

Ecstasy: Mysticism and Mission in the Wesleyan Tradition

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Introduction

In this paper I advance the proposal that Christian mysticism in the Wesleyan tradition has been suppressed and marginalized, even though it is the fountainhead for the original missional ecclesiology in that tradition. After providing an introductory grammar and conceptual framework for Christian mysticism, I highlight the presence and power of Christian mysticism and its link to evangelism and mission, from the time of John Wesley into the early twentieth century. Pentecostalism which emerged from the North American holiness movement is the primary manifestation of twentieth century mysticism in Wesleyan traditions, and like early expressions of mysticism in Methodism, has been sidelined by mainstream Methodism. I propose that the revitalization of missional vitality in the Methodist Church will require a retrieval of the mystical element of religion. This is fundamentally a renewed openness and surrender to the Holy Spirit, which is an inherently mystical orientation.

What is Mysticism?

Some Christians resist all talk of mysticism as if mysticism and Christianity were mutually exclusive. The great Methodist mystic and mother of the holiness movement, Phoebe Palmer, was herself opposed to what she called “mysticism” because of her narrow understanding of mysticism.¹ Yet as Anne Taves demonstrates, Christian

¹ Phoebe Palmer, *Full Salvation* (Salem, OH: Schmuel Publishers, n.d.), 146-147.

mysticism has always been present in the Methodist tradition.² Indeed, the mystical element of religion is necessary in order for the Christian religion to remain truly Christian, according to Friederich von Hügel, whose landmark work *The Mystical Element of Religion* opened the way for new explorations of Christian mysticism in the academy.³

Mysticism, contrary to popular belief, is not essentially about private numinous experiences. The earliest Christian usage of the word “*mustikos*” was in relationship to God’s revelation in Christ, of that which was previously hidden.⁴ Colossians 1:26-27 is an example of this understanding. As time passed the meaning of Christian mysticism evolved to include Christ revealed in the Incarnation, in the Eucharist, in Scripture and in the community of faith.

Christian mysticism is about the revealing of spiritual truth to the worshipping community through the agency of the mystics. Those who could properly be called the great Christian mystics, such as St. John of the Cross, attained a radical degree of holy transformation as a result of their encounters with God.⁵ That is, their inward transformation resulted in an outward life of extraordinary impact on the world. All of the great Christian mystics were prophets with a vision for God’s mission in the world.

What about mysticism and ecstatic experiences? The word “ecstasy” comes from the Greek word *ekstasis*, which means to go out from a standing or “static” position.

² Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

³ Friedrich von Hügel, *The Mystical Element of Religion* (New York: Crossroad, 1999; E.P. Dutton & Co., 1923), 50-84. There are three necessary elements of religion, according to von Hügel. These are the philosophical, the institutional and the mystical. Of the three, the latter is the most mature element, he felt, because it is about the lived experience of the love of God rather than statements about God or an organization for the purpose of worshipping God. Each of the elements is in creative tension with the other two.

⁴ Mark A. McIntosh, *Mystical Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), 24.

⁵ William M. Thompson, *Christology and Spirituality* (New York: Crossroads, 1991), 5.

Authentic Christian ecstatic experiences are God-initiated movements of the Holy Spirit that lead Christians beyond themselves to greater identification with God and God's mission in the world. Genuine ecstatic experiences always propel the Christian (and the church) into mission.

Mark McIntosh and William Johnston emphasize the Trinitarian nature of *kenosis*, or the divine self-emptying that is the basis for apophatic mysticism.⁶ Harvey Egan observes, "because of Jesus' essentially Trinitarian consciousness, all authentic Christian mysticism must also be Trinitarian."⁷ Christian mysticism is grounded in the church, the Body of Christ.⁸ It is the God-initiated experience of being moved beyond oneself into greater depths of divine love. This movement results in an inward transformation of wholeness and integration, and an outward life of holiness, an increasing love of God and neighbor. Mysticism has epistemological significance in that the experience of God, whether apophatic or kataphatic, is a participatory knowing. The divine encounter of mysticism carries profound authority for those who experience it.

