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MDCCCLXXVIII.

ENGLISH MYSTICS OF THE PURITAN PERIOD.

By Professor R. E. Thompson.

MYSTICISM is a type of thought and devotion, which reappears in every age of the world, and either within every religious system, or external to it and in antagonism to it. It owes this universality to the fact that it is the feminine mode of insight and aspiration. Whenever woman's intellect, or even that of the more woman-like part of the other sex, finds itself depreciated and excluded from the sanctuary of religious thought, it asserts for itself a right and a place by effecting a reaction against the principles and methods which would have excluded it. Hence the readiness with which Buddhism was welcomed in the far East, by those who found in Shintoism, Confucianism, and other indigenous Turanian faiths no play for the affections, no scope for the gentler virtues. But Mohammedanism presents within its own sphere the most striking instance of this. If ever there was a purely and thoroughly masculine creed, it was Islam—a religion made up of external duties, public relations, and abstract beliefs, and making little or no demand upon the affections. It was utterly theocratic; it presented God as a king, a man of war, an irresistible ruler; not as a Father, a Friend, a Comforter. It upheld the masculine virtues of truth, courage, soldierly obedience, self-respect; for those of woman it had no blessing, no recognition. And its works have been according to its faith. It has taken, it is every day taking, villages of low-caste Hindoos and debased negroes, and lifting them to their feet, bidding them to know themselves the equals of the greatest on earth, and to look their fellow-men in

the face. And for the same reason its foot has been on the neck of woman, crushing her down from the place of free equality where the Prophet found her, as the mistress of a free Arab home, to the place she now fills in every Moslem country, as the slave, the plaything of man. Mohammed never taught that women have no souls, but he might as well have done so, as proclaim a creed which presents no object to her affections, and puts no honour upon her virtues. The mystical reaction against his creed shows, by its intensity, how utterly masculine it was. Soofeeism is Mysticism of the extreme type. It arose in the very first century of the Hejira, and among its earliest saints the woman Rabia holds the chiefest place, as the sublimest instance of its gospel of resignation and submission. To her, Allah was not king and sovereign, but lover, and as such she addressed him in her prayers; by the paths of mystic self-denial, mortification, and annihilation, she had entered into the union of her being to that of God; and the narratives of her life represent her as the centre of the great Soofees of her time, inciting their devotion and reproving their lack of faith.* But it was in the following ages that Soofeeism flourished the most, when the crude theocratic optimism of Islam became no longer credible to men, during the dissolution of the Caliphate, and the expiration of the great hopes of the conquest of the world. It was then that princes and generals abandoned the world, to adopt the life of voluntary mortification, to put on the

* See Tholuck's *Soufismus sive Theosophia Persarum Pantheistica*, (Berlin, 1821) pp. 50-54.

wool (*soof*), and to become monks after the model of Christendom or of Buddhism, in spite of the Prophet's express prohibitions. Hence the vast outgrowth of Dervish orders, anchoritism, and all the paraphernalia of an exuberant monasticism. It seems not unlikely that just as the Caliphate was broken up by the re-emergence of old lines of national division and the re-awakening of national feeling, so also Soofeeism was not without historical relation to the mystical elements in the religions which Islam was supposed to have superseded. It seems to have flourished best on the ground previously occupied by Zoroastrianism and Magianism.

Inside Christendom reactions of this same sort have repeatedly occurred, but never with such violence. Christianity itself being utterly free from all one-sidedness, and complete in its recognition of every aspect and power of man's nature, every ignored or depressed interest can rightfully appeal to the original norm as given in the life and teachings of the Master. In these teachings and in that life the feminine virtues are exalted to an honour which they never before received. The beatitudes are a series of blessings pronounced upon woman's condition; and the revelation of God as the Friend, the Comforter, the Father, and the Helper to whom man can have the freest and most immediate access, is given in all its fulness. The Christian system presents the truth not in an abstract form as a system, but concretely as a person, a living object of trust and faith to which the heart of woman, and the heart of womanliness in every complete man, can alike cling. Yet Christianity is as manly as it is womanly. It does not set aside the social and civic virtues; it enjoins truth and courage and all the manly excellencies, with the largest emphasis in its teaching. It declares that God is King as well as Father, and that to consecrate all public and private relations alike as part of the order of His kingdom is one purpose of the Incarnation.

But the treasure is put into earthen vessels—very earthen vessels sometimes. And therefore the Christianity of different periods in the Church's history may be but partial and one-sided, thus provoking reaction and antagonism. The Church has had her periods of dry, arid dogmatism, in which a masculine intellectualism has prevailed in the elaboration and the defence of systems of theology. She has had periods of rigid hierarchy, in which the soul was shut out from the light of God's countenance by the shadow of Pope and priesthood. Such were the middle ages of Europe when dogmatism and hierarchy were in close alliance, and provoked a wide-spread reaction in mediæval Mysticism. All classes shared more or less in the reaction. Doctors like Richard of St. Victor and Gerson taught Mysticism in the schools; preachers like Eckhart, Tauler, and Suso proclaimed it in the pulpit; devout laymen like Nicolas of Basel, Rulmin Merswen, and the author of the *Theologie Deutsche*, spread it by voice and pen among the people. Very significant is the name by which the German mystics distinguished themselves from the mass of less enlightened Christians; they called themselves the "Friends of God" to mark the fact that they had discovered in God something more loveable and intimate than was known to those who knew Him only as a king. But besides these more sober mystics there were some who rushed to wild extremes of fanaticism: "Brethren and Sisters of the Free Spirit," who denied the very basis of common morality, and held all acts alike sinless in the illuminated. These deniers of the kingship and the kingdom of God had their parallel among the Soofees of the school of Bustami, and afterwards among the English Ranters.

The Puritan period of English Church history is one whose nobleness and fruitfulness in great principles have been coming into ever clearer recognition since Mr. Carlyle's *Cromwell* opened up the way for a

fairer estimate of the men and the measures of that time. To Mr. Carlyle, and many others, the thorough masculinity of the Puritans is clearly the most admirable thing about them. They were manly men—men of the soldierly temper, true as steel, courageous with a courage not of earth. And their Christianity was masculine. It was intellectual to a degree. Their Bible was not merely studied, but intellectually appropriated; its teachings took shape in their minds as a connected and logical system of doctrine, in which every conception was clear, sharply cut, well defined. They had unflinching faith in their own capacity to thus connect and harmonise the sum of scriptural teaching. Furthermore their Christianity was theocratic. An actual real kingship of Christ over the nations was the watchword of the Scottish Covenant, with which the great uprising against the Stuarts began. The Puritans of all classes responded to that proclamation. It was embraced by those who quarrelled with the Scotch and put them down at Dunbar and Worcester, even more than by those who sided with them in upholding the Presbyterian theory of Church government. It found utterance in Cromwell's speeches and proclamations; it was caricatured in the beliefs of the Fifth Monarchy men. In both its intellectual and its theocratic aspects Puritanism was masculine, even one-sidedly masculine. It had more faith in the kingship than in the fatherhood and the friendship of God. It was not, with all its nobleness, a reproduction of the Christianity of the Gospels in the full rounded completeness of Christian truth. It did but slight justice to the needs of more feminine natures, and to the glory of the feminine virtues.

It was therefore to be expected that both within Puritanism and alongside of it, a reaction in the direction of Mysticism would take place. And when we come to look more closely into the literature of the period,

we find that this was decidedly the case. In manifold forms, and in various circles, we find a genuine Mysticism, akin to that of Rabbis, Tauler, and Böhme, while bearing also the impress of its own age. It was heard from Puritan pulpits, even those of the chaplains of the army and of the Protector. It taught in the universities; it permeated the lives of statesmen and the lives of cobblers. It set wealthy citizens at the work of translating into English the profoundest writings of this sort known on the Continent; it united others of them in the practical attempt to realise the mystic's ideal of a true Church—the fellowship of an elect and holy seed. It blended with the thinking of the calmest and sanest minds of the age; and it was mixed with the crude notions of the age's coarsest fanatics. It was in the minority always, but it was everywhere. Its adherents were more by weight than by count. At every step, if we look for them, we find the representatives of the tendency.*

* The theology of the Puritans—I would not be understood to deny—in general abounded in practical and devout teaching, and they insisted on the searching truths of Christianity. St. Theresa's last English biographer can find nothing in English literature so like the Spanish mystic, as are some parts of the *Saint's Rest*. Gottfried Arnold in his *Historia et Descriptio Theologicæ Mysticæ* (1702) enumerates among English mystical writers John Abernethy, Richard Baxter, Paul Bayne, Robert Bolton, John Bunyan, John Cotton, Daniel and Jeremiah Dyke, John Downname, John Everard, John Fox, Thomas Godwin, James Guthrie, Bishop Joseph Hall, John Haywood, William Perkins, Nicholas Rogers, Francis Rous, Thomas Shephard, Richard Sibbes, Emmanuel Sonthomb, Thomas Taylor, Arthur Warwick, ——— Whalley, Thomas Walter, and Robert Wilkenson. But there is a vast difference between most of these (concerning Everard and Rous *vide infra*) and the mystical writers. Sonthomb's *Golden Key* had a great circulation in German, having been printed as late as 1746; it, together with the German translation of Bishop Lewis Bailey's *Practice of Piety*, made a great impression on Spener, the founder of the Pietists, when still a lad.

