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A DEFENSE OF MYSTICISM

New Studies in Mystical Religion. By Rufus M. Jones. Macmillan Company, New York: 205 pages: \$1.75.

Embellished with gems from a wide range of choice prose and poetry, Dr. Jones defends mysticism from its scientific and theological enemies. Empirical psychology by its very nature considers all things as subjective experiences. It is thus excluded from pronouncing on questions of objective reality. No more than the moral can psychology call the mystical experience purely subjective. On the other hand, the philosopher may, and the mystic does know that this is a real connection with something objective.

If religion in general cannot be branded as abnormal, neither can mystic experience. For we do not restrict the term to Plotinic ecstasy. Rather we emphasize the deep abiding peace which comes from communion with God. This does not require flagellations, but it does require a rigorous training of the soul, severe, excluding every vicious thought and act.

The startling scientific advances help us conquer nature, but not temptation. We must study mysticism with the same application to save the child from a one-sided education. For the child, more mystical than his elders suspect, is dwarfed by materialistic surroundings.

But not all of the book is so commendable. Speaking of Christ he says: "Much more important than what he thought about his own Messianic mission was his own discovery of the love and grace of God." This in its context does not harmonize with Dr. Vos' recent work, "The Self-Disclosure of Jesus" which we wish Dr. Jones had read. Again, "The theological battles . . . were concerned not with the Galilean Jesus, but with a Greek theory of the Logos." This is not exactly so for one who knows both the Galilean Jesus and Greek philosophy. We refer Dr. Jones to "The Origins of Paul's Religion" by Dr. Machen. Dr. Jones discredits the theological thinking of the past until one fears he is tired of thinking. He makes the oft repeated and untrue charge that theology is unrelated to Christian experience.

We conclude, however, not that Dr. Jones has too much mysticism, but we too little: not that we are too devoted to theology and historical fact. But he not enough.

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