Apophatic mysticism refers to the *via negativa* or what is sometimes called the way of "unknowing," for although God is revealed to us in nature, the Bible and especially in Jesus, our comprehension is limited by our finitude. We "see through a glass darkly." We tend to fixate on specific aspects of God's self-revelation as if they were exhaustive, such as God as Father and *only* as Father, when God is actually much more than Father and the many other images God has given us. We can know God through God's self-revelation, but we cannot know God exhaustively. Because God is

⁶ McIntosh, 151-183; William Johnston, *Arise, My Love* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000), 192-201. *Kenosis* is seen in Philippians 2:5-11, the hymn extolling Christ's self-emptying to the point of death on the cross.

⁷ Harvey D. Egan, *Christian Mysticism: the Future of a Tradition* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1984), 23.

⁸ Thompson, 9.

uncreated, God cannot be known or described as just one more “thing,” in the way we might describe a plant or a human being, or the earth. God is no “thing.”⁹ Apophasia is in part, the process of growing in our understanding and experience of God who is more than we can ever exhaustively know. Apophatic mysticism is about God’s transcendence.

By extension apophatic mysticism also includes aspects of negation or self-emptying (*kenosis*) in the spiritual journey: the renunciation of one’s own agenda, the purification of ego and all that is involved in “dying to self.” Spiritual advancement in the *via negativa* involves, among other things, a detachment from an idolatrous clinging to religious images, forms, rituals, human traditions and experiences, so that their place in the spiritual life can be cleansed and re-aligned. The language of the mystics about apophatic mysticism can itself seem to be a “cloud of unknowing” because of the emphasis on nothingness, detachment and so on. Yet genuine apophatic mysticism is about a *de-emphasis* or relativization of experience, rather than a quest for negation.¹⁰

In contrast to and creative tension with apophatic mysticism is kataphatic mysticism which is, conversely, a path of spiritual advancement in which images, forms, creation, subjective spiritual experiences, incarnation and discursive thought all lead to union with God. Kataphatic mysticism is related to God’s immanence, and is the most notable form of mysticism found in the Hebrew prophets. It is a mysticism of affirmation (*via affirmativa*), with God as the source of all that exists.¹¹ God speaks to Moses in a burning bush, not in silence and nothingness. The prophet Ezekiel sees visions of God,

⁹Christian apophatic mysticism can help to “protect” Christian spirituality from panentheism, in a spiritually syncretistic world.

¹⁰ McIntosh, 23.

¹¹ Johnston, *Arise My Love*, 116-117.

as do Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos and others. In the New Testament the incarnation of Jesus adds to the Old Testament foundation of the *via affirmativa*. As the Apostle Paul writes, “He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation...for in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.”¹² Throughout the New Testament there are stories of mystical visions, dreams, actions, experiences and encounters. Indeed, kataphatic mysticism is overwhelmingly present in the New Testament. Thus it is safe to say that from a standpoint of Scripture alone, truly Christian mysticism must include the kataphatic. Again, it is important to note that Christian mysticism is not essentially about kataphatic experience or apophatic de-emphasis on experience. It is essentially about holy transformation.

The mystic, then, is one for whom the immediate presence of God and the drawing of God toward union, is a lived, fundamental reality. God’s presence is both immanent and transcendent, transforming the mystic inwardly while compelling him or her to an outward life of increasing love and compassion.¹³ Mysticism is an ordinary part of the Christian life, or ought to be.¹⁴ Yet the reality is that many Christians do not appear to attain radical transformation, thus while mysticism or mystical experiences may be found among believers who are at different levels of spiritual maturity, the one who could properly be called a mystic seems to be much less common.

Whether the mystic is predominantly apophatic or kataphatic in his or her experience, the greatest “proof” of mysticism is its fruits—love of God *and neighbor*. This is a love that is enfleshed in action. Mysticism brings about prophetic action that is compassionate and sacrificial, the Eucharistic life in which God’s people become “broken

¹² Colossians 1:15, 19, NRSV.

