

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MYSTICAL RELIGION FOR A BASIC OBJECTIVE

The original text was double-spaced, except for certain quotations and footnotes. The sexist language of the early 1970s remains along with the styles of punctuation, footnotes, etc. Misspellings have been corrected, and bracketed 2008 comments have been added to some footnotes. Hyperlinks have been newly inserted here and there.

The pagination conforms to the original text; this results in some awkward appearing places in this version.

Readers are asked to bear in mind that when this dissertation was researched and written, the author had no access to computers for word processing or internet searches; even copy machines were not common. His typewriter make and model are pictured below.



What follows is a 2008 edition of Chapter Four (pp. 170-92) of the 1973 New York University Ph.D. Dissertation

“The Significance of the Religious Thought of Edmond La B. Cherbonnier for a Basic Objective for Religious Education” by Richard T. Nolan

THE SECTIONS/CHAPTERS OF THE DISSERTATION
(Available Within This Website by June, 2008)

Preface

[indexed as “Dissertation Preface” within the All Handouts subsite]

Introduction

[indexed as “Dissertation Introduction” within the All Handouts subsite]

I. The Religious Concepts Related To A Basic Objective Of Religious Education

[indexed as “Philosophy of Religious Education” within the All Handouts subsite]

II. Cherbonnier’s Interpretation of Mystical Religion Or Perennial Philosophy

[indexed within the subsite “The Perennial Philosophy”]

III. Cherbonnier’s Interpretation of Biblical Religion

[indexed as sections of “Biblical Religion/Philosophy” in the subsite “Biblical Thought”]

IV. [The Significance Of Mystical Religion For A Basic Objective](#)

[\[indexed within the All Handouts and Perennial Philosophy subsites\]](#)

V. The Significance Of Biblical Religion For A Basic Objective

[indexed with the All Handouts and Biblical Thought subsites]

VI. Conclusion

[indexed as “Dissertation Conclusion” within the All Handouts subsite]

Bibliography

[indexed as “Dissertation Bibliography” within the All Handouts subsite]

Two Perspectives for Religious Thought

Cherbonnier’s religious thought distinguishes two contrasting types of religious perspectives, mystical (or perennial) and biblical. His personal choice rests with the latter, not from the result of selecting one religion from two equally valid perspectives. For Cherbonnier, the biblical is a superior philosophy, testable by canons of evidence acceptable to logic, to experiment, and to public verification generally. Commenting upon the inadequate mystical, having its roots in Athens, as against the true biblical, with its heritage founded in Jerusalem, he wrote:

“What has Jerusalem to do with Athens?” Basically the answer will be the same as always: Jerusalem has everything to do with Athens. She has to save Athens from herself. First and foremost, she has to save *men*. One aspect of this primary task, however, inevitably involves the *minds* of men. Can Jerusalem challenge Athens in her own bailiwick, the realm of thinking? However unlikely the prospect might seem at first glance, the preceding pages have found some encouragement for the hope not only that biblical metaphysics need not take a back seat for academic philosophy, but that the Sons of Athens herself may find that all roads are blind alleys except the one that leads to Jerusalem.¹

¹Cherbonnier, “Jerusalem and Athens,” pp. 270f. [Added in 2008: Cherbonnier’s writings are available within the “Cherbonnier” subsite of www.philosophy-religion.org/.]

Thus, his analysis of religious thought has two dimensions. The first concerns the clarification between two basic interpretations; the second is his judgment that one of these, the biblical, is the only true perspective.

In a reply to Cherbonnier’s critique of his concept of God, Wieman offered praise for the analysis distinguishing mystical from biblical interpretations:

The clarity of his thought is a joy amidst the theological blur now prevailing. . . . I agree with Cherbonnier in his powerful and cogent criticism of present—day theology when theology claims that God is the “mystery of being” beyond reach of definite and descriptive knowledge. Cherbonnier’s indictment of present-day theology is irrefutable.²

Though he agreed with Cherbonnier’s indictment of contemporary theology as being a mixture of mystical and biblical elements, Wieman contended that his own interpretations did not fall clearly under Cherbonnier’s understanding of mystical religion, for which Cherbonnier had criticized Wieman. However, his basic support of Cherbonnier’s analysis is clear.

