular doctrine coming up into existence through the Catholic Church itself.

These Pietists believed that by creating a kind of spiritual emptiness in which as persons they were nothing, God in them could become everything. This type of philosophy has also intrigued a great many western peoples in modern times, perhaps in a somewhat modified form, but we are all beginning to realize the dangers of materialism. We are all inclined to be fatigued with the burdens and confusion of modern life, and like the Pietists of the seventeenth century, we are disturbed over the fact that our way of life has no clearly defined objectives. We are not striving to become better than we are. We are satisfied to drift along in programs of accumulation and self justification. The Pietists believed that luxury could lead only ultimately to slavery, and that if we kept luxury as our primary objective, we

would also maintain systems of tyranny in which luxury was about the only useful by-product. The individual who compromised for luxury became the servant of corruption. Wherever we compromise principles, we endanger the final emancipation of our own lives.

The Utopians with their dreams sought to build in the Western hemisphere the New Atlantis. They sought to create a kind of Christianopolis and in this we find many evidences of the rise of socialistic movements. The Pietists, like the Essenes of the Holy Land, held all goods in common. They had no possessions. They viewed all life from equality. They did not believe in any positive type of human leadership. Their so-called leaders were simply their inspirers; the ones who helped them to be what they wanted them to be, not what the leader wanted them to be, but that which each individual himself desired to attain as a spiritual fulfillment within himself. There was also a definite recognition of the old socialistic idea of production for use rather than profit. These Pietists believed that the profit system would have to ultimately fall; that human beings would share in common because they understood common needs. They appreciated and respected the rights of others. This sharing was not a matter of the hard worker giving to the one who would not work, but all laboring together for a common good; that common good being the greatest good for the greatest number and ultimately the greatest good to all humanity, and the labor itself dedicated to the glory of the divine will.

These Pietists seemingly believed in the concept of the New Jerusalem. They believed that the Woman in the Wilderness was, in a sense, the New Jerusalem itself. It was their duty to build the living proof of their dedication. They had to build the house according to the law. If they built the house according to the law, the living God would dwell therein. They pointed out very clearly that this house was not to be a great and beautiful building but a simple place sanctified by the hearts of men. Here they would gather in silence and in peace, and those gathered in common brotherhood and united in earnest desire for God's presence would be the living *iglesia* or chapel. The real church was not made of stone or brick or wood; the real church was the union of hearts around the altar of the mustard seed, the altar of the Divine within themselves.

This type of thinking seems to have spread among the American Indians. The effect of Penn and others of the early American leaders upon the Indians was quite profound. William Penn was especially admired and respected, and so were the members of these special communities such as the Mennonites, Dunkers, Quietists, Chiliasts, Catharists, and all these mystical groups. They were regarded with respect by the Indian because they formed a link with his own life. The American Indian was a natural mystic. He believed in visions. His priests were visionaries. He believed also in the power of the spirit to reveal to man all that was necessary for his own salvation. Even before the arrival of William Penn, the great Iroquois League had established itself as a powerful force along the entire Eastern seaboard from Canada to the Cumberland Gap. This great league of nations was itself a mystical league, for it taught mysticism, practiced mysticism, and was led by mystics.

These people were attempting to restore in their own way the natural world as it related to man. The Indian believed that man had been given a beautiful world in which to live; he had been given every



William Penn (1644 - 1718) was founder of the Province of Pennsylvania.

necessity for happiness and peace. He had been given the power to be fruitful, to be thoughtful, to be kind, and to be noble; having these potentials, it was his proper duty to apply them to his own conduct and to the government of the five nations—later six.

There was a sympathy between Penn, the Quakers, the Pietists, the Mennonites, and these Indian tribes. In fact it is reported that at the time when William Penn was given the great peace belt by the Iroquois League, an interesting legend was disseminated about him. It seems the Indians told him that, because he was not an Indian, he could not go after death to the Indian heaven because it really would not be heaven to him anyway; it would not be his way of life. Instead, they had built him in the inner world a beautiful medicine lodge right at the entrance where he could watch all the Indians and all the spirits that he had loved go to their reward. They concluded this was the thing that would please him the most. As long as Penn was able to control or direct, or his policies were in force, there was a strong mystical fraternity between these people and the Indian tribes.

We realize that, arising in this early pattern of things on the Western hemisphere, there was a strong family tie established among non-members but sympathizers of this procedure. The Pietist group under Kelpius did not really want to become part of any community in the area. After they had proved themselves to be of highly benevolent nature, their neighbors wanted them to remain with the communities, but the Pietists declined. They preferred to be isolated in order to be completely free of temptation and interference and to follow the ways of fasting and prayer in the wilderness. They left a number of very constructive ideals behind them which had a strong influence on Colonial America, one of which was that this new world was being formed for a purpose as part of a Divine Plan. It had been preserved against corruptions for ages that it might be a pure and clean place to build a better way of life than man had ever known. It was, therefore, the belief of these people that it was set aside for the second advent. They believed that in the mountains and valleys and plains of this beautiful region, unspoiled by man, unafflicted by the tremendous political pressures of Europe, and remote from European involvements, a new way of life could be built. They held this attitude, how-

ever, with one distinct and definite modification: this new way of life must be founded in God and established upon the firm dedication to God's will and purpose. It was here that those who were dedicated could, if they so willed, build a heaven upon earth, that the New Jerusalem would descend in the midst of a world of happy and dedicated people. They also believed that the advent could only be possible when the people themselves had deserved it. The people had to so dedicate their lives that the spirit of God could dwell among them. If they would do this, they would flourish unto everlastingness.