The best known group are of course the Cambridge Platonists, who were also the forerunners of the Latitudinarian party. As this indicates, the Mysticism of some of them was but one of the several reactionary elements of their creed; with John Hales of Eton, they had "bid good-night to John Calvin," and that they were "great readers of Grotius and Episcopius," a contemporary tells us. But while they possessed certain common characteristics, they exhibit great individuality and marked differences in their views. They were often very unlike each other, but always still more unlike their times. They were all great admirers of Plato, or rather of Plotinus; all the later and younger members of the group shared in an admiration of the new philosophy of Monsieur Des Cartes. And in nearly all there was a certain rationalising element, an assertion of the greater importance of practice as compared with principles, which accounts to us for the fact that "they begot a race of moralisers whom we have learnt to look back upon as respectable and instructive, but unable to do any great work for the renovation of human society or the discovery of truth.*"

At the head of the Cambridge School we believe must be placed a man whose name is never mentioned in connection with them by the historians of philosophy or of theology, whom indeed Mr. Maurice contrasts with them. A contemporary authority, quoted in Brook's *History of the Puritans*, says that Peter Sterry and "one Sadtler were the first who were observed to make a public profession of Platonism in the University" of Cambridge. And when we compare the evidence of speculative power and of original thought presented in his works, with that of his associates, we see no reason to doubt that here we have the true master of the Cambridge Platonists.

* Maurice, *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy*, ii, 350.

A graduate of that "Puritan foundation," Emmanuel College, to which they nearly all belonged, he first became the chaplain of (the second) Lord Brooke, who was killed at the siege of Lichfield Castle in 1643. Then and afterwards he was known as the friend of the younger Vane, with whom he sat in the little group of Independents in the Westminster Assembly. Seven times he preached before the Long Parliament, and in one of these sermons he eulogised the Roman Catholic Church as in this respect better than the Presbyterian Kirk because "they give and take a large scope to the understanding and the affections in generous contemplations, in mystical divinity." He became chaplain to the Council of State, and then to the Lord Protector after its abolition, and in 1654 was appointed one of the "Commissioners for Approbation of Public Preachers." At the Restoration he of course retired to private life, preaching, till his death in 1672, to a conventicle of men like-minded with himself. The substance of his preaching we have in two posthumous works, *A Discourse of the Freedom of the Will* (1675), and *The Rise, Race, and Royalty of the Kingdom of God in the Soul of Man* (1683). It would carry us too far were we to attempt to trace his life more closely, or to analyse his works. This only we will note, that wherever we can discern his influence at work it is fruitful in the dissemination of mystical views in other minds. With his college friends, with Lord Brooke, with Vane and his circle, his fellow-chaplains under the Protector, and even Cromwell himself, and lastly the little group of disciples that gathered around him in later years, he seems to have held the same commanding position of teacher and master, and we can everywhere trace his fertilising influence in the products of other minds. As regards his works, Professor Maurice says that Sterry is "one of those men into whose writings few have looked without carrying

away some impressions which they would be very sorry to lose. Dwelling in the midst of the civil war, full of all the highest aspirations which that war awakened, not surpassed by other Independents in his dislike of the monarchy and hierarchy which he supposed had shut out the perfect monarchy and hierarchy from the vision of redeemed men, he was led to a different conception of the spiritual world and of the kingdom of darkness from that which satisfied those champions of the commonwealth who regarded themselves as the saints of God and all besides as His enemies. A struggle of essential light with outer darkness, of original good with evil in its first motions, sometimes overwhelmed, sometimes elevated, his spirit. The reader may be utterly lost in the wealth of Sterry's thoughts and imaginations; he will seldom have to complain of poverty or barrenness. . . . Sterry is little read in the nineteenth century; but a better knowledge of him would often throw light upon the works of his contemporaries, and would enable us to prize them more."*

Two of the Cambridge School died in their youth, and both in the year 1652, but not until both had left behind them evidences of extraordinary gifts. John Smith was in his thirty-fourth year, and was already famed as a preacher before both academic and less learned audiences. Coleridge pronounces him an "enlightened and able divine." His *Select Discourses*, edited by his friend Dr. Worthington, though but ten in number, fill nearly five hundred quarto pages, and their merits are attested by their frequent republication, as well as by the praise bestowed upon them by Chalmers and others. He was a thorough Platonist; he quotes the sayings of that and of some other Greek philosophers as if he were quoting Scripture. His friends seem to intimate that in political matters he had as little

sympathy with Puritanism as in theology, which was little enough. "To seek our divinity (he says) merely in books and writings, is to 'seek the living among the dead;' we do but in vain seek God in these, where His truth too often is not so much *enshrined as entombed*. No; *intra te quaere Deum*, seek for God within thine own soul; He is best discerned *νοερεῖ ἐπαφῇ* as Plotinus phraseth it, by an intellectual touch of Him." He rebels, as the Protestant mystics of all sorts have rebelled, against the theological notion of imputed righteousness, declaring that the righteousness which is by faith "is in its own nature a vital and spiritual administration, wherein God converseth with man." For he asserts "That the Divine judgment and estimation of everything is according to the truth of the thing; and God's acceptance or disacceptance of things is suitable to His judgment," and that "God's justifying of sinners, in pardoning their sins, carries in it a necessary reference to the sanctifying of their natures."*

Only three years older than Smith, was Nathaniel Culverwell, a scion of a family which produced many Puritan divines. His *Discourse of the Light of Nature* is far more readable than Smith's *Discourses*; it is "a book instinct with literary life," and very

* *Select Discourses*, treating—1. Of the true Way or Method of attaining to Divine Knowledge. 2. Of Superstition. 3. Of Atheism. 4. Of the Immortality of the Soul. 5. Of the Existence and Nature of God. 6. Of Prophecy. 7. Of the Difference between the Legal and the Evangelical Righteousness, the Old and the New Covenant, etc. 8. Of the Shortness and Vanity of a Pharisaick Righteousness. 9. Of the Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion. 10. Of a Christian's Conflicts with, and Conquests over, Satan. By John Smith, late Fellow of Queen's College in Cambridge. Also a Sermon preached by Simon Patrick (then Fellow of the same College), at the Author's Funeral: with a brief Account of his Life and Death. London, 1660. Reprinted Cambridge, 1673; Edinburgh, 1756; London, 1823; and Cambridge, 1859. The sixth discourse was translated into Latin by Le Clerc.

* Maurice, *ubi supra*, pp. 250-1. Cf. Hare's *Memoir of a Quiet Life*, ii. 96 and 182.

unjustly neglected. It bristles at times with Greek, Latin, and Hebrew quotations, for the range of his reading is something wonderful. He has dwelt much with Aquinas and the other scholastics, as one might have conjectured from the disciplined acuteness of his intellect. But his authors are not authorities or masters; they are friends and helpers of his wit. He bears his load of learning easily and gracefully, and exhibits a literary power and vivacity to which Smith is a stranger. His theme is the saying of Solomon, "The understanding of a man is the candle of the Lord," and his object is to show that the light of nature is indeed a diminutive light,—a candle and not the sun—yet a Divine, directive, elevating light, by which to bring men back to the Fountain of all light.*