¹³ Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (New York: Meridian, 1955), 90.

¹⁴ Thus the title of Evelyn Underhill’s book *Practical Mysticism* (Columbus, OH: Ariel Press, 1986.)

bread and poured out wine”¹⁵ for the world. The Eucharistic life is evangelistic.

Mysticism and the Call to Mission

From the beginning mysticism has played a pivotal role in the experiences of Methodists who were called and empowered for evangelistic mission. John Wesley’s¹⁶ “heart was strangely warmed” by God, assuring Wesley of his salvation. Out of this kataphatic encounter with God, he experienced new power and stamina to “spread scriptural holiness across the land.” The role of spiritual experience in Wesley’s theological method was one of his significant contributions to theology.

For Wesley the experience of God within the community of faith over time, is a reliable guide for interpreting Scripture on points that are ambiguous or silent.¹⁷ Though Wesley resisted mysticism during the middle years of his ministry because of his misunderstanding of apophatic mysticism (and perhaps his struggle with depression), toward the end of his life he retracted his anti-mystical statements. By 1776 he commented that one would have to search for many centuries to find someone as holy as Madame Guyon, an apophatic mystic.¹⁸

Wesley’s affirmation of mystical experience is also evident in that at least eight of the books in Wesley’s Christian library were mystical texts. As Wesley gradually developed his theological perspective on spiritual gifts he eventually became convinced that all the gifts of the Holy Spirit were intended for the church for all time, thus was

¹⁵ This is a favorite phrase of Oswald Chambers in describing the Eucharistic life. See Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1935), 33, 41, 46, 56, 136, 197, 274, 320.

¹⁶ John Wesley, 1703-1791.

¹⁷ Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 44.

¹⁸ Jean Orcibal, “The Theological Originality of John Wesley and Continental Spirituality,” *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, Vol. 1, Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp, eds. (London: Epworth Press, 1965), 94.

accused of promoting “Montanism Revived.”¹⁹ Throughout his ministry Wesley was accused of “enthusiasm,” a derogatory label having to do with emotional excess and ecstatic spiritual experiences. Though he refuted the accusations, he was unwilling to deny the importance of experience in the Christian life.

John Fletcher, whom Wesley designated to be his successor, has sometimes been called “the Methodist Mystic” and “the Methodist Saint.”²⁰ Fletcher’s mystical theology of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit influenced subsequent nineteenth century holiness preachers, including Phoebe Palmer. In addition to the Bible his spirituality was steeped in mystical texts: *The Imitation of Christ*, *The Practice of the Presence of God* and several books by or about Madame Guyon. It was said that, “when the atheist philosopher Voltaire was asked who was the most Christ-like person in the modern world, he replied without hesitation, ‘John Fletcher of Madeley.’” In Wesley’s funeral sermon for Fletcher, he remarked that John Fletcher was the holiest man he had ever met or expected to meet this side of eternity.²¹

The history of nineteenth century American Methodist evangelism is among other things, a history of Methodist mysticism. Women and men encountered the living God at camp meetings and in small groups, while milking cows and tending the fields. They experienced dreams, visions, voices, falling prostrate, being undone. They experienced the radically transforming grace of God. Out of these encounters they experienced a call to mission, to be agents of healing and transformation to their world.

¹⁹ Maddox, 135.

²⁰ John Fletcher (1729-1785), died before he could succeed John Wesley.

²¹ David Lyle Jeffrey, ed., *A Burning and Shining Light: English Spirituality in the Age of Wesley* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 349.