The peculiar idealism of this Pietist movement certainly did carry through into the works of our founding fathers as far as the nation is concerned. We know that these ideals were strongly exemplified by Thomas Paine and close to the lives of Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and Washington. We know that the old guilds and movements coming from Europe to this country—better established in the eighteenth century—had received great encouragement and inspiration from the earlier footings in Colonial Pennsylvania. It was, therefore, a continuance, more or less, of a dedication. These colonies wanted to be more than simply free from the mother country. They wanted to have the privilege of living above the level of their European backgrounds. They wanted to fulfill the mysticism that was already clearly present under the surface of the earth, a mysticism that was centered in Europe very largely in the Transylvanian Hungarian Germanic region, a mysticism which showed itself most clearly above the surface in Southern Germany and adjacent areas, but which also spread with the migrations of these people into Holland, into England, and from England, the stopping-off point, to the Western hemisphere.

There is no doubt that the German communities did perpetuate and carry on a peculiar sense of the significance of this Western world. They carried the same significance that the American Indian had, for we find it in Seattle's famous speech. This was special. This continent was not just going to be colonized and exploited as other lands had been. It was God's land, for God's people. Penn so believed it, and many others, and the responsibility of building a way of life here was more than a mere search for religious freedom. It was a quest for a religious integrity and a right to live a Christian life. Here it was possible to build a Christian commune.

But on the practical side of the problem, difficulties arose even during the life of Kelpius. The various segments of idealism had never been reconciled, and many who have the highest dedications and the noblest convictions cannot work together. This situation was obvious from an early time in the Germantown area, and it has been obvious ever since. There is no shortage of idealistic overtones, but there is a lack of coordination and lack of cooperation between those who feel the call of higher dedications. Kelpius took the point of view that this lack of cooperation was the surviving self-centeredness which is to be found in persons, organizations, nations, and societies; that the individual in some mysterious way cannot trust himself completely and unreservedly in the Divine Will. He must still try to steer it in some way, instead of fulfilling it.

Most mystics have also the difficulty of probably not fully understanding the Divine Will. Therefore, interpretation is almost inevitable, but from the Ten Commandments, from the Sermon on the Mount, the Epistles of Paul, and from many other early and relevant teachings, the broad outline of the Christian purpose is clear. That this Christian purpose does imply the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man cannot be questioned, and all that gravitates against such relationships is, in a sense, enervating to the major project. It is up to the individual to realize, as Kelpius tried to, that the new way of life had to be built from a complete break away from the old selfishness.

Today we stand in a peculiar situation in which a break from the old ways of doing things may loom on the horizon. We are beginning to realize that our present policies are without internal directive and certainly without the blessing of eternity. To meet this situation there has to be a gradual relaxation away from self-interest. To the Kelpius community this severance was complete. In our modern way of life it probably will not be so complete, but there must be a degree of recognition in which those things that belong to heaven come first, and that those things which belong to our natural and material life should be administered justly and wisely.

We find also in the Kelpius community, in its peculiar doctrine of the mustard seed, the realization that this seed has the same myste-

rious medicinal properties as the tree that bore all manner of fruit in the Book of Revelation. Here there was a tree with one root and many fruits, and the Kelpius community believed that this tree of life, with its root in God, had many branches and could bear many kinds of fruit, but while all these fruits were themselves to a degree separate, they were one in source. One life sustained them all. In this way all the good works of man, all the fruits of the spirit, though they may appear to be different, are sustained by one life. Therefore, competition between them is unreasonable and contrary to the Divine Will.

Miss Saxy told me when we were talking about various religious situations in the Germantown area that her father had believed firmly that one of the prominent factors in the development of the Pennsylvania Dutch mysticism was the introduction of elements of Rosicrucian philosophy. At some time in the seventeenth century Rosicrucians, or disciples of this particular group, had migrated to the Western hemisphere and had settled in the areas around the Ephrata community. These persons had brought with them the two great objectives of the Rosicrucian society as set forth in the *Fama*, and these objectives were the establishment of a universal learning and the universal reformation of society.

From the College of the Holy Spirit, the Society is supposed and believed to have possessed a great book, called the *Book M*, in which were set forth the essential mysteries of life. These essential mysteries were extremely simple but difficult to comprehend because they demanded not intellectual analysis but an experience within the heart itself. The two great objectives of mankind, therefore, were the growth of his own inner life so that the best in him became leader of the rest of him and by extension into society, those most enlightened having the parental responsibility of protecting, serving, and advancing the lives of those around them. The concept, therefore, of the universal reformation was that government should be entrusted to those most internally enlightened and that education, society, culture, art, music, literature, religion—all of these becoming the handmaidens by means of which the spiritual society of man could be guided and protected, and leaders inspired to the fulfillment of their proper responsibilities.

