

On Mystic Love

Our love is a kind of feverish pressure from within our hearts overpowering our more reticent minds that we aim towards the God whom those who are lovers believe is personal and responsive.

In our zeal we may examine holy texts feverishly to verify the personal Love we believe, is our only means of overcoming both God's and Life's apparent contradictions. And in our fear of surrender to the world's cynicism and despair we surrender ourselves wholly to love as our only means of knowing God and of enduring the world.

Love's mysticism is credulous, naive, oddly balanced, not merely rational. But lovers, of course, are rarely expected to be models of normalcy, since love is seldom concerned only with balance or practical approaches to reality.

Love is concerned with nothing at all but the union of lover and beloved. That is its only work, its passion, its way of life.

And love's consequences are rarely considered beforehand or studied for improvement afterwards.

There is a point reached in love's mysticism, among the most disciplined of believers and ritual adherents in whom the asceticism of the heart is absolutely verified by their moral deportment and by the fruits of their life, when the lover is simply overwhelmed by love itself and rendered senseless by ecstasy that is induced by God alone.

The Muslim martyr al-Hallaj said of direct union, "between the two of us, who can say which is the lover and which the beloved?" Words echoed centuries later by St. John of the Cross:

*"Rejoice, my love with me
And in your beauty see us both reflected..."
and
"As the loved-one in the lover
Each in the other's heart resided."*

In the ecstatic union with God there is a substitution that moves one beyond all hint of distance, of vicariousness, of identification of oneself and one's beloved as separate to the point, as al-Hallaj said, of "no longer knowing my name."

In such union, love attains its only bearable, only possible, solution to loss. And, as with all journeys, the journey of love has an ending. And the

ending is not the martyrdom of al-Hallaj, anymore than it is the crucifixion and death of Jesus.

The mystic love returns home, so to speak, with the invisible friendship of God's substitution.

Substitution is the gift of love aspired to initially by irrational desire, by proddings of love itself, but only realized by its gift not by one's mere desire for it. And with it comes removal of aspects of oneself that are impediments to love.

-Herbert Mason