Also recognizing the Hartford scholar’s analysis is Kirkpatrick, who wrote:

Closely related to the search for a Christian philosophy but emphasizing more the character of Biblical motifs is the attempt by some thinkers to find a “biblical metaphysics.” Although the school of “biblical metaphysics” has not received the

²Henry N. Wieman, “Reply to Cherbonnier,” in *The Empirical Theology of Henry Nelson Wieman*, pp. 280ff.

attention that some think it deserves, it is at least one viable way of interpreting Biblical themes and perspectives. One exponent of the biblical metaphysics school, Edmond Cherbonnier, has said that there is a third alternative to an ontological philosophy of religion and no philosophy at religion at all which “would both provide a metaphysical basic for Biblical conceptions and also hold its own at the philosophical level.”

Referring to Cherbonnier’s analysis of the perennial interpretation of the divine as standing in opposition to the superior biblical concept, Dilley notes, “There are those who hold that God is ‘a Being, not Being-Itself’ and who argue that a ‘bold anthropomorphism’ is the only adequate way to speak about God”⁴ Dilley differs with Cherbonnier at the point when the latter claims superiority for the biblical; he criticizes Cherbonnier for attributing objective factuality to biblical thinking:

It is certainly an oversimplification to claim, as he does, that the adequacy of biblical philosophy can be proved by simple reference to the facts of history. His claim is, correctly, that

the truth of historical “symbols is wholly dependent upon the factuality of the events which they symbolize,” but it is hardly justifiable to say that those who reject this God “can be refuted by objective evidence” because “Biblical theology does acknowledge objective standards of verification, both logical and factual.” Such a claim seems to imply that non-Christians are making simple factual and logical mistakes when they reject Christianity, that they are denying obvious and easily verified historical facts.⁵

³Frank G. Kirkpatrick, “The Idea of God in the Thought of John Macmurray: Its Basis and Some Implications” (unpublished Ph. D. thesis; Brown University, 1970), p. 13.

⁴Dilley, *Metaphysics and Religious Language*, p. 110.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 112.

173

The criticism leveled at Cherbonnier by Dilley is not, then, for the analysis of religious thought within two perspectives, but for Cherbonnier’s claim of truth with objectivity for the biblical. With the support of Hare and Titus, that one’s bilk or philosophy is founded upon assumptions or postulates, Dilley implies that the alleged superiority of the biblical position rests upon the canons of adequacy and the assumptions of biblical religion itself. Clearly, perennial thought could also claim superiority, according to its own standards.

The strength of Cherbonnier’s contribution to religious thought, as recognized presently, rests with his analysis of concepts and interpretations of mystical religion as distinct from biblical, rather than the claim of superiority of one perspective over the other.

A summary of his interpretation of mystical religion follows, and then implications for the basic objective of religious education is described.

A Synoptic View of Mystical Religion

With the assumption that ultimate reality is the non-physical, perennial philosophy interprets divinity as non-personal (*e.g.*, Brahman) or analogically personal (*e.g.*, the “supra-personal”). The most philosophic forms of Asian

174

religions most clearly choose the former,⁶ while Judaism, Islam, and especially Christianity, under the influence of Greek philosophy, have utilized the latter as a mainstream of their theologies.⁷ Uniting both the Oriental and Hellenized Jewish, Christian, and Muslim systems of thought, the conviction is maintained that true reality (whether called “the One” or “God”) is supersensible or non-physical. The shared ontology has been interpreted by Cherbonnier as a primary motif of mystical religion. For Cherbonnier, this perspective applied to Hebraic religious is a mistake.

With the establishment of the nature of ultimate reality as non-physical, the problem of the physical (visible and invisible) world requires a solution. Perennial philosophies have developed the following possibilities: (1) The everyday world is unreal, an illusion; (2) physical reality is a lesser reality than the One, separate from It; and (3) the world is a participating emanation of the non-physical, less real the further down the scale toward the physical it goes. History, in fact time itself, being an aspect of the physical, is insignificant, and, for some mystics, unreal.

⁶Titus, *Living Issues*, pp. 398-416.