Whether we agree with all of the observations of these people back in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is not so important at the moment, but we do realize that the one important point that Kelpius tried to promulgate, and which many other mystic organizations attempted to teach, is that every form of human knowledge must be *ensouled*. Every art and science has its mustard seed, and all forms of learning, sacred and secular, spring from a root in God. In their growth and development they must never lose sight of the great earth of heaven in which their roots are attached. It is, therefore, only possible to bring about the hoped-for millennium if all arts, sciences, crafts, and trades are recognized as essentially religious and are all ways of releasing spiritual life into the common purposes of humanity. Every carpenter is indeed a priest, every merchant, every doctor, every lawyer, every tradesman, everyone in every walk of life is actually part of the hierarchy of God's will. These persons earn their living, make their way, by serving their fellowmen, but they must also have within themselves dedications, for these dedications are the basis of integrity, and without integrity all material institutions collapse.

Kelpius went as far as an extremist or religious enthusiast could go in elevating the divine part above all others, even to the rejection of that which was secular. He went probably further than he should have, but under the tremendous spiritual enthusiasm which filled his life so that it overflowed in all directions, there was nothing left but the tremendous urge after holiness, the desire not to be holier than his neighbor but to be holy enough to experience and discover God within himself. The procedure was extreme, but the problems and the times were unusual. Here in a new world a valiant effort was made to dedicate this world, this hemisphere, to the fulfillment of the prophecies of the ages. It is part of our heritage, and perhaps it is a part of our heritage that we should not forget.

PART II

THE TRANSCENDENTALISTS OF ALEXANDRIA, ATHENS AND BOSTON

Transcendentalism has been described as a philosophical and religious democracy. Its approach is not from the standpoint of authority but of internal enlightenment. According to Buddha, who was in this phase of the subject definitely a transcendentalist, the individual must work out his own way of life, his directives must come from within himself. He cannot be completely under the leadership of an authoritarian religion. In other words, he cannot exist within the pattern of dogmatic religious institutionalism. He does not wish to be told by some intermediary what Deity wants from man. When Cambeses entered into the presence of the great Olympian temple, the priest came out and said to him, "We are the servants of this temple. What can we do for you?" The conqueror asked, "Whose house is this?" The priest replied, "The house of God," Then Cambeses said, "Man, step aside." He went in alone.

This in a sense expresses a metaphysical point of view, a point of view based upon the inner experience of reality. Each person is constantly under the guidance of his own inner life. If he is early in the path of wisdom and does not have a very solid foundation, then the guidance from inside is gentle. If he is further advanced and becomes inconsistent with his own principles, then the guidance becomes more severe. And if he wanders too far from the paths of integrity, the guidance becomes almost dictatorial. From within his own soul the individual has the leadership of his life.

A number of interesting questions are thus presented, some of which are not easily answered. First of all, we must say that from within the individual there arises a constant stream of impulses coming through into the personality. These impulses are not all good.

The concept that everything which comes from the inside is beneficial, and everything from the outside is harmful, simply cannot be sustained by experience. The individual release of internal guidance depends upon a series of preparatory disciplines. In short, we can only bring out or bring through that which we can dominate by our own integrities. Therefore, the beginning of the inner or mystical experience must be self-discipline, as the Neoplatonists of Alexandria and Athens pointed out.

Self-discipline, in this case, is not based upon an arbitrary theological point of view. This discipline is the moderation of personal conduct. It is the individual gaining mastery over little things, the daily preservation of principles. Unless the individual has attained discipline, he cannot depend upon the internal pressures of consciousness. He cannot get the soul guidance he needs unless he makes possible its natural and normal expression through his daily life. If his outer living is incorrect, if in his daily existence he is inconsistent with soul principles, he then can be deceived by a variety of pressures that come not from the soul but from the misapplication of his own mental and emotional functions. Emotion has become identified with soul power, but many emotions do not arise from the soul but from the environment and appetites of the individual. Therefore, many emotions are selfish, self-centered, and destructive.

The individual cannot be liberated from the inside out. He must begin by preparing his outer life to receive this true light of soul power. He must therefore overcome the hazards which would destroy or restrict the functions of this soul factor. If he has a bad temper, it is a mistake to assume that an abstract spirituality will cure this. If he is selfish, he cannot simply proceed in spite of it. He cannot hope that soul power will overcome his selfishness; he must overcome it himself before the power of the soul can function. He must prepare the way, cleanse the inside of his own cup. He must do those things in daily life that remove from his activities the circumstances which prevent the natural expression of the good within himself.

Most systems of theology are autocratic, whereas mysticism and transcendentalism are democratic. They allow the individual to realize that when he achieves something worthwhile the achievement is

his. There is an endowment within him which Emerson and many others represented as being a divine capacity. The individual has within himself a spark of the Infinite. He has within himself a principle, an energy which enables him to unfold a destiny of his own. This destiny is, of course, conditioned and limited by the universe in which he exists, and is further conditioned by the environment into which he is born. He is not able to be a free agent completely, but he is able to have what Aquinas calls "a limited individualism", a limited determinism, the right to choose that which is best for himself among those things he can choose between.

If he makes the choice himself, then it is his responsibility, his opportunity, and his are the consequences. If this choice is forced upon him by others, then his power to grow is frustrated. So we have in metaphysics and transcendentalism the concept of the individual having the right, the inalienable right, to grow according to the dictates of his own conscience. He has a right to select that which is the greatest good for him. Now, it may well be that he is not able to make such a decision. He does not know what is good for himself, whether the things he wants are proper or improper. He does not know the difference between aspiration and ambition. He is not sure how much worldliness he should sacrifice in order to obtain a condition of inward enlightenment. He is not aware of how far he can trust his own nature. The answer, of course, is that he can trust his own nature to a very high degree if he does not permit superficial and unimportant factors to dominate him.