Smith's tutor, Benjamin Whitchcote, (1609-1683) might be regarded as in some sense the central figure of the Cambridge group, so fully does he combine and represent all its tendencies. He has been called, and not inaptly, the Frederick W. Robertson of the seventeenth century. His political sympathies seemed to have leaned towards the Royalist side, but he was not a vehement partisan. He received ordination from Laud's enemy, Bishop Williams; he was selected as the Provost of King's College in the Puritan reorganisation of Cambridge in 1643, and though he hesitated for a time, he finally accepted, but with the good will of his ejected predecessor. He was removed at the Restoration, but conformed, and became a preacher in London, where he spent

the close of his life. He has left us three volumes of sermons, of unusual quality, and a collection of twelve hundred aphorisms. These latter are most instructive reading; a double strain of thought and feeling runs through them, showing us the Platonist with his faith in the eternal "rule of right" and immutable morality on the one hand, and the moralising Latitudinarian with his dread of zeal, his passion for moderation, on the other. "If you will be religious," he says, "be rational in your religion." More instructive still is the controversial correspondence between Whitchcote and Anthony Tuckney, Master of Emmanuel College, bound up with these *Aphorisms* in the edition of 1753. It is a correspondence which does credit to both the men, and its interest lies in this, that the exceptions taken by Tuckney to Whitchcote's sermons bring the two tendencies then at work in theology to direct and plain speech with each other. One passage will give the points made on the Puritan side. Tuckney refers to his correspondent's earlier years at Emmanuel: "Whilst you were fellow here, you were cast into the company of very learned and ingenious men, who, I fear, at least some of them, studied other authors more than the Scriptures, and Plato and his scholars above others." "And hence in part hath run a vein of doctrine, which divers very able and worthy men, whom from my heart I much honour, are, I fear, too much known by.—The power of nature in morals too much advanced.—Reason hath too much given to it in the mysteries of Faith.—A *recta ratio* much talked of, which I cannot tell where to find.—Mind and understanding is all; heart and will little spoken of.—The decrees of God questioned and quarrelled, because according to our reason we cannot comprehend how they may stand with His goodness, which, according to your phrase, He is under the power of.—Those our philosophers, and other heathen, made fairer candidates for heaven than the

* *An Elegant and Learned Discourse of the Light of Nature, with several other Treatises.* By Nathaniel Culverwell, Master of Arts, and lately Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. London, 1652, 1654, and 1661, and Oxford, 1669. Berwick, 1857. The last edition omits the "other Treatises," (five sermons and a treatise on Spiritual Optics, first published 1651), and is edited by Dr. John Brown, father of the author of *Leisure Hours*, with a Critical Essay by Rev. John Cairns.

Scriptures seem to allow of, and they, in their virtues, preferred before Christians overtaken with weaknesses.—A kind of moral divinity minted, with only a little tincture of Christ added; nay, a Platonic faith unites to God.—Inherent righteousness so preached as, if not with the prejudice of imputed righteousness, which hath sometimes very unseemly language given it, yet much said of the one and very little or nothing of the other. This was not Paul's manner of preaching.—This inherent righteousness may be perfect in this life.—An estate of love in this life, above a life of faith.—And some broad expressions as though, in this life, we may be above ordinances;—with diverse other principles of religion by some very doubtfully spoken of." The Puritan knew how to strike for the openings in the joints of the armour, and time has justified many of his censures.

Dr. John Worthington (ob. 1671) a pupil of Whitchcote's, and the editor of Smith's *Discourses*, was known to us till quite recently only by a number of ascetical treatises, such as that on the *Duty of Resignation*, frequently reprinted and even translated into German. His recently discovered *Diary and Correspondence* have given him a new claim on the attention of students, as they are said to cast great light on the literary history of the times. Burnet reckons him among the Latitudinarians. Although a Cambridge man, he was made Master of Jesus College in Oxford, when Cromwell removed the old heads of houses for their Royalism. Yet he seems to have been much of his master Whitchcote's mind in politics.

Ralph Cudworth (1617-88), another of the six masters of colleges chosen from the fellows of Emmanuel in 1643, is known to all the learned world by his huge and candid refutation of Atheism and Hobbeism, *The Intellectual System of the Universe*, whose Latin translation by Mosheim is said to be much more readable than the English origi-

nal. He dealt so fairly with his opponents, that he was suspected of a secret agreement with them, and he has also been accused of Arianism. His sermon on the Lord's Supper, and his treatise on *Immutable Morality*, are better reading, and the latter especially exhibits his reverence for Plato and his acquaintance with him at first hand. It was first edited by Bishop Chandler in 1731, and others of his works are still in manuscript. From the allusions Mr. Emerson makes to Cudworth, it would seem that the American philosopher has learnt much from the Englishman.

Three Cambridge men, masters and scholars, are distinguishable from the other Cambridge Platonists by the fact that they were not students of Emmanuel College. They are Drs. Robert Gell, Henry More, and George Rust, all of Christ's College, where John Milton also studied. Gell and More were decided Royalists, and both were students of the Cabbala. Dr. Gell (ob. 1665) was one of the most successful of the tutors of his time, but left the college to become rector of Alder-Mary Church in London, where he preached through the Commonwealth times. He published an *Essay toward the Amendment of the last English Translation of the Bible* (1650), and after his death appeared in two folio volumes his *Remaines: or Several Select Scriptures of the New Testament Opened and Explained*, being in fact his notes of his Cambridge and London sermons. Gell was a stout Perfectionist, for which reason his *Remaines* was a favourite book of John Wesley's, and it is said that Charles Wesley got from it the suggestion of several of his hymns. "His works," says Orme, "are a curious mass of learned, occasionally original, interpretation of the Scriptures, and mystical speculation, often of a very peculiar character." Both his books were translated (in an abridged form) into German by R. Bacon, and published at Berleburg in 1723. They were used afterwards in the

preparation of the famous mystical translation and commentary known as the Berleburg Bible (1728-1741).

Henry More (1614-1687) is the best known of all the Cambridge Platonists. He was more properly a Neoplatonist and a Cabalist, besides being a student of Des Cartes and the Arminians; but he was also a disciple of "that golden little book, with which Luther is also said to have been wonderfully taken, viz.: *Theologia Germanica*." He says there was none of his "Platonick writers," nor any of "the mystical divines," that "to speak the truth so pierced and affected me." His singularly amiable character, his great personal excellence, and his many gifts, have won him the friendly regard of later generations as well as of his own. Few writers of his time wrote so much that is worth preserving; none managed to bury it under such a heap of rubbish. He enjoyed a European reputation. His Cabbalistic studies brought him into friendly relations with Knorr von Rosenoth, the German master of such studies, and at the request of continental friends he wrote in Latin an Estimate of the Philosophy of Böhme, in which he shows some acquaintance with the theosopher's writers and a disposition to treat him fairly.

Gell's other pupil, George Rust (ob. 1670), Bishop of Dromore in Ireland after the Restoration, was a Platonist and also a Universalist, as may be seen from his *Letter of Resolution concerning Origen and the Chief of his Opinions* (1661 and 1707) and his *Discourse of Truth* (1682).

This closes our list of the Cambridge Platonists. There are, indeed, a few others, of whom we know only the names. Such are the "one Sadtler" mentioned as Sterry's Platonic colleague—possibly the Mr. John Sadler "well known and beloved of" Dr. Gell, who helped to edit Gell's *Remaines*; the William Dillingham, who edited Culverwell's *Light of Nature*, and succeeded Dr.

Tuckney as Master of Emmanuel College; and Lazarus Seaman, dear to bibliomaniacs as the owner of the first library of which we possess a printed auction catalogue. There is also a group of Oxford scholars who are frequently associated with the Platonists of Cambridge, such as Dr. Thos. Jackson (ob. 1640), the elder Dr. S. Parker, Bishop of Oxford (ob. 1687), Bishop John Wilkins (ob. 1672), Theophilus Gale (ob. 1677), Joseph Glanville (ob. 1680), and John Norris of Bemerton (ob. 1711). But they all belong to the Restoration period except the first, whom Coleridge classes as a Platonist, on what grounds we cannot say.

Somewhat akin to the Cambridge men, was the group which takes the name of Vanists from the younger Sir Harry Vane. They were all united in the love of religious liberty, and in a certain practical Mysticism, which starts from the same premises as the ordinary Puritan theology, but reaches very different results. One might say that from Puritans they became Mystics by merely changing the doctrinal perspective, and making that chief which had been subordinate, and *vice versa*. Such doctrines as that of the mystical union, spiritual communion and illumination, inward sanctification by the mortification of the old man and renewal in Christ, they put into the first place.