Phoebe Palmer,²² sometimes called the mother of the holiness movement, redefined sanctification theology for her generation with her “altar theology.” What Palmer gave to Methodists was an apophatic mysticism that was undeveloped in Wesley’s theology. In the manner of mystics throughout the history of the church, Palmer experienced a dark night of the soul, visions, dreams, spiritual warfare, a call to public ministry and the power to carry it out. Over 25,000 people came into a deep faith in Christ because of her ministry.²³ In addition to revival preaching, writing and teaching, Palmer helped found Five Points Mission, the first immigrant settlement house in Manhattan. She pioneered the right of women to engage in public ministry with her seminal work, *The Promise of the Father*. Some of the greatest American leaders in the nineteenth century social justice movement were disciples of Palmer.²⁴

Julia Foote,²⁵ a contemporary of Palmer and the daughter of slaves, experienced many encounters with God that transformed her into a powerful evangelist who led many to faith in Christ. When Julia was converted to Christianity at age fifteen, she experienced being “slain in the Spirit,” or falling into a state of unconsciousness due to the palpable presence of God.²⁶ When God first called her to ministry Julia experienced angelic visitations, which she resisted because she did not believe in women’s public ministry.²⁷ Then she had a profound encounter with the Trinity in a vision in which Jesus removed her filthy clothes, washed her in the sea, and led her to the Father. There she

²² Phoebe Palmer, 1807-1874.

²³ Ruth Tucker and Walter Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1987), 263.

²⁴ These include William and Catherine Booth, founders of the Salvation Army, and Francis Willard, founder of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union.

²⁵ Julia Foote, 1823-1901.

²⁶ Julia Foote, *A Brand Plucked from the Fire: An Autobiographical Sketch*, William L. Andrews, ed. and with Introduction, *Sisters in the Spirit: Three Women’s Autobiographies of the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 180-81.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 200-201.

was given a clean new robe, fruit from the Holy Spirit, and her commission to preach. Jesus placed in her bosom a scroll with golden words so that she would have the authority she needed to preach to a racist and sexist generation.²⁸

Phineas Bresee,²⁹ the Methodist Episcopal pastor who eventually founded the Church of the Nazarene, was launched into revitalized ministry through a mystical experience of a fireball from heaven. The encounter took place after three weeks of holiness revival meetings at Bresee's Los Angeles church in the mid 1880's. Throughout the meetings Bresee prayed continuously for God to give him the grace he needed to fulfill his vocation. One evening while in prayer at the parsonage, Bresee looked up and saw something like a meteor of "condensed light" coming down to him from the sky. Then a voice told him to "Swallow it; swallow it."³⁰ Bresee obeyed, taking into himself a portion of the light. His lips began to burn, a sensation which remained for several days. At the same time an inner transformation took place in which Bresee received greatly increased spiritual life and power, an inner "unction" that previously had been lacking. Because of the new power Bresee was able to evangelize many more people than before, so that his church doubled in size.³¹

The examples of Wesley, Fletcher, Palmer, Foote and Bresee are representative of numerous other Methodists, both clergy and lay, whose evangelistic vitality flowed from their mystical experiences of God. By the end of the nineteenth century the largely Methodist holiness movement had given birth to more than twenty denominations whose theological orientation was pneumacentric, emphasizing the power of the Holy Spirit to

²⁸ Ibid., 202-203.

²⁹ Phineas Bresee, 1838-1916.

³⁰ E.A. Girvin, *Phineas F. Bresee: A Prince in Israel* (Kansas City, MO: Pentecostal Nazarene Publishing House, 1916; New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1984), 82-83.

³¹ Ibid.

transform, heal, and send the church into evangelistic mission. Pentecostalism emerged from this mix, carrying the trajectory of Wesleyan mysticism into the twentieth century.

Today Pentecostalism is probably the fastest growing form of Christianity in the world.³² Pentecostalism is now pan-denominational and in many parts of the world did not originate in the west or come from Methodism. Yet much of the Methodist world outside of North America is clearly Pentecostal, with evangelistic power flowing from a Pentecostal pneumatology. The Methodist Pentecostal Church, for instance, is the largest Pentecostal denomination in Chile. As is the case with many forms of Pentecostalism in the world, among Chilean Methodist Pentecostals the emphasis is upon the Holy Spirit's empowerment of the church, rather than on speaking in tongues as an "initial sign."³³ Members practice infant baptism and use a traditional Methodist liturgy. The Methodist Pentecostal Church of Chile is an example of world Methodism that is, like early Methodism and the nineteenth century holiness movement, affirming of the mystical element of religion.