One of the problems that nearly everyone has to struggle with is the difference between ambition and aspiration. Ambition is usually a very physical, very mortal type of pressure. Ambition makes us want to be a leader over others; aspiration makes us want to be true to the self within us. Ambition ends in worldly controls; aspirations come in the disciplines of inner life. One of the safeguards to prevent us from making the mistake between ambition and aspiration is to realize humility. Humility is the individual placing himself under the control of good, so far as he is capable of determining it. He is gradually invited to cast off the restrictions and limitations of his own negative attitudes. He is taught the importance of truthfulness, gentleness, service, and cooperation.

The individual also has to realize that the obstacles to his growth are not primarily in his environment but within himself. It is man's personal environment, his body, emotions, and mental attitudes that must be organized and relaxed into a state of cooperation. He must release soul power into conduct, in daily relationships with people. He must learn to love the beautiful and serve the good. He must become unselfish, and he must protect himself against all destructive attitudes

These things come first. In the ancient mystery system the focus was on discipline, but the discipline was not intended to bring a man under the authority of the temple or under the domination of the gods; the discipline was for the purpose of releasing his own divinity from within himself. Until the release is from the inside, no essential growth is possible. No one can grow for someone else, nor can someone else grow for him. Man cannot bestow enlightenment upon man, The only thing the wise can do is invite the individual to control himself.

Now this is contrary to many of the precepts and doctrines which have dominated human life for thousands of years. We have depended almost entirely upon a few leaders to make our lives safe. We appoint representatives and expect them to express our opinions. This is a materialistic policy which we probably cannot overcome immediately. No leader can save his following. All he can do is invite his following to save themselves and provide them with reasonable opportunities to express their own inner lives. This being the case, the teacher is not one who primarily gives instruction; he is only the one who gives a certain number of basic rules to live by which, if followed with intelligence and dedication, will help the person to help himself. In a democracy we must all grow. We cannot depend for our security upon the growth of others. A leader cannot be a substitute for the leadership of our own inner life.

Emerson, Thoreau, and others of the New England Transcendentalists were persons who had previously very orthodox religious backgrounds, but a gradual rebellion arose within them. Emerson rebelled against the domination of a more or less rigid clergy. All over the world people today are striving to rescue religion from theology.

Theology determines the individual's conduct of will by order of an ecclesiastical hierarchy. In the middle ages, if he did not conform he was burned at the stake. Therefore, his decisions were made not from love of God but because of the fear of being burned. This was contrary to all basic religious insights and thus caused a rebellion, leading ultimately to the Protestant Reformation. Wherever the rules of human relationships are broken, history becomes violent. Wherever the individual follows the best part of himself, he comes to the nearest security that he can attain in this world

The Protestant Churches to a measure have taken on this transcendentalism. There is less and less dogmatism in them. In groups such as the Friends and the Quakers we find an almost complete lack of ecclesiastical organization. In many of these groups the individual allows whatever is his own highest conviction to come through.

Here we have the problem of weeding out what constitutes to most people information from inside. They want to believe that dreams, visions, symbols, or mysterious arrangements of psychic pressures are very important. They are only important if the individual who receives them is already a well organized individual. In other words, the visions of a neurotic are not trustworthy. In most cases these pressures, visions and messages are aimed at telling the individual that he is right and other people are wrong. The mind and the emotions contribute to this. Both, when cornered with a mistake, fight to defend it, transform it, or transfer the blame to someone else. A person subject to excessive temper fits is not nearly as interested in correcting his attitude as he is in trying to prove that other people are responsible for his bad disposition because they infuriate him beyond his control. Such a person is desperately trying to be right when he is thoroughly wrong.

To get to understand this thorough wrongness is not easy, but Nature does its best for us at all times. Because each of us has an individual relationship with life, various hurts and disappointments come if we pervert the qualities of our own natures. The individual with a bad disposition ultimately has to live alone. The individual who breaks all the rules of good health gets sick earlier than those who are a little better organized. Individuals who determine to lock

themselves in their own negative ideals pass through life with practically no growth of any kind, simply wasting seventy or eighty years of time.

Unless the individual grows he has no reason to be here. An individual does not grow if he feels he is already right. He is not here because he is perfect. Buddha pointed out a very important principle: we are not here because we are right; we are here because of the unfinished business in ourselves, and we will be back as long as the business remains unfinished. The individual trying to escape responsibility, trying to have a life of fun, depending upon bad habits for his pleasures and devoting himself entirely to the accumulation of worldly goods in a universe where these are of no importance whatsoever does not have a good life.

People come to me frequently with the names of a dozen teachers. They ask me which one is authentic. The one that is authentic is the one inside-if you give it a chance. If someone says, "I can help you to reach into yourself by discipline," you might have a little confidence in them. Anyone who is a fit leader is gently but firmly impelling change; not compelling but impelling. The sincere leader wants to liberate a follower, not to attach him. He wants the individual to grow into his own fullness, insofar as he can. It is not likely that he is going to develop all his potentials in any one embodiment, but he should leave this world better than he came into it. The only way he can be better is by releasing more of good from within himself. It is this good from within himself that helps him to grow.