Robert Greville, second Lord Brooke, already mentioned as Sterry's patron, was one of Vane's disciples. An ardent champion of English liberty, he had at one time fully determined to embark for America with his friend Lord Say; and the town of Saybrook recalls both their friendship and their purpose. He was one of the three whom Baxter, in the earlier editions of the *Saints' Rest*, mentioned as men whom he would rejoice to know again in heaven. Elsewhere Baxter says Brooke "was slain before" Vane "had brought him to maturity." His *Discourse of Truth* (1641) is o

such a tenor that Mr. Hunt, in his valuable *History of Religious Thought in England*, classes him as "a Platonic or Mystical Christian," and says of Sterry, that "he was of the same mystical spirit as Lord Brooke." John Wallis, Secretary of the Westminster Assembly, afterwards founder of the Royal Society, wrote an answer to it. Wallis was one of Whitchcote's pupils; he was at this time a zealous Presbyterian, but conformed at the Restoration and became Professor of Geometry at Oxford.

Vane's Mysticism has been a great stumbling-block to his eulogists and his biographers. Hume pronounces his religious writings "absolutely unintelligible. No traces of eloquence or even of common sense appear in them." Mackintosh and Forster would fain see everything excellent in so staunch a champion of liberty of conscience, but they are quite unable "to place him," and are obliged to confine their praises of him to the one point we have mentioned. Even Professor Maurice classes him—hesitatingly—with the Millenarians, though he sees in his writings "deep principles and remarkable distinctions." How he fared with his contemporaries may be imagined. Clarendon says, "Vane was a man not to be described by any character of religion, in which he had swallowed some of the extravagances of every sect and faction, and was become (what cannot be expressed by any other language than was peculiar to that time) *a man above ordinances*, unlimited and unrestrained by any rules or bounds prescribed to other men, by reason of his perfection. He was a perfect enthusiast, and, without doubt, did believe himself inspired, which so far corrupted his reason and understanding (which in all matters without the verge of religion, was inferior to that of few men) that he did at some believe that he was the person deputed to reign over the saints on earth for a thousand years." The fact being that Vane looked for no such

external millenium or reign of the saints. Elsewhere Clarendon detects a close resemblance of the style of one of his books to that of Father Augustin Baker's *Sancta Sophia*—a Catholic mystical work—but seeing that "in a crowd of easy words the sense was very hard to find out, I was of the opinion that the subject matter of it was of so delicate a nature that it required another kind of preparation of mind, and it may be another kind of diet, than men are ordinarily supplied with." Burnet calls Vane and his friends "Seekers," thus confounding them with a very different set of persons, and misleading many subsequent writers. He says of him, "Though he had set up a form of religion of his own, yet it consisted rather in a withdrawing from all other forms than in any new or particular opinions and forms. In the meetings of his friends "he preached and prayed often himself, but with so peculiar a darkness, that though I have sometimes taken pains to see if I could find out his meaning in his works, yet I could never reach it." But Baxter is worse than either Clarendon or Burnet: "His unhappiness lay in this, that his doctrines were so cloudily expressed that few could understand them, and therefore he had but few true disciples. The Lord Brooke was slain before he had brought him to maturity. Mr. Sterry was thought to be of his mind, as he was his intimate friend; but was so famous for obscurity in preaching, being, as Sir Benjamin Rudyard said, 'too high for this world and too low for the other,' that he thereby proved almost barren also; and *vanity* and *sterility* were never more happily conjoined. Mr. Sprigge is the chief of his more open disciples, and too well known by a book of his sermons. This obscurity was imputed by some to his not understanding himself; but by others to design, because he could speak plainly when he listed."

Vane's writings which were found so obscure by his contemporaries, contain nothing

especially puzzling to those who are acquainted with writers of his class, and who are therefore aware of the unusual and profounder sense which the Mystics are accustomed to ascribe to very common words, such as *principle, opening, forms*. The influence of Sterry seems to us everywhere palpable in them, and they certainly rise at times to a very lofty and impassioned eloquence. He differs from the Platonists, as do his friends generally, in being far more practical and less speculative, and in showing more Hebraic earnestness. As to his ecclesiastical position, he—like Milton—did not feel at liberty to unite in communion with any of the outward fellowships of his time, regarding as he did even the Reformed Churches as under a cloud of darkness. But he looked for the breaking of that cloud to the fuller disclosure of Christ, and the “speedy and sudden revival of His cause and spreading His kingdom over the face of the whole earth.” For the present he fell back upon the patriarchal form of religion, worshipping God with his household; but in his dying advice to his children he recommended them to conform to the religious usages and worship of the community they lived in, in so far as conscience permitted. He looked for no miraculous transformation of Church and State, no fifth monarchy.*

Henry Stubbe (1631-1676) was a *protégé* of Vane's, and wrote a defence of him against some aspersions of Baxter's in 1659. But at the Restoration he conformed, and afterwards came forward as the champion of Aristotle against the Royal Society. He practised medicine, and was drowned on his way home from visiting a patient. His Vanism was never more than skin deep, seemingly.

* Of his many works the best worth reading seems to be *The Retired Man's Meditations, or the Mysterie and Power of Godliness shining forth in the Living Word, to the Unmasking the Mysterie of Iniquity in the most Refined and Purest Forms*. 1655.

A more ardent disciple was George Sikes, who wrote *The Life and Death of Sir Harry Vane, Kt.** Vane's modern biographers have very different opinions of its worth. Mr. Forster thinks it “a very singular and valuable book,” while Mr. Upham calls it “a mere rhapsody by a religious enthusiast.” Singular enough it certainly is, being much more occupied with a rehearsal and vindication of Vane's views, than a narrative of his life. There is a pound of mystical theology to every ounce of biography in it. And it is notable that the author censures the *Theologia Germanica* for its pantheistic tendency. In this work first appeared Milton's sonnet to Vane, which was written on Vane's return to public life after his retirement consequent on the execution of the king.

“The chief of his more open disciples,” Joshua Sprigge (1616-1684), is the author of the well-known *Anglia Rediviva, being the History of the Motions, Actions, and Successes of the Army under the Conduct of Sir Thomas Fairfax* (1647). Two years later he published a volume of sermons, *Testimony to an Approaching Glory*, described by Mr. Orme as “somewhat mystical, but creditable both to the talents and the piety of their author.” Of earlier date is his rare and curious pamphlet (privately printed in only a hundred copies), *Some Weighty Considerations humbly submitted to Members of the High Court of Justice*, 1648. He pleads for the king's life, but premises, “I do acknowledge you to have cognisance of this cause, and to have the right of deciding it, if that the Lord do set up Himself in you,

* The full title is worth quoting: *The Life and Death of Sir Harry Vane, Kt., or a Short Narrative of the Main Passages of his Earthly Pilgrimage; together with a True Account of his Christian, Peaceable, Spiritual Gospel Principles, Doctrine, Life, and Way of Worshipping God, for which he suffered Contradiction from all sorts of Sinners, and at last a violent Death*; 1662. Sikes also wrote *The Book of Nature, Translated and Epitomized*, 1667, which I have not seen.

and bring forth Himself in and by your judgment; that is, if you are able to search into and lay open the root of all our evils;" but proceeds to plead that this root is not Charles Stuart, but the "hiding" the unseen king by the Babylon in men's hearts and consciences. But a Royalist pamphleteer says that Sprigge preached at Whitehall on the fast-day kept on the day after that on which the king's trial began, from the text "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."

Along with Sprigge may be mentioned three other army chaplains of similar principles—William Dell, John Saltmarsh, and John Webster.

William Dell (ob. 1697) was a Cambridge man, and at one time a fellow of Emmanuel College, but he had studied at Gaius College, of which he was appointed Master, in 1643. He was one of the five appointed to give Charles I. spiritual aid after his sentence. Although a chaplain in Fairfax's army, and apparently also in Cromwell's household, he gradually approximated to the views of the Quakers, especially as regards baptism with water and the requirement of a university degree for admission to the ministry, and the general influence of studies not explicitly Christian in their character. His works, or a selection from them, have been repeatedly printed by the Friends in England and America. They exhibit an acquaintance with Luther's Latin writings not usual with English theologians.

John Saltmarsh was one of those natures which have an innate tendency to extreme views on every subject. Before the outbreak of the war he was a zealous Conformist, but when he espoused the popular cause he at once veered to the other extreme. He was charged with Antinomianism, and the charge is now all that is remembered about him; but the Antinomians disclaimed him, as one too unsettled in opinions and too ready to catch at novelties. In Fairfax's army,

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"Saltmarsh and Dell were the two great preachers at the head-quarters," chaplain Baxter says. Saltmarsh published a great number of pamphlets, many of them against the scheme of Presbyterian government devised by the Assembly and favoured by the Parliament. He died in December, 1647, and one of his last acts was a solemn and public protest, in the prospect of death, against the sinful compliances and negotiations with the king. This protest must have shortly preceded the famous Conference, held just before Christmas of that year, in which the officers and the representatives of the soldiers, after prolonged prayer and fasting, reached "a very clear and joint resolution on many grounds at large there debated among us, that it was our duty, if ever the Lord brought us back again in peace, to call Charles Stuart, that man of blood, to an account for that blood he had shed and mischief he had done to his utmost against the Lord's cause and people in these poor nations." Saltmarsh's best known book is his *Sparkles of Glory, or some Beams of the Morning Star, wherein are many Discoveries as to Truth and Peace, to the establishment and pure enlargement of a Christian in Spirit and Truth* (1645; republished 1847). Dr. Stoughton (*Eccles. Hist. of England*, iv. 380-2) claims that its author is the Puritan Mystic, more worthy of the name than even Sterry.