Suppressing Mysticism

Why are so many North American Methodists unaware of or downright resistant to Christian mysticism, especially Pentecostalism? The primary reasons are sexism, racism and Enlightenment rationalism, all of which have stifled the Methodist Church and bound the theological education of Methodist clergy. Coming out of this matrix is a classist ideological bias against Pentecostalism by its opponents within and beyond the academy throughout most of the twentieth century. As Grant Wacker demonstrates, even though early Pentecostals came from a cross section of society, with the majority from

³² Allen Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1.

³³ *Ibid.*, 13.

working classes, outsiders have consistently portrayed them as impoverished misfits and losers.³⁴ Only recently due to the extraordinary growth of global Pentecostalism with its liberationist impulses and non-western manifestations, have scholars begun to take a new look at the movement.³⁵

As noted earlier, from the beginning Wesley and the Methodists were accused of being “enthusiasts,” or people whose religion is grounded in emotional excess. In Wesley’s day emotional religion was thought to be the domain of hysterical women, those with “weak nerves,” mentally ill persons and primitive people of color. Ecstatic experience was cast as superstitious and occultic. It was not proper in the Enlightenment scheme of things to base religion on anything but rational thought. The bias against enthusiasm carried into the nineteenth century. Holiness camp meetings were castigated by establishment Methodists, who viewed the emotional displays and mystical experiences as a disgrace to religion.

The new behavioral science, psychology, arose early in the twentieth century in no small part to demythologize “enthusiasm.” Ann Taves notes, “As the handmaiden of true religion, psychology’s initial task was to explain and thus discredit enthusiasm.”³⁶ Taves goes on to say that “...in the wide-ranging struggle against enthusiasm, as in their engagement with superstition, promoters of the Enlightenment forged weapons that

³⁴ Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 197-216.

³⁵ For example in addition to previously noted work by Allen Anderson and Grant Wacker see Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion for the 21st Century* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001); David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Pentecostalism in Latin America* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

³⁶ Taves, 20.

became standard tools of the academic study of religion. Foremost among them was the power to explain religion in secular terms.”³⁷

In addition to labeling mystical experiences as the domain of hysterical women and the mentally ill, opponents of early Pentecostalism resisted the movement for racial reasons. A major criticism of the first North American Pentecostals was their racial integration and the influence of African American culture on Pentecostal spirituality. William Seymour, the father of modern North American Pentecostalism, was an African American preacher who led the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles, and whose leadership team was male and female, black and white.³⁸ When the revival broke out in Azusa Street then spread to numerous other locations, newspapers described the phenomenon as a black and white “religious frenzy.”³⁹ Accusations of voodoo and insanity were also leveled against Seymour and the Pentecostals.⁴⁰

The nineteenth century holiness movement arose as a prophetic response to the Methodist church in North America, which was beginning to lose its fire. Holiness leaders and their disciples led the way in abolition, women’s rights, the abolition of sweatshops and child labor, efforts to humanize the treatment of persons with mental illness, and a host of other social justice concerns. Their activism grew directly out of their mystical encounters with the living God. They were mystics and prophets of their day. Many of them were women.

And they suffered the same accusations John Wesley had, of being enthusiasts, of being hysterical, of being primitive and inferior. Phoebe Palmer suffered derisive attacks

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ The Azusa St. revival began in 1906 and lasted for about nine years.

³⁹ Anderson, 40.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

throughout her ministry, much of it because of her gender. Julia Foote was excommunicated from the African Methodist Episcopal Church because of her mystical experiences and being a woman engaged in public ministry.⁴¹ Phineas Bresee left the Methodist Episcopal Church after a protracted season of persecution by his denomination over his holiness beliefs.⁴²

As the nineteenth century rolled to a close the disputes grew worse, until many of the holiness leaders were driven out of mainstream Methodism. Holiness, the keystone doctrine of John Wesley, became what Albert Outler called the pebble in the Methodist shoe.⁴³ The expulsion of holiness Methodists had as much to do with their mystical experiences, gender and race as with their doctrine.