In order to increase this probability of good and encourage growth, man is faced with responsibility. His life is very often a mass of duties; he is continually being beset by situations that are difficult. These become, in a sense, his trials, his tests, his obligations. The reason he is so beset is because he has not handled situations correctly. The situation that is difficult arises usually from his own inability to handle something that might have been good. Nature does not send false evils to us. Nature does not afflict us with anything that is beyond our comprehension to work with and finally to normalize us. We are not being simply beaten down by some strange cosmic force that wishes to bear down on us until we cannot stand it any longer.

Difficulties require certain adjustments within ourselves. Mysticism in general teaches the importance of adjustments, the importance of making things what they should be through a process of enlightenment. We are free of that which we do well, and slaves to that which we do badly. It is our constant duty and responsibility to learn more and more, to do everything well that we possibly can, and in a very quiet, peaceful and gentle way to go along growing as Nature would have us grow. The moment a problem arises we have to estimate our own resources. Whoever we are and whatever our problem is, the answer is in ourselves. Of this, there is no doubt. Whatever situation we face can be dominated by our own inner convictions.

We all have to have faith in something. Faith is the beginning of effort. Faith is that attitude in ourselves which is supported by the highest traditions of the race, the greatest experiences of the past, and those things held most sacred and dear to our own hearts and souls. Faith must have a proper integration, a proper point of view.

There are two forms of faith that are important to us. One is faith in universal integrity; the other is faith in the possibility of personal self unfoldment. If the individual believes that the universe is honest, then there is no longer any reason for his own dishonesty. If he believes that there is, within himself, a divine spark, a flame, or a light, then he has the faith to do something about it. Faith is the acceptance of an honorable hypothesis. Faith is something that must be accepted first and proven by experience later. If our faith is wrong to start with, we can become very embittered and may likely blame the religion we belong to or the world we live in. But faith is basically the individual's acceptance of a law of universal love and justice.

Faith begins, according to mysticism, in the simple recognition that the individual can grow and can accomplish all good that is necessary to himself, and that this faith is manifested through a complete pattern of unselfish dedication to principles. The individual also, in the process of learning, must come to the realization that the most important of all religious exercises is service. The individual who forgets himself in service comes nearer to his own soul. The individual who is always thinking of himself and his rights, privileges, and abilities is usually not internally enlightened.

Some people want to govern others, control them, exploit them, use them, and if necessary destroy them if they refuse to obey. This is a wrong attitude. As long as nations or individuals dominate in this way, the tragedy will never end. It is not the domination of others but the direction of ourselves that is the reason for evolution as far as man is concerned.

It is the forgetting of self in the fulfillment of the law that brings us closer and closer to our inner potential. Emerson and the great Neoplatonists of Athens and Alexandria, such as Plotinus, took a theology that had descended to them principally from Plato and adapted it to a complete dedication to the highest possible concepts of human life. They were the ones who emphasized most of all the tremendous importance of simple sincerity in strengthening the spiritual life. Most of these people were philosophers, but philosophy is a very broad term. Philosophy does not necessarily mean one of the schools that we know today. Most of these schools are at loggerheads with each other.

It does not mean a sheer intellectualism in which we try to rationalize ourselves into a state of grace. It is nothing more nor less than organized idealism. It is the individual using the inner values of his own life to create what he calls common sense.

Common sense is simply the most natural and most obviously correct way of directing a life. Common sense is the most uncommon of sensory perceptions. It arises when the individual begins to cast off superficial, impossible, or irrational hypotheses and settles down to the common circumstances of life. Common sense has been likened to childhood because in the early years of life the individual has not been spoiled. What we today call growing up is largely the destruction of our inner lives—not destruction in the sense of final annihilation, but the prevention of these inner values from coming through. Children, small children especially, are normally friendly, kindly, and affectionate. They are trusting, they believe in things. It is only when they are educated out of their own faith that we have more and more trouble with them.

Mysticism, the quiet way, is the way of peaceful growth through the acceptance of responsibility, the quiet fulfillment of all duties,

and complete control of our own attitudes. Mysticism, by quieting the inner life, by taking away from it all the pressures, inconsistencies, and absurdities with which we burden it, allows the truth to come through. We hear the voice of the silence. We hear the gradual revelation of the nobility within ourselves-not in words, but in values, strength, and courage. "Be still", the Bible says, "and know that I am God".

Emerson and the Neoplatonists of Alexandria and Athens were of one mind about the soul. The soul, they said, is a transcendent being. The soul is that seed of eternity which is sown in man at the time of his creation, a being that is his own true self. Paul says, "the Christ in you, which is the hope of glory". The soul, in a sense, is the Christ in us, the divine power without which we would not exist at all, but which we seldom, if ever, understand correctly. According to the Greeks and the Egyptians, the human soul is the link between spirit and body. It represents the middle distance between the exterior world and the interior. This inner power must be cultivated.

Through the soul the eternal moves into the temporal. Through the soul the divine root of life becomes a tree and spreads downward to become the mortal world in which we live. All things are in their middle distances soul. That is why everything in its natural state is beautiful. The stars are beautiful, the sky is beautiful, the earth is beautiful. They are symbols of a beauty which is normalcy, order, integrity, and justice. The soul, therefore, links man's spiritual and material life. In alchemy, it is the transforming and transmuting agency. It is that power by means of which it is possible for the human being to transcend himself. It is his link with the Infinite, that part of his own nature which alone can survive, which alone can fulfill, and alone can solve all the problems of existence-and solve them by the simple realization that there are no problems except the ones man creates himself.