John Webster has left us several books. He came up to London to preach after leaving the army, and excited some opposition by the manner and the substance of his sermons. His *Saint's Guide, or Christ the Rule and Ruler of Saints* (1653), provoked a reply, to which he responded in his volume of sermons, *The Judgment Set and the Books Opened, and all Religion brought to Trial* (1654; republished 1835). His sermons are vigorous and weighty, Puritan in tone of severity and earnestness, but everywhere divergent from the Puritan type of doctrine,

and divergent in the same direction as Vane and Sterry. He was a Cambridge man, but of what college I cannot say. He and William Erbery the Seeker held a public disputation in London in 1653, anent the maintenance of the universities and the national clergy; and in the following year he published an *Examination of the Universities*, which provoked replies from Seth Ward and John Wilkins, afterward bishops, then Presbyterians. At the Restoration he withdrew from the ministry to practise medicine, and wrote one of the first English works against a mischievous superstition, *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft*, folio, 1677. This "admirable treatise," as Coleridge calls it, is not even noticed or mentioned by any writer on the other side. It was translated into German.

Webster's sermons are commended "to the reader" by John Cardell, Joshua Sprigge, R. Bacon, and Thomas Somerton, who avow their entire agreement with the author. Sprigge has already been spoken of; of Somerton I can learn nothing, nor do I know who R. Bacon is, unless it be the "R. B." who, in 1678, edited Dr. Gill's *Remaines*, and the "R. Bacon" who made the abridged German translation of them. John Cardell is still known to us by three volumes of *Sermons* (1647, 1649, 1650), and by his very explicit and emphatic commendation of Dr. Everhard's *Gospel Treasury* (*vide infra*).

Distinct from the Vanists stand the Seekers, of whom William Erbery is the representative and leader. "These taught," says Baxter, "that our Scripture was uncertain; that present miracles are necessary to faith; that our ministry is null and void, and without authority, and our worship or ordinances unnecessary or vain; the true Church, ministry, Scripture, and ordinances being lost, for which they are now seeking. . . . They closed with the Vanists, and sheltered themselves under them, as if they had been the very same." Penn (in his "Preface" to

Fox's *Journal*) confounds them with the "Family of Love," and says that "as they came to the knowledge of one another, they sometimes met together, not formally to pray or preach, at appointed times or places according to their own wills, as in times past they were accustomed to do; but waited in silence, and as anything rose in any one of their minds that they thought savoured of a Divine spring, so they sometimes spoke." And he derives the sect of the Ranters from such of these Seekers as "ran out into their own imaginations." They looked for a complete transformation or re-creation of the Church, to be ushered in by the revival of the miraculous gifts of the primitive Church, and heralded by inspired Apostles. One might call them Irvingites born out of due time; but the same excited expectations have reappeared again and again in Church history. They watched the discomfiture of sect after sect with increasing confidence; "Popery is fallen," says Erbery in his *Children of the West*; "Prelacy is fallen, Presbytery and Independency are fallen likewise; nothing stands now but the last of Anabaptism, and that is falling too. Thus they are all fallen to those who already stand in God alone, who see God in spirit; and to spiritual saints in this nation the Churches are nothing." He gives us his estimate of the Vanists when he speaks of Sterry as one of those "who had the knowledge of Christ in the spirit, and held forth Christ in the spirit. These men are nearest to Zion, yet they come not into it. For as every prophet shall one day be ashamed of his prophecy—yea, prophecy itself shall fail—so is it manifest that these men are of a dark and deeper speech than can easily be understood; therefore it is not Zion."

The Seekers have but slight claims to be classed as Mystics; we have mentioned them here not only to distinguish them from Vane's friends, but also to point out their relation to another group of which they were

the forerunners, and into which they were for the most part absorbed. About 1650, at any rate not much earlier,* George Fox and the first Quakers began to attract attention by their proclamation that it had pleased God to call out of the dispersion of an unchristian Christendom and into the fellowship of His Spirit, a true Church, a Society of Friends. Fox and the first generation of the Friends were Mystics to a man. Some of them, like William Bayley, had been of the Böhmenist sect, which had then sprung up in England (*vide infra*); Robert Cobbett made the contrary change. That Fox himself had ploughed with Böhme's heifer is evident from many expressions of his *Journal*. "I saw," he says, "that there was an ocean of darkness and death; but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. In that also I saw the infinite love of God, and I had great openings." Here we have Böhme's victory

* Fox, in his *Narrative of the Spreading of Truth and of the Opposition thereto*, written in 1676, says: "The truth sprang up first to us, so as to be a people to the Lord, in Leicestershire in 1644, in Warwickshire in 1645, in Nottinghamshire in 1646, in Derbyshire in 1647, and in the adjacent counties in 1648, 1649, and 1650; in Yorkshire in 1651, in Lancashire and Westmorland in 1652; in Cumberland, Durham, and Northumberland, in 1653; in London and most of the other parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland, in 1654. In 1655 many went beyond sea, where truth also sprang up, and in 1656 it broke forth in America and many other places." The earlier dates are probably correct, but they cannot be reconciled with those of his *Journal*, unless the Society of Friends existed before Fox joined it, which is quite possible. Fox says, under the year 1647, "During all this time I was never joined in profession of religion with any." The beginning of his public ministry seems to have been at the great gathering of the Baptists at Broughton in 1647. The earliest notice of the Friends I have seen in a letter of news to Lord Clarendon under the date 1647: "There are a sect of women, lately come from foreign parts, and lodged in Southwark, called Quakers, who swell, shiver, and shake, and when they came to themselves they begin to preach what hath been delivered to them by the Spirit."—(*State Papers*, II. 383.)

of the light principle over the dark principle. "I saw into that which was without end, things which cannot be uttered, and of the greatness and infinitude of the love of God which cannot be expressed by words. For I had been brought through the very ocean of darkness and death, and through and over the power of Satan, by the eternal, glorious power of Christ; even through that darkness was I brought, which covered all the world, and which chained down all, and shut up all in death." "Now was I come up in spirit through the flaming sword into the paradise of God. All things were new; and the creation gave another smell unto me than before, beyond what words can utter. . . . The creation was opened to me; and it was showed me how all things had their names given them, according to their nature and virtue." Here is Böhme's description of the process of regeneration, by which the soul is carried through "the first principle" with "its dark, fiery, astringent properties," represented by the cherub's flaming sword at Eden's gates, and into the paradise of light and joy, the second principle. And here, too, are Böhme's "signatures of things" and "speech of nature." As we know from Fox himself, he spent the years prior to 1647, when he began preaching, in an anxious search through all England, seeking to find any that could point out to him the way of life and peace. And during those years the Böhmenists were busy with press and voice spreading their theosophers' views.*

* These coincidences have been partly indicated in Vaughan's *Hours with the Mystics*. In Hancock's *Peculium*, the mystical as well as the High Church character of primitive Quakerism, the transformations it has since undergone, are well insisted upon. He also notes that Giles Calvert was publisher to both the Böhmenists and the first Quakers. I would not be understood to insinuate any plagiarism on Fox's part. He no more plagiarised from Böhme than from the Apostle John. He was a man of real spiritual power and insight, not a fanatic pretender, such as arose in great numbers at that time. Such were

Besides these native types of mystical thought and devotion, there were three attempts making to transplant foreign types to English soil. The first was that of Dr. John Everard, Giles Randall, and John Deacon, to naturalise the Mysticism of the mediæval "Friends of God" of the Rhine Valley. Dr. Everard was a Cambridge man, who graduated A.B. in 1600, and took a prominent place as an extreme Puritan. He was imprisoned six or seven times for preaching against the Spanish marriage, till at last King James, punning upon his name, said that instead of Everout he would make him Dr. Neverout. In his later years he underwent a very great change of views, so that he used to say "he was now 'ashamed of his former knowledge, expressions, and preachings, ever since he commenced Doctor in Divinity ;' although he was known to be a very great scholar and as good a philosopher, few or none exceeding him ; yet when

John Taney, King of the Seven Nations, sent forth to gather the Jews together ; John Robins alias Adam Melchizedek, who had met Abraham on the way, and the like.