⁷Edwin Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), pp. 116-138

175

Man, trapped within an alienated existence, separated from the One, consists of body and soul. The finite body perishes at death, thereby releasing the soul to an eventual union with the One. In various forms, the “soul” has been utilized in most of the world’s religions. Among Asian religions, however, the notion of personality as an attribute of the immortal soul was not an emphasis as it has been in religions of Hebraic origin.⁸ To the extent that the physical is regarded as evil, the body is likewise judged; consequently, the separation from the One has been interpreted as involving the individual person in “original sin”; that is, he has been born into an inherently evil or alienated condition.⁹

Human reflection and language are limited to the finite world. Consequently, religious knowledge on the human level is limited to silence (for the pure mystic) or the use of analogical language. In either case, humans are incapable of using symbols that refer directly and literally to ultimate reality.

Because truth is known only when one finds union with ultimate reality (in ecstatic moments or possibly at physical death), words are at best poetic hints of the divine. The

⁸James Robson, “Soul,” *Dictionary of Comparative Religion* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1970), pp. 587ff.

⁹S. G. F. Brandon, *et al.*, “Sin,” *Ibid.*, pp. 578ff.

176

paradox is acceptable, because eternal truth cannot be put into words, and the absurdity of the divine to the human intellect is illustrated well by the contradictory.¹⁰

Cherbonnier wrote:

The pagan world, despite its vaunted humanism, regarded the very conditions of finite existence as a stigma. From Homer to Marcus Aurelius, it was haunted by the refrain, “Better never to have been born.” Humility therefore consisted in the acknowledgement or the wretchedness of the human condition.

.....

The best known illustration is his [Augustine’s] ascribing to citizens of the heavenly city a “love of God to the *contempt of self*.”¹¹

Consequently, perennial philosophy in its various forms regards human existence, the very process of living, as alienation and tragedy. Hope is rooted in the expectation of liberation through death, the gateway to union with ultimate reality. Until that union comes, one is able to be sustained by understanding the insignificance of the temporal, maintaining an orientation toward the non-physical, realizing that death will provide liberation of the real self from the physical, and yearning for union with Oneness.

¹⁰Steere, "Mysticism," pp. 236ff. Also, Stanley R. Hopper, "Paradox," in *A Handbook of Christian Theology*, pp. 261ff.

¹¹Cherbonnier, "Humility," *Dictionary of the Bible*, pp. 406-407.

177

The Mystical Concepts and the Basic Objective

God

It has been shown earlier in this study that the concept of God has implications for a basic objective for religious education.¹² Mystical religion, as interpreted by Cherbonnier, with its concepts of ultimate reality, therefore sets a perspective for the basic objective.

One observer of mysticism and its implications has written:

...mystical theology had always a practical end, a pedagogical purpose; for in tracing the stages of the soul's advance to higher spiritual experiences and to the end of all, union with God, it provided means for a systematic training of the whole spiritual nature.⁵

A central issue is brought to the foreground by this observation. Because union with God is the goal of life for perennial philosophy, the basic objective for religious education is likewise union with God. Mysticism's God, being the whole or the most important aspect of reality (whether interpreted within Oriental or Hebraic scriptures), is both the objective of life and of religious education.

¹²See pp. 45ff.

¹³"Mysticism and Education," *Encyclopedia of Education*, ed. by Paul Monroe (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1914), p. 363.

176

Another clear example of the relationship between a mystical concept of God and a basic objective can be found in Hinduism or Buddhism. Liberation from the physical world, from one's own self, toward the non-physical Brahman or Nirvana is the goal of life and of religious education.¹⁴

In Platonic philosophy the non-physical realm of Forms or Ideas is ultimate reality. This form or perennial philosophy calls for the realization and appreciation of the Ideas as the goal of the good life. Knowledge of ultimate reality, the recollection of the universal, and eternal Ideas known in a previous existence, is the most significant objective of all education?¹⁵ As Brubacher noted, "The educational aims of the philosophers or guardians were naturally the highest since theirs was the duty of guiding the state in the light of the unremitting search for the metaphysically true and good."¹⁶ Though not called "religious education," the orientation of this aspect of education was clearly supernatural, toward the Eternal. In the *Republic* (Book VII, 540), Socrates says of the guardian: "We shall require them to turn upwards the vision of their souls and fix their gaze on that which

¹⁴Lee A. Belford, "Hinduism," *Westminster Dictionary*, pp. 311ff.; also, Robert H. L. Slater, "Buddhism," *Ibid.*, pp. 66ff.

¹⁵Alden D.. Kelley, "Idealism," *Ibid.*, p. 329.