Man living in a beautiful universe has a right to enjoy it, has a right to share in it, be part of it and live with it. He has a right to the natural joys of life, but also must realize that any pleasure detrimental to his own nature or damaging to any other person cannot be a true source of comfort or consolation. The individual cannot be selfish and grow.

He cannot nurse his own temperament and outgrow it. On the other hand, people have tried for years to fight against themselves. Very often this is a terrible fight. It is a fight against shadows, a tremendous resistance to demons of formless or mindless structure. To fight against this selfishness does not seem to do any good. The individual simply becomes more and more neurotic. He always wanted to do something, he disciplines himself by not doing it, and he gets sick. He cannot intellectually and willfully dominate his own personality any more than he can fight against that which is not right. He must quietly accept that which is right. Instead of opposing evil, he must strengthen good. When we strengthen good we discover that evil is only a shadow. It is only a non-being we have mistaken for a reality because it had within it certain values which we liked but which had no permanent place in the universal policy of things. If we begin to grow, the evil slips away. We no longer wish that which is not good, once we have discovered the importance of doing right by things.

The problem of the release of the soul is an experience which Plotinus and Proclus both described. It is an instant in which the tremendous nature of the internal is made known to us. Every effort to describe it has been futile. The individual in a few seconds can have an experience that changes his whole life-the first contact with the Infinite, the sudden awareness of the divinity within ourselves. It is the experience of the infinite love that governs all things, the divine power of eternal right, and the realization that all the sufferings and problems we go through are necessary because through them we discover this ultimate right.

In the transcendentalist's way of thinking, the mystical experience or the experience of man's relationship to Deity is not something that comes as a reward for a specialized training. It is a reward simply for the life of virtue, what Confucius calls "the life of the superior person", the person who is so integrated in himself that he is incapable of being over influenced by the corruptions of his environment. The gentle person, completely relaxed and not negative, is the one in whom the soul power or inner life has the greatest possibility of manifesting itself.

One thing, of course, that most people have gotten into trouble over is the conflict between the ego and the soul. The ego, or the “me and mine”, does not represent the true self. It has been demonstrated in nearly all systems of learning, in mysticism, psychology, and religion, that the ego is a false god. The ego is simply the superficial summary of undigested experiences and unenlightened attitudes. The ego is a personal self allowed to dominate the impersonal self locked within it. The ego is the superficial outside of the human personality. It is that which most commonly dominates conduct and mutilates it.

The difference between the ego and the soul is that the ego lives in this world, thinks in terms of it, expects nothing beyond it, and wants to build into this material existence every conceivable satisfaction. There is no long-range plan because to the ego there is no long range. There is simply the immediate comfort, whether it be by dissipation or by damaging other people. The ego is the source of crime; it is the source of practically every delinquency of the individual. These delinquencies arise from various negative attitudes or simply from the desire to succeed without sincere effort. The individual who does not want to earn what he has but tries to take it some other way is a victim of his own ego.

Occasionally an individual suffering from the pressures of his own personality passes through an experience which causes a tremendous internal change. He is transformed by a surfeit of his own errors. He comes to a point where the fallacy of it all bursts upon him. He can no longer live with his own external self. The internal is frustrated perhaps for many lives. It is demanding attention because the external becomes increasingly uncomfortable. After you abuse the body long enough, it fights back. If you abuse life long enough, it turns against you. Sometimes in an emergency of that type there is an extension of consciousness. This is the way most mystics interpret the conversion of St. Paul who suddenly reversed his position because he was able to dominate his own ego and transmute himself into a servant, rather than a master, of outer things.

The individual has not only an enemy inside himself, his ego and appetites, but he has an enemy outside himself-his ignorance and

misinterpretation of his world. The individual who measures his world only by what it has done for him or to him is wrong. The individual who takes it for granted that life is impossible and that it is his moral duty to criticize and condemn has simply missed the point.

Man looking around him is deceived by his environment. Looking inside, he is deceived by his appetites. To overcome this and to understand this situation properly, there must be an opportunity for the individual to experience the sublimity of the good.

All great works of beauty in nature have been done by the soul. It is the soul which has inspired great art, great music, great literature. It is the soul that has made great humanitarians and given us the martyrs and the saints. The soul does the work that is important, right, and proper. So, the Neoplatonists suggested that we go around and look, see the temple in the world around us, see beauty in its own place in nature. It is important to stand by the side of a beautiful valley and look out upon the wonders of life, realize how beautiful nature can really be.

The beauties of nature help us to appreciate and understand the large plan of things. In doing the wrong thing, man has disfigured himself. Nature, according to Plotinus, tells us to love the beautiful. The soul moves toward beauty.

The great religious realities of life have been given to us in terms of beauty. The great cathedral is an architectural masterpiece, a magnificence of stone and stained glass, a wonderful thing. When you come into it you are quiet because the wonder of it impresses you. A great painting is a wonderful experience. As the Zen Masters of Japan pointed out, a painting is not just a thing; a painting is alive. Nothing that is not alive can influence anything else. So it is the life in the picture taken in by your soul power that helps you to grow. The same is true of a great book or a great piece of music. It is equally true of a very simple person in whom we can see the virtues and values that we are not able to possess ourselves.