But the top-sawyer of all such fanatics was Ludovick Muggleton, who with John Reeve founded the sect of the Muggletonians, which still exists and has even spread to America. My friend, Rev. B. W. Chidlaw, the zealous missionary of the Sunday School Union, once accosted a man who was unloading a wagon on the street of Cincinnati, with : "Well, stranger, haven't you some little boys and girls at home ?" "Yes, I have," "You send them to Sunday-school, I hope ?" "No, I don't ; *Sunday-schools are a sprout of free agency.*" "Ah ! what Church do you belong to ?" "I'm a Muggletonian." Reeves and Muggleton are the two apocalyptic witnesses, with power, which they freely used, to curse unto everlasting damnation all who gainsayed their testimony. Their testimony amounted to nothing in particular, except a materialistic and Sabellian notion of God, and the assertion of their own mission, and the opinion that the heavenly bodies are no bigger than they seem. There was something sturdy, matter-of-fact, and British about their fanaticism, which brought them into repeated collision with both the Böhmenists and the Quakers.—See Muggleton's *Acts of the Witnesses*, 1699 and 1764 ; and Hunt, i. 241-3.

he came to know himself and his own heart, and also to know Jesus Christ and the Scriptures more than grammatically, literally, or academically, viz. : experimentally, he then counted all these things loss and dung." His change of views only gave Laud and his associates in the High Commission a new hold upon him. In a previous trial before that court he had been deprived of his benefice ; he was now again called to account for holding conventicles and preaching heresies. His case was kept hanging from term to term without even the charges being formally presented, until the downfall of Laud and his associates gave him peace. But he died soon after in 1641. His hostility to the Prelates and their doings continued to the last ; he foretold their overthrow when they were at the very zenith of their power. And when the Scotch Covenanters rose in 1638, he declared "the work was begun ; and I do observe (saith he) by their countenances, their hearts fail ; for I see very lead in their eyes." The character of his theology we know from his *Gospel Treasury*.* His Mysticism differs from that of the Cambridge Platonists in his greater emphasis on the natural inability of man, and the need of self-denial, mortification,

* *The Gospel Treasury* [or, in the first and fourth editions, *Some Gospel Treasures*] *Opened, or the holiest of all Unvailing, discovering yet more the Riches of Grace and Glory to the Vessels of Mercy, . . . in several Sermons preached at Kensington and elsewhere.* London, 1653, 1659, and 1679 ; Germantown (Penn.) 1757. Dutch translation, Amsterdam, 1688. The second and third editions have appended to them translations from "Dionysius the Areopagite," John Tauler, John Denck, the Anabaptist disciple of Tauler, A. Tenzel, and other Mystics not named. The American is a reprint, by Christopher Saur, of the first edition, and is the handsomest. Anthon Benezet reprinted in 1773 (in a volume of religious tracts) Everard's "Supposition of Two Drops reasoning together," from one of the sermons, and it has been recently reprinted in England. Everard also translated *The Divine Poemander of Hermes Trismegistus* London, 1650 and 1657.

and annihilation, that we may attain to "deiformity." The high ground which he took as regards the powerlessness and worthlessness of legal obedience and empty forms, attracted some who sought to be not only law-free but lawless. "Some of his acquaintance and following, who indeed were very knowing men, and pretended high things, as indeed they were, but abused by them to great licentiousness, making even these precious truths an occasion to the flesh; insomuch that he was constrained to threaten prosecution of them to punishment, for their vile words and actions, if they so persisted, after so often admonition; and he forbade following or hearing of him, except they came with affection to the truth and willingness to be built up in the most holy faith." Of the more faithful friends, who accepted his teachings in the right spirit and in their entirety, we can catch but few glimpses. Rapha Harford was the editor of his sermons, and speaks as one who knew him most intimately. He tells us of "some religious lords," who interceded with Laud for permission for him to preach once a week in Latin *ad Clerum*, offering to pay a hundred pounds a year for any object the Archbishop might select, if this were granted. Some of his sermons were preached for Mr. Hodges, who had a lecture in the Old Jewry. As already said, John Webster and John Cardell commended the book from the pulpit, and in the strongest terms, but neither of them seem to have known him personally. More notable still is the "Approbation" signed by Thomas Brookes, the well-known Puritan divine, which praises the sermons heartily and with a discrimination which shows that he had read them. "While some seek," says Brookes, "to build up themselves upon the deceitful foundation of corrupted nature, and struggle, though in vain, in the light and power of it, to advance toward perfection, he is planting his spiritual artillery against it, to throw it into the dust,

that man may come to be surely bottomed upon the righteousness, power, and wisdom of Jesus Christ."

Dr. Everard's translation of the *Theologia Germanica* lies in manuscript in the Cambridge University Library. It would probably have been printed by his executors had it not been anticipated by a translation* published by Giles Randall in 1646. Both are from the Latin version of Sebastian Castellio. Randall was a sore puzzle to the heresiographers of his time. Old Paget catalogues among the Antinomians "one Randall, who preaches about Spital Yard," and is followed by the London Presbyterian divines in their *Testimony for the Truth* (1647). Robert Baillie, the Scotch Commissioner to the Westminster Assembly, in his *Dissuasive from the Errours of the Time* (1645), also describes him as having "for some time past preached peaceably in the Spital," and classifies him, with equal inaccuracy, as a Familist. Baillie seems to have had the curiosity to hear Randall preach; he says he taught "that all the resurrection and glory which Scripture promises is past already, and no other coming of Christ to judgment or life eternal is to be expected than what presently the saints do enjoy; that the most clear historical passages of Scripture are mere allegories; that in all things—angels, devils, men, women—there is but one spirit and life, which is absolutely

* *Theologia Germanica, or Mystical Divinity. A little Golden Manual, briefly discovering the Mysteries, Sublimity, Perfection, and Simplicity of Christianity in Belief and Practice. Written in High Dutch, and for its Worth translated into Latin, and printed at Antwerp, 1588. London, 1646 and 1648. Archbishop Leighton's copy with his notes is still preserved. A third translation, also from Castellio's Latin, was made by Rev. Francis Okeley, the Moravian, during last century, but was never published. The fourth, by Mrs. Malcom, was from the imperfect text first edited by Luther, of which text an edition appeared at Lancaster (Penn.) in 1823. The fifth, by Miss Winkworth, is from the perfect text, first edited by Dr. Franz Pfeiffer in 1851, and again in 1854.*

and essentially God; that nothing is everlasting but the life and essence of God, which now is in all creatures." This is quite a recognisable caricature of the teachings of the school which produces the *Theologia*, though there stand two refractory media between us and the original light, viz: Randall's understanding of his author, and Baillie's understanding of Randall.

John Deacon we have put with Everard and Randall, because his *Guide to Glory* (1658) contains a translation of Tauler's "Dialogue with a Beggar." Another Taulerian is the "P. G." who published at Oxford in 1673 a translation of Boethius' *de Consolatione*.

Both Everard and Randall were classed as Familists. It was the most general, the vaguest, and the most effective charge brought by the heresy-hunters of that age. The "Family of Love" was founded in Holland about the middle of the sixteenth century by Hendrik Niclaes, an Anabaptist of mystical but unsound views—unsound both as to the Trinity and the moral law. He laboured also in England. His sect were charged with regarding Christ as a quality in the man Jesus; a quality which might be shared by other men, and in which their founder did share as much as the Founder of Christianity, or even more. Moses they said had preached the dispensation of hope; Jesus that of faith; Niclaes that of love, the greatest of all. Asceticism the severest, and Antinomian notions the loosest were blended with them. One of these notions was the propriety of denying or concealing one's faith, so that the "Family of Love" was organised as a secret association whose members were unknown as such to the world at large. This made their sect a terrible bugbear, and caused the wildest suspicions. Baillie writes home to Scotland, that several persons "counted zealous and gracious," including "a great man, a peer of the land," were commonly believed to be

affiliated with them. Mrs. Hutchinson and her followers in Massachusetts were charged with Familism, and Mr. Thomas Weld's absurd pamphlet about her proceeds upon that supposition. The heresy seemed to Dr. Henry More so dangerous that he wrote a big book, *The Mystery of Iniquity* (1650), to refute it.* But from the very first the Familists excited attention and alarm. A Catholic controversialist in 1560 mentions them as one of the "four known religions" of England. In 1575 they printed a Confession of Faith, and transmitted a copy to the Queen. In 1580 Niclaes' works were ordered to be burnt, and all persons were declared punishable who had them in their possession without permission of the Ordinary. But they continued to print their tracts at a secret press during Elizabeth's reign, and in the period of the Civil War and the Commonwealth there was great activity in secretly reprinting and circulating these.