¹⁶John S. Brubacher, *A History of the Problems of Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1947), p. 4.

sheds light on all. . . .” Thus, the non-physical again influences the basic objective of what can be called “religious” education, if one uses “religious” to refer to the supernatural. Dupuis wrote:

.... Plato considered the attainment of happiness, climaxed by final unity with God, to be the ultimate purpose of all human endeavors. Consequently the ultimate purpose of education, taken in its broadest sense, consists of assisting man to achieve this lofty goal.¹⁷

Within Christianity Augustine’s concept of God clearly affects his basic objective for religious education. In this regard, Price wrote, “Augustine’s philosophical reflections upon his theory of education stems from his conception of God.”¹⁸ In his interpretation, influenced by the classical Greek perspective,¹⁹ Augustine too leans heavily upon a non-physical interpretation of God. Because of his biblical leanings, however, he does ascribe analogically personality to God. In any case, the gulf between the non-physical perfect God and finite sinful man must be overcome by change and sorrow in each person. Price observed further about Augustine: “The ultimate objective of education grows out of the corruption of human nature

¹⁷Adrian H. Dupuis, *Philosophy of Education in Historical Perspective* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1966), p. 39.

¹⁸Kingsley Price, “History of Philosophy of Education,” *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 6, p. 233.

¹⁹Frank Thilly, *A History of Philosophy* (3rd ed. rev. by Ledger Wood; New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1957), p. 177.

and God’s concern over it. Like the ultimate objective of the church, that of education is conversion and repentance.”²⁰ Therefore, a mystical concept of God orients the basic objective of religious education toward the non-physical.

The World

Clearly, an implication of a perennial interpretation or ultimate reality and its consequences for the physical world as unreal or less significant leaves little room for worldly matters in religious education. Historical events as pivotal become subordinate symbols at best, Scriptures are utilized as tools toward contemplative wisdom.²¹

This is not to say that mystical interpretations of education ignore the world. Plato concerned himself very much with education for citizenship.²² Augustine centered his religious educational curriculum upon the Bible.²³ But the basic objective, focusing upon the Union with the Eternal, sets the perspective for matters of the world as secondary.

²⁰Price, “History of Philosophy of Education,” p. 232.

²¹Slater, "Buddhism," pp. 66-67.

²²Dupuis, *Philosophy of Education*, pp. 39-14.

²³Edmond L. Brunner, "Augustine," *Westminster Dictionary*, p. 40.

Human Nature

Because the soul is the primary aspect of man's nature in mystical thought, religious education of this sort implies as a basic guideline the nurture of the soul. One scholar, seeing "ethics" as such nurture, has written:

The soul approaches God by purification of the heart; for one sees only as he is what he sees. In the case of God, he can know God only as he loves God. Therefore, by ascetic training a man frees himself from the external, world and the life of the senses, with its passions and desires. He is trained in virtue, and here mysticism and theological ethics are one. This training differs from the popular ethics in being a preparation of the soul rather than a means of acquiring merit. The soul, thus prepared, by ascetic discipline intelligently directed, and by meditation upon the facts of divine redemption, attains the same result as in the intellectual training, which it must always accompany. In perfect union with God, the soul loves nothing less than God, loves all else than God only as they are soon to be included in the love of God.²⁴

Consistent with the emphasis on the non-physical, this interpretation of human nature included reference to the body only as it is to serve the soul. Discipline of the body for the sake of the soul's nurture is a feature. As specifically related to the basic objective, another observer of mysticism has concluded:

In general, the ultimate aim of monastic education was the same as the ultimate aim of monastic life - the salvation of the individual

²⁴"Mysticism and Education," Monroe (ed.), p. 363.

soul. The primary idea of monasticism was asceticism, the disciplining of all bodily desires and all human affections and aspirations so that the mind and the soul might be devoted to the interests of the "higher life."²⁵

Thus, in perennial philosophy the concept of human nature orients the basic objective of religious education to the soul and only to the body as subordinate, to be disciplined for the sake of the soul.

Religious Knowledge

The soul's salvation is clearly independent of cognitive data, since mystical union is beyond words. Religious education can make use of whatever symbols provide a feeling for the divine. Miller and Williamson have contributed studies to the issue of religious language and have pointed out well the various problems connected with religious knowledge.²⁶ However, both scholars take for granted the "otherness" of God common to perennial thought. Consequently, little clarity, beyond the continuing confession of the inadequacies of various kinds of language, is offered.