All beautiful things draw from life and draw your own soul out from the lockedness of itself. Beauty releases soul power. It brings into play what Emerson calls the overself. It is the power to bring

forth out of yourself sublimity. Beauty may cause you to break into tears because you cannot handle its emotional pressures. It may cause you to experience great exaltation, or great depression. But beauty is an instrument for release of soul power. Beauty is not only in things but in qualities. Love is beautiful. Hate is ugly. There are beautiful ideals and emotions. Kindness is beautiful. Forgiveness is beautiful. All the things which arise from the impulse to be better or to share good are beautiful. Yet among the most beautiful things in this world are the commonest. There is nothing more beautiful in all the world than the leaves of a weed, of an ordinary thing, for there is nothing that does not ultimately reveal the soul power working through material nature.

The Transcendentalists cultivated beauty. They wanted to live simply. They realized that the more you have, the more trouble you have. Thoreau worked that all out to his own satisfaction at Walden Pond. He knew the beauty of gentleness, though he was not able to live it always. No one is completely free from the pressures which restrict the integrities. No one is completely perfect. But everyone is trying to take the next step forward. If we try to take a big leap, we are liable to fall down. But the little step we can take each day will gradually give release to the soul power. It is our own soul power working through human nature that must grow if we are ever to have peace, security, and integrity.

This is what the alchemist meant when he spoke of opening the door of the shut palace of the king. It is the opening of the inner life, allowing it to come out, when you are not afraid to be yourself, when you are not afraid that you will be misunderstood. As long as you play games with your own mind, you will be misunderstood. But when you are truly gentle, have great faith, and the kindness of your soul comes through in its full value, you know when to speak and when to be silent. You know what to say, and why it should be said. And you are not involving yourself in any effort to avenge or revenge yourself, or to dominate the thinking of another person. Everything moves in a very quiet way. It is the path of the quiet way that is true mysticism.

Mysticism is not something that you get by all kinds of fancy doctrines. It is not something that you rationalize or intellectualize. Mysticism is simply allowing the best of yourself to govern the rest. When this happens, then you are truly a transcendentalist, you are a person in whom the spiritual values of life have been released into their own maturity.

It is rather obvious that if we believe in life after death, it is the degree of growth that we have achieved that we take with us when we go. The degree of peace we have attained here comes to be the peace we have in the life beyond. The early saints were very much concerned with this thought. They believed that as this world is a terror to the ignorant, so life beyond the grave will be a terror to the ignorant when they die. But if the individual has learned here to love life, serve others, be gentle, kind, and thoughtful, he will awaken beyond the grave to a world of peace and quietude because this is his own life. The afterlife is merely an expression of his own life here while he tries to grow.

In the effort to grow, people get all mixed up. For some unknown reason, growth has been seriously retarded for the last several hundred years. The cause is probably karma; the many entities involved in the tragedies of the previous two thousand years have been coming in here the last one hundred years. Man has not grown easily, generously, or happily. He has grown through war, privation, pestilence, and through catastrophe.

Today, as perhaps never before in the recorded history of the world, success is all that matters. And the only success is in this world. The only success is to have that extra house, the yacht, the swimming pool. These are called success. For these the individual is willing to compromise his integrities. You ask him why and he says, "Well, why shouldn't I? Everyone else is".

This is where the individual is mistaken. What everyone else does can have no actual influence on him unless he permits it to. Each individual must retain his own integrity. There has never been a better opportunity than right now to retain integrities, but they are fast slipping away. Yet, it is this very slipping away that in the last twenty-

five years has caused the greatest resurgence in religion that has occurred for the last one thousand years. More and more people are realizing that something is wrong. More and more people are having trouble living with their own way of life. In the government, we find constant anxiety about these points in our history

The great rebellion that we find arising against nuclear armaments bears witness to the fact that the soul is still there and is trying to speak. It is determined to accomplish certain things. The human being is potentially better than his way of life today permits, but he cannot depend upon the changing of society to improve himself. It is said that in a better world we could live better. If we were in heaven already, we would be perfect. Unfortunately this is not true, A better world is of no value to us unless we are able to live in it constructively. If the better world should simply be a place where we could have more and do less, we would be worse off than we are now

Work is becoming an odious thing, so we are reacting with every kind of mechanical device we can think of. All these things are going to turn on us because our motives are wrong, our intentions are not correct as far as personal character is concerned. We are indulging in laziness rather than seeking to grow. We are trying to save money by unemploying people. We are seeking shortcuts to almost every kind of material advantage we can think of. Our crime rate is high. Narcotic addiction is high, and so is alcoholism. All of this bears witness to the fact that the individual is refusing to permit his own soul to function.

Nature's correction is to show us that whatever we do that is contrary to the right that we should be doing will ultimately come back and hit us. We are going to find that the only peace in the world comes from keeping the rules. Keeping the rules means that friendship, kindness, and cooperation must become the basis of human relationships. We cannot be a competitive people, and survive. We cannot break the faith without being damaged.