Rapha Harford, Dr. Everard's editor, says that his master kept clear of the "Familist, who saith he lives above ordinances, and so hath quite left all religion, and by degrees hath turned licentious Ranter." It is impossible to say whether this, or that which Penn gives, was the origin of that curious party, the extreme left wing of the mystical protest against the moral severity and legality of Puritanism. They correspond—as we have said—to the Brethren and Sisters of the Free Spirit in Mediæval Germany, and to the Soofees of the school of Bustami. "They made it their business," says Baxter, "to set

* See Hunt, *ubi supra*, I. 234-7; and Nippold in the *Zeitschrift für hist. Theologie*, 1862. David Joris is sometimes mentioned as their founder, but wrongly, although there is a decided resemblance of the Familists to the Jorists, as Nippold points out at the close of his third paper on Joris, *Zeitschrift f. histor. Theologie*, 1868. English writers against Familism are John Knewstubb: *A Confutation of Heresies taught by H. N. of Leyden, and embraced by a number who call themselves the Family of Love*, 1597; Dr. Stephen Denison: *The White Wolf*, 1627; and a Mr. Deslop.

up the light of nature in men, under the name of Christ, and to dishonour and cry down the Church, the Scriptures, the present ministry, and our worship and ordinances. They called men to hearken to Christ within them, but withal they enjoined a cursed doctrine of libertinism, which brought them to all abominable filthiness of life. They taught as the Familists that God regardeth not the actions of the outward man, but of the heart; and that to the pure all things are pure, even things forbidden: and so, as allowed by God, they spake most hideous words of blasphemy, and many of them committed whoredoms commonly." "I have seen myself letters written from Abingdon, where, among both soldiers and people, this contagion did then prevail, full of horrid oaths, curses, and blasphemy, not fit to be repeated by the tongue or pen of man; and all these uttered as the effect of knowledge, and a part of their religion, in a fanatic strain, and fathered on the Spirit of God. But the horrid villanies of this sect did not only speedily extinguish it, but also did as much as ever anything did to disgrace all sectaries, and to restore the credit of the ministry and of the sober, unanimous Christians." We have still more exact and trustworthy accounts of the Ranters from the early Quakers, especially Gorge Fox. The history of Ranterism is closely interwoven with that of Quakerism. They, like the Seekers, were for the most part swallowed up by the Society of Friends; when Baxter proceeds to say that the Quakers "were but the Ranters, and turned from horrid profaneness and blasphemy, to a life of extreme austerity on the other side," he is an unwilling witness to the services rendered by the Friends in damping and quenching the lawless and fanatic spirit which, before their rise, seemed so threatening. Justice Hotham, a well-wisher to the Friends, told George Fox, "If God had not raised up this principle of light and life, which I preached, the nation

had been overrun with Ranterism, and all the justices of the nation could not have stopped it with their laws; because (said he) they would have said as we said, and done as we commanded, and yet have kept their own principle still. But this principle of truth, said he, overthrows their principle, and the root and ground thereof." And Fox's principle was that of the presence of both light and darkness in the heart of man, and salvation through the victory of the former,—a victory attained through abiding in Christ, waiting upon God, submission to the leadings of the Spirit, walking in the light.

In the third year of Fox's ministry (1649) he came to Coventry, "and heard of a people that were in prison for religion. . . . When I came into the jail where the prisoners were, a great power of darkness struck at me, and I sat still, having my spirit gathered into the love of God. At last these prisoners began to rant and vapour and blaspheme, at which my soul was greatly grieved. They said they were God, but we would not hear such things. When they were calm, I stood up and asked them whether they did such things by motion, or from Scripture; and they said, from Scripture. A Bible being at hand, I asked them to point out that Scripture, and they showed me the place where the sheet was let down to Peter, and it was said to him what was sanctified he should not call common or unclean. When I had showed them that that Scripture proved nothing for their purpose, they brought another, which spoke of God reconciling all things to Himself, things in heaven and things on earth. I told them I owned that Scripture also, but showed them it proved nothing to their purpose. Then, seeing they said they were God, I asked them if they knew whether it would rain to-morrow? They said they could not tell. I told them God could tell. Again I asked them if they thought they should always be in that con-

dition or should change? and they answered they could not tell. Then said I unto them, God can tell, and God doth not change. You say you are God; and yet you cannot tell whether you shall change or not. So they were confounded and quite brought down for the time. After I had reproved them for their blasphemous expressions, I went away, for I perceived they were Ranters. I had met with none before. . . . Not long after this one of these Ranters, whose name was Joseph Salmon, put forth a paper or book of recantation, upon which they were set at liberty." In his early years of ministry he encountered them in London, and in no less than eight English shires, chiefly in the north. And whenever any body of Friends fell away from the Society and "went out into imaginations," they gravitated uniformly into Ranterism. Such was the defection of the Friends at Cleveland, in Yorkshire. "They had formerly had great meetings, but were then (1651) all shattered to pieces and the heads of them turned Ranters. . . . They had some kind of meetings still, but they took tobacco and drank ale in their meetings, and were grown light and loose." Such was James Naylor's fanatical escapade in 1656, when he allowed a company, of women chiefly—William Erbery's wife was one—to address blasphemous titles to him. "But he came to see his outgoing, and to condemn it." Such also was the outcome of the schism begun in the north by Story and Wilkinson, about 1676, on the occasion of Fox's setting up meetings for discipline, especially women's meetings separate from the men. They pleaded that the Society had hitherto existed without any such meetings, under the discipline of the Spirit alone; and their case was very plausible. But the schism faded away like the snow; great numbers returned to the Society, and others became by degeneracy Ranters of a new sort. "They frequently come into our meetings," says Thomas Story, "and rant, and sing, and

dance, and act like antics and madmen, throwing dust into the faces of our ministers when preaching; and though they profess the truth, and are called Quakers, and have meetings of their own as we have, yet they have no discipline or order among them, but deny all that as carnal and formal, leaving everyone to do as he pleases, without any reproof, restraint, or account to the Society in anything, how inconsistent soever with civility, morality, and religion; and are in mere anarchy. . . . And as they go under the name of Quakers, as the world calls us, and often come into our meetings and act such things and many more the like, other people, who do not know the difference, think we are all alike; and, since we cannot oppose them by force, they continue to impose upon us in that manner."

The profound theosophy of Jacob Böhme (1575-1624) had already found a considerable body of English adherents, and his influence has never ceased to be more or less widely felt in England as well as in Germany. One of the numerous myths connected with the history of his theosophy represents Charles I. as profoundly impressed by a perusal of the *Forty Questions* (of which Werdenhagen had published a Latin translation, 1632), and as sending a learned man into Germany for the sole purpose of mastering the language and translating Böhme's works. An English life of Böhme did appear in 1638, and as soon as the cessation of the civil war gave opportunity for other literature than pamphlets, sermons, and *Mercuries*, the translation of the theosopher's writings was begun. Between 1644 and 1659 the work was nearly completed, all that was wanting being published in two volumes in 1662. The expense seems to have been borne by Humphry Blundel, a rich merchant, who also took part in the translation, but it was mostly done by J. Elliston and John Sparrow. This is *the only English translation* of Böhme, although there are later versions of tracts and passages.

That printed in quarto in 1764-81 is not (as an ambiguity on the title-page has led many to suppose) by William Law; it is a mere (imperfect) reprint of the old translation with some corrections and many arbitrary changes.

