

## Wk5 Mysticism & The Dark Night

Engage with the idea of mystery and silence. Discuss the use and place of apophatic theology in our daily practice. Discussing the “ascent to Christ” and what the process of deification entails. Define Beatific Vision and the nature of a 2nd personal relationship. Discuss the Difference between propositional knowledge and knowledge by acquaintance. The necessity of finding God in the Dark Night. The spiritual gluttony of believers. The union that arrives through knowing the Giver instead of the gifts.

**Definition of Christian Mysticism:** Christian Mysticism is the desire to know God beyond propositional knowledge and to know him through a more intimate and personal knowledge by acquaintance.

**Propositional Knowledge** is knowledge of a fact or declarative statement

**Knowledge by Acquaintance** is knowledge through direct awareness or experience of something.

*<sup>8</sup> To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, (Ephesians 3:8)*

*<sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup> may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:17–19)*

*<sup>19</sup> and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, (Ephesians 6:19)*

*For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, <sup>2</sup> that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ, <sup>3</sup> in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Colossians 2:1–3)*

*<sup>21</sup> that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. (John 17:21)*

**How is Christian Mysticism distinct from Eastern Mysticism or New Age Mysticism?**

- Two kinds of silences: 1. Silence without words; 2. Silence by words being exhausted
- Relational; person-to-person

**Aphopatic Theology:** a silence of running out of words

## **The Ascent to Christ and the Beatific Vision**

<sup>2</sup> *Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.* <sup>3</sup> *And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.* (1 John 3:2–3)

<sup>12</sup> *Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.* <sup>13</sup> *Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,* <sup>14</sup> *I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 3:12–14)

## **Christian Mysticism is not a search for experience (I Kings 19)**

“They cling only to the gift they can feel. When the felt gift is withdrawn, all falls without support. They are discouraged as soon as God tries them. They make no difference between the experience of joy and God. Thus it comes that, when the joy escapes, they decide that God is abandoning them. They are blind who give up prayer, as St. Teresa said, when prayer begins to be purified by trials, and to become fruitful.” (Fenelon, 50)

. . . perfect prayer and love of God are the same thing. Prayer then is neither a sweet sensation, nor the enchantment of an excited imagination, nor the light of the mind which easily discovers sublime truths in God, nor even a certain comfort in the sight of God. All these things are the exterior gifts, without which love can exist so much more purely because, being deprived of these things which are only the gifts of God, we will devote ourselves more singly and immediately to himself . . . It is a love which loves without feeling, as pure faith believes without seeing.” (Fenelon, 53.)

“The mark of a good prayer life is not abundant consolation but growth in the virtues.” – Thomas H. Green, *When the Well Runs Dry*, 21)

## **The Dark Night by St. John of the Cross**

- Dark Night of the Soul (Purging the Sin of Gluttony)
- Dark Night of the Spirit

## **Union with Christ**

- Eleonore Stump: “second-personal” relationship<sup>1</sup>
- Song of Songs 2:8-13

## **Practical Applications:**

- Study yourself into silent places
- Contemplative Prayer & the Jesus Prayer
- Seek the Giver and not the gifts

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<sup>1</sup> <https://cct.biola.edu/union-god-love-joy-peace-eleonore-stump/>