Our attitudes affect not only the soul within us but the body also because, as the ancients pointed out, the healthy body is made possible by the constructive qualities of the soul. A soul that is enlightened can protect the body from a great many sorrows. It will not

prevent it from passing on, as is its way, but the soul controlling the body gives us maximum health and longevity. The soul dominating the mind makes us constructive, cheerful, and kind. And the control of the soul over the emotions makes us loving, affectionate, friendly, and moderate in our appetites

All these things help to make a person. It is the blocking of the soul that gives us religious intolerance. It breaks up homes. It leaves parents and children isolated. It causes all the things to happen that we do not want to happen. Wherever we break the soul's laws, we suffer and are saddened. We weep. We realize that something is desperately wrong. There is no pleasure left for us in life because all of our affairs go badly. What people do not realize apparently is that this is all due to the fact that we have declared war upon the best of our selves. We are determined to destroy that which prevents us from doing as we please. And as that which we want to destroy is the only indestructible part of ourselves, we come in the end to a stalemate.

The Neoplatonists of Alexandria discovered in the works of Plato the idea of a great religious system. We are told by Proclus of Athens, the last of the Platonic successors, that Plato's philosophy was the outer cover for a religion. Therefore, Proclus, in his books on the theology of Plato, lets us know that in the closing years of his life Plato transformed his whole philosophy into a way of life, a very simple way. The end of true philosophy is that the individual shall experience the divinity of life. Philosophy is not an end, but a means. The end of philosophy is that man shall love the beautiful, serve the good, and honor the true, the integrities of existence.

Philosophy gives us our first basic understanding of the true nature of God, and by philosophy we can justly correct our own imperfections. We can find a natural theology, a theology that is supported by the natural law that is obvious in the world wherever we look around us. It is the natural integrity by which every function of existence is maintained. The Alexandrian Neoplatonists took this concept and began to interpret philosophy in terms of a great internal discipline, an experience of universal integrities.

Philosophy was not destroyed by this. Mysticism does not destroy philosophy; it consummates it. So far as philosophy is honorable, it

shows us many of the truths which help us to have the courage to live well. But to end in an argument concerning abstractions is to destroy the essential value of philosophy. Philosophy is not a mere intellectualism. It is not something in which the individual tries desperately to be wise but fails in all of his values of life. Philosophy is simply the outer chamber of a great universal system. It is one of the outside steps leading into the temple. Philosophy is, therefore, perhaps summed up in man's discovery that all things are reasonable, all things are just, and all things move inevitably to the fulfillment of their ordainment by Divinity.

This philosophical theology, in which the individual grew rather than received absolution vicariously, characterized Neoplatonism and later influenced Emerson and the Transcendentalists. It involved the simple realization that there is a natural, kindly, good-natured and peaceful way of doing things which is not spectacular, not full of fads, and does not require the individual to viciously attack things that do not seem to work out to his particular satisfaction,

Things have to be what they are, but everything is what it is and can be beautiful. There is no reason why truth should hurt anybody. The only person you can hurt is the person who does not believe in truth. On the other hand, to go around making cruel remarks about other people is not a matter of truth. It is ulteriorly motivated. There is spite, vengeance; there is an ulterior motive whenever we are unkind. We are trying to get some kind of satisfaction, trying to fulfill something in ourselves at the expense of other people. Neoplatonism and mysticism do not work on this level, on this type of thinking.

We have hundreds and hundreds of groups springing up now, based on all kinds of religious principles. Some of them are very good, some of them may be good, and some of them are obviously not good. But, they are all based upon some concept of something. All of them, to fulfill a constructive purpose, must come back to the same rules.

No system can grow or help people to grow unless it helps the individual to correct his own mistakes. Unless he is impelled to be a better person, no organization can make him one. No organization

can save him by taking him out of the thundering herd and isolating him on the top of a mountain. No Divine Plan can be fulfilled through the use of narcotics. None of these various shortcuts work. Any system, to be worthwhile, must include the basic requirement of self-improvement—self-improvement not in the sense of becoming wiser in worldly things, but in the sense of becoming better in the virtues of life. No system that does not teach an individual to escape from the pressures of his own attitudes can do anything of permanent value. We have to break through this shell we have built, the shell of our own alleged infallibility, the shell of our own uniqueness, the shell that we have been selected by destiny for some noble purpose. All these attitudes must be overcome. It is only when we overcome these things and become more what we ought to be—natural human beings—that Nature or the Infinite can use us for some major purpose or project. Those who have done the most for the world have been those who have forgotten their own spirituality and tried every day to work for the benefit of other people.

We must expect no rewards. The reward is not in anything except growth. The final reward for the good deed is growth. We become better people; because we are better people, we can do more for others. Growth is self-rewarding, self-fulfilling. We grow and, in so doing, become a little wiser, a little better, a little more beautiful within ourselves. The simple daily deeds of life release that grandeur which is locked within everything. Just as the flower passes from bud to full bloom and then has its seed, so the soul unfolding comes to full glory and then bears its eternal fruit in the redemption of man.

This type of thinking is needed right now. A great many people are not going to get it right away, but more are reaching for it than ever before. They are no longer so much interested in sects and creeds, in the old traditional forms of worship, but they have a great need, a great spiritual need of the immediate presence of God. They need to have an experience of some kind that will forever overcome and dissolve the insecurities of life. The individual then lives in an eternal life; one moment of enlightenment, and the individual becomes eternal. He will not be in this new state all the time, but that moment reveals to him the eternality of himself. He is an undying, immutable,

inevitable being. He always has been and always will be. When he knows this firmly, it makes no difference whether he is born or dies. He has experienced the eternal continuity of life preserved forever in the love of God. He knows that all forms are manifestations of a great system of spiritual enlightenment and education. We are so blessed with this plan that we can ask for no better.



Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803 - 1882)

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