The sect of Böhmenists is never mentioned by Fox, nor is their master, yet we have seen reason to believe that there were many points of actual contact and sympathy between them and the Quakers. Muggleton found in the North of England societies composed of a mixture of the two parties. Bayley still retains many things from his earlier theosophy in his Quaker tracts. Baxter says of the Böhmenists that their "opinions go much towards the way of the [Quakers] for the sufficiency of the light of nature," *i.e.*, of the light within, "the salvation of heathen as well as Christians, a dependence on revelations, and so forth. But they are fewer in number, and seem to have attained to greater meekness and conquest of passion than any of the rest. Their doctrine is to be seen in Jacob Böhme's books, by those that have nothing else to do than to bestow a great deal of time to understand him that was not willing to be understood, and to know that his bombastic words signify nothing more than before was easily known by common familiar terms." All of which shows that Richard Baxter had not wasted that "great deal of time" in finding out what Böhme meant. The Silesian is a theosopher, not properly, or, shall we say, not merely a Mystic. "Mysticism and theosophy," Richard Rothe says, "are both of an essentially religious character; but it marks both their distinctness and their relation to one another that the former knows in God only the subjective self, the latter the entire objective universe equally with it."* And in the passages quoted

above from Fox's account of his own experience, and in others besides them, it is evident that in his earliest stages of illumination he passed beyond the limits of Mysticism into theosophy.

"The chief of the Böhmenists in England," says Baxter, "are Dr. Pordage and his family, who live in community, and pretend to hold visible and sensible communications with angels," and so forth. Pordage had studied Böhme, but as he himself advertises us in his works, his own theosophy differed very essentially from that of the German, in spite of its large obligations to it. Pordage's visions and theurgies are utterly alien to the broad daylight of Böhme's "beholdings," and when his works, and those of his disciples, Rev. Thomas Bromley and Mrs. Jane Leade, were translated into German by Loth Vischer—chiefly from the unpublished manuscripts—they excited among the orthodox Böhmenists of the Continent the fiercest spirit of opposition that theosophers are capable of entertaining. Pordage was expelled from his Berkshire rectory in 1644 by a Committee of Tryers, for his various heresies and sorceries; but he lived till 1697, and in his later years united with Leade, Bromley, Francis Lee, and a goodly number of others, in founding the Philadelphia Society. It was dissolved by his death, but had two successors of the same name, the later lasting till well into the reign of George II.*

founded by John George Gichtel. It seems probable that it was from a Manchester branch of it that Ann Lee derived her spiritual culture, for the very slight doctrinal element in Shakerism is clearly traceable to Pordage's semi-Böhmenism, and her early membership in some such sort of a religious fellowship is recorded.

* Rothe's *Stille Stunden*, 262-3. Durandus Hotham wrote a *Life of J. B.*, which was bound up with the translation of the *Mysterium Magnum* (folio 1654). Edward Taylor (1682) published an epitome of Böhme's works, with introductory matter of his own. I have discussed the life and theosophy of Böhme in two papers, which appeared in *The Unitarian Review*, September and November, 1874.

* Dr. Pordage's account of his trial in the *State Trials*, ii. 217-60. The Philadelphia Society had branches on the Continent, and was stoutly opposed by the *Engelsbrüder*, the strictly Böhmenist society

Besides these six groups, there are many single figures, who cannot be omitted in the history of the Mysticism of the period. They may generally be described as having some affinity for some of the groups, but not strictly as members of any.

John Howe and Robert Leighton might fairly be associated with the Cambridge Platonists. Platonism indeed is rather a flavour than a doctrine in their writings, but this is equally true of Worthington and of Whitchcote. Howe studied at Cambridge before he went to Oxford, and as Cromwell's chaplain he was necessarily brought into contact with Peter Sterry. Another of the Protector's chaplains bears much more distinct marks of Sterry's influence. Jeremiah White edited the second of Sterry's posthumous works, and with such expressions of his approbation of their contents as leads us to expect some similarity to them in his own. And in his *Restoration of all Things* (1712), we find that the form of thought and expression is modelled after that of Sterry, in much the way that might be expected to result from the close contact of a receptive with a productive intellect.

Francis Rous (1579-1658), "that old Jew of Eton," as the Cavaliers called him, might perhaps be classed among the Vanists. He was an Independent, and a zealous adherent of Cromwell, regarding the Protector as a second Joshua raised up for the deliverance of the elect people. Cromwell made him Provost of Eton, and he had previously sat in the Long Parliament and the Westminster Assembly. He is now best remembered for his version of the Psalms, a version vigorous and terse, if not always smooth, which has enjoyed the admiration of three such critics as Thomas Campbell, Sir Walter Scott, and Thomas Carlyle. Three of his numerous treatises obtained a Continental reputation, being translated into German and

Latin, and highly esteemed by the foreign Mystics.*

Here also might be placed the millenarian, Nathaniel Holmes, whose *Resurrection Revealed* (1654 and 1833) enjoyed the praise of Sterry. And here, perhaps, Magnus Byne, the mystical opponent of Quakerism (*The Scornful Quaker Answered*, 1656), who declared that "the first principle of pure religion" is "the Son of God dwelling in us. He who lives in this principle is taught to be religious." And the sacred poet, Royalist, and nonjuror, Edmund Elys, of Oxford, shows himself a kindred spirit when he says, "The people called Quakers do affirm that the principal rule of faith to a sincere Christian is that which Almighty God has written in the hearts of all men; and in this I fully concur with them, and I say, for want of a belief in this, the whole world lieth in wickedness." But Elys belongs rather to a later generation, although his earlier publications bear the date of Commonwealth times.

Other later representatives of the mystical thought and spirit are Walter Marshall, author of *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*; Bishop Jeremy Taylor, who in the *Holy Living*, and in the chapter "Of Meditation" in his *Life of Christ*, teaches the standard mystical theology of the Roman Catholic ascetics, especially their three degrees of mystica ascent, first stated by "Dionysius the Areopagite," viz., purification, illumination, and union, using, says Dr. Pusey, "their very words and turns of expression, giving their advice and their cautions;" Bishop Fowler, who called down Bunyan's Lutheran indignation by asserting that sanctification is the sum and substance of Christianity, but received the qualified

* These are *The Great Oracle*, *The Heavenly Academy* (1638), and *The Mystical Marriage* (1653). The Latin version of the three bears the title *Interiora Regni Dei*, 2nd ed., 1673.—Peter Poiret catalogues him as *Mystices commendator Anglus*; and Gottfried Arnold says *Mysticas materias non solum per experimentiam descripsit, sed et expressè professus est*.

approval of Richard Baxter, whose *bete noir* was Antinomianism: Edward Polhill, who maintained the truth and reality of the mystical union of Christ and believers as fundamental to all Christian theology, against Stillingfleet and other rationalising divines, who inclined to represent it as a trope; and Samuel Shaw, the much-enduring Dissenter, whose *Immanuel*—a book still read—insists that religion is nothing unless it be “a living principle in the minds of men.”

As Puritanism lost its masculine, public, and political character by becoming Non-conformity and Dissent; as it ceased to be

the creed of soldiers and statesmen, of armies and of parliaments, it also ceased to provoke any reactions of the sort we have been describing. Its sharp lines and definite distinctions became less distinct because of the new influences of a new age, so that the theology of Owen and of Manton has little more than a formal kinship to that of Watts and of Doddridge. The later representatives of English Mysticism are to be found chiefly within the Establishment and among the Nonjurors, until in Methodism there arose a type of Protestantism with many points of contact with Mysticism itself.

SCIENCE AND POETRY.*

By Professor Franklin Carter, Yale College.

TO those who read the little book on “Religion and Culture” which Principal Shairp issued some years since, this volume on “Poetical Interpretation of Nature” will promise something. But most readers will be disappointed in its contents. Some interesting questions it treats and leaves partially answered, but many of its utterances, even in the elaborated portions, are vague. Poetry seems in certain passages to be made coincident with an expression of joy. “The expression of that thrill, that glow is poetry.” “Poetry,” quoting from Coleridge, our author says, “is the blossom and fragrant of all human knowledge, human thoughts, human passions, emotions, language; or,” adds our author, “it is the fine wine served at the banquet of human life,” which certainly does not add clearness to Coleridge’s definition. Having

spoken of the joy of the mathematician when “recognising the agreement between mathematical formulæ,” and having created a poet of the mathematician who could adequately express his joy, he proceeds, “Hence what is true of mathematical is still more true of other forms of truth. Whenever a soul comes into vivid contact with it, there springs up that emotion which is the essence of poetry.” This discussion on emotion as the essence of poetry runs on in the first chapter, and then a movement is made toward the true doctrine of Wordsworth and Coleridge by the statement, “Even if the potential poet may be silent, the actual poet must add the power of embodying his emotion in melodious words;” which means, we suppose, that the poet is an artist. But a return is made to the first doctrine: A Westmorland dalesman walking with Wordsworth by the side of the brook said, “I like to hear the sound of a beck.” Principal Shairp notes that “his liking to hear

* On *Poetical Interpretation of Nature*. By J. C. Shairp, LL.D., Principal of the United College of St. Salvador and St. Leonard, St. Andrews.