As Taves notes, Methodist historians have tended to downplay Wesley's affirmation of mystical experiences such as dreams, visions, outcries, and the like, because these phenomena were not "respectable."⁴⁴ With the suppression of mystical experience in Methodist history and doctrine, coupled with an overly rationalistic focus in theological education, Methodist clergy of the twentieth century were not well equipped to cultivate the mystical element of religion in the local church. It is no coincidence that the suppression of mysticism in Methodism parallels the decline of missional vitality in the Methodist Church.

Mysticism and Methodism Today

Today most of us have either experienced or know someone who has experienced conflict in a Methodist church over Pentecostalism, charismatic gifts or a "worship war."

⁴¹ Andrews, 205-207.

⁴² Girvin, 97-10.

⁴³ Albert C. Outler, *Evangelism and Theology in a Wesleyan Spirit*. (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1996), 118.

⁴⁴ Taves, 57.

Essentially these are contemporary conflicts over “enthusiasm.” The old racist, sexist and rationalist arguments are still alive. Emotionally powerful new worship music is dismissed as theologically shallow, womanish, touchy-feely love songs to Jesus, even when the words are Scripture or ancient creeds set to music. Methodist clergy who seek to develop new paradigms of ministry in postmodern culture, especially geared toward racial and gender inclusivity and an openness to mystical experience, encounter widespread resistance from denominational officials. The new paradigms are not “proper.”⁴⁵ Clergy and seminarians who feel called to the new monasticism with its commitment to a life of holiness among the poor,⁴⁶ find little support in an appointment system that rejects bi-vocational ministry for ordained elders. It is time for Methodists to recover our own rich history of Christian mysticism.

In some ways we are moving toward a retrieval of the mystics. This is evident in the increasing numbers of pastors who are reading mystical texts, who are getting training from the Shalem Institute or the Academy for Spiritual Formation. More pastors are reclaiming ancient spiritual practices associated with the great mystics of the church, such as walking a labyrinth or taking a thirty-day Ignatian retreat. These are socially acceptable expressions of a hunger for mysticism, avenues that proper Methodist clergy can pursue without much opposition.

⁴⁵ For an introduction to the emerging church see Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

⁴⁶ For an overview of the new monasticism see Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *To Baghdad and Beyond: How I Got Born Again in Babylon* (Eugene: Cascade, 2006); Rutba House, *Schools for Conversion: Twelve Marks of the New Monasticism* (Eugene: Cascade, 2005); and Shane Claiborne, *Irresistible Revolution* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan: 2006).

The renewal of interest in spiritual formation is good, but not enough. Methodists need fire, a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit, a new awakening to our missional vocation. We need to be transformed, to be called beyond ourselves, to be ecstatic.

This is a time of unprecedented opportunity for us to reconnect with our own heritage as Wesleyan Christians, to reclaim the central importance of prayer and mysticism to the Christian life. We have in our own heritage the kind of spirituality, the kind of mysticism, the kind of spiritual community that could evangelize postmoderns.

We also have the kind of prophetic potential in our heritage that emerges from authentic Christian mysticism. We are facing unprecedented threats on a global scale, with war, pollution, global climate change, HIV/AIDS, and hunger. We need Christian leaders who are grounded in the transformational experience of the Holy Spirit, who like Phoebe Palmer, are putting everything on the altar of Christ so that their lives are a dynamo of holy transformation in the world. We need new John Wesleys, new Phoebe Palmers and new Julia Footes.

Methodism originally arose not as a church or a new denomination, but as a holiness movement. It emerged from the transformative, mystical experience of men and women with the living God. The suppression of mysticism within Methodism is rooted in sexism, racism and Enlightenment rationalism. It is linked to a rejection of the prophetic work of the church to be good news to the poor. When mysticism is reclaimed and put into its right relationship with the philosophical and institutional elements of religion, the Methodist church will regain its vocational fire.

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