Implied within mystical religion is union with ultimate reality. The basic objective, therefore, is oriented to

²⁵Elmer H. Wilds, *The Foundations of Modern Education* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart Co., 1942), p. 174.

²⁶Miller, *Language Gap and God*, and Williamson, *Language and Concepts in Christian Education*.

183

that experience beyond words that is knowledge itself. Thus, this perspective orients the basic objective toward religious experience, meaning the mystical oneness, as religious knowledge and not toward any type of information as such.

Consequences for Living

The primary value, according to Cherbonnier's interpretation of mystical religion, is liberation. Another word for liberation, as used within this perspective, is "love." An examination of "love" in the perennial sense assists in understanding further the relationship between the axiology of perennial philosophy and a basic objective for religious education.

In an analysis of the perspective which gives meaning to *eros*, Nygren has written of Plato's philosophy:

The background is formed . . . by his teaching of the two worlds: above the world of the senses arches the world of eternal ideas, this world which at one time was the home of the human soul before it was bound to the body and with it bound to the prison of the World of senses. The soul, however, retains a memory of its pre-existing mode of being; this is the reason why the soul is conscious of its present misery and is grasped by the longing for a higher world.²⁷

Nygren analyzed the *eros* of Plato in these words:

The Platonic *eros* is desiring love. As such it is marked by two elements: the consequences of a

²⁷Anders Nygren, "Eros and Agape," in *A Handbook of Christian Theology*, p. 98.

184

present want, and the direction of this want toward the freedom of a higher and more blissful state. The first is the starting point, the latter is the aim. *Eros* is rightly called a "wanting to have." According to its structure it is egocentric; it circles around its own ego, its needs, and its satisfaction. Its desire is, however, not directed toward the nether world of the senses. *Eros* is love directed toward the higher regions; it is the longing upward toward the world of ideas, and in relation to the present world it assumes the form of fleeing from the world. But even in its highest and most sublimated form it never abandons its desiring, egocentric direction.²

In Aristotle as well, the Platonic notion of love "is given wider reference and applied . . . even to the physical world." Fundamentally, the *eros* of Aristotle bears the marks of his teacher:

The whole of existence becomes a continuous *Stufenkosmos*, in which the lower everywhere strives upwards towards the higher and the whole process of movement converges towards the Divine, which exercises its attraction on the lower while remaining itself unmoved. Everything in existence displays this upward tendency; there is in everything an iradicable longing for likeness to God.³⁰

The word used most often in the New Testament for “love” is *agape*. Nygren claims that “*eros* and *agape* signify two principally different orientations of life, two fundamental motives which compete with each other.”³¹ He posits

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros* (London: S.P.C.K., 1957 ed.), p. 183.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 185.

³¹Nygren, “Eros and Agape,” p. 99.

185

further that “the history of the Christian idea of love is essentially the history of how these two perceptions of love were first joined and then sundered again.”³² Nygren has observed:

The process of amalgamation is found in its final form in the doctrine of *caritas* in Augustine. Here neo-Platonic perceptions of *eros* and New Testament perceptions of *agape* have undergone a peculiar union. Love is, according to Augustine, an elemental human drive. It is founded upon the essence of man which is always to desire, to seek his *bonum*. If he directs his desires towards perishable, temporal things, desire takes on the character of *cupiditas*, that is, false love. If man directs his desires upward and thus seeks his satisfaction in God and in the eternal, desire is called *caritas* - that is, the right kind of love, because only in higher things can man really find satisfaction for his needs. God is at the same time “the highest good and the good which cannot be lost.” Thus the love directed toward God becomes the right kind of self-love. If Augustine moves entirely on neo-Platonic grounds, the element of Christian *agape* in his thought emerges in such a way that *caritas* can occur only through the fact that God descended to us in Christ and became humanly accessible to us.³³

As seen through the foregoing analysis, Augustine’s essentially Platonic perspective minimizes any major distinction between *eros* and *agape* (*caritas*). The significant difference seems to occur because of the “personal” nature of ultimate reality as revealed through the Christ; that is, *caritas* is different from *eros* in that it is mediated through Jesus Christ. Both concepts of love seem to encompass the characteristics of love in its Platonic form.

³²*Ibid.*

³³*Ibid.*

186

Aquinas “starts from the same point and goes a good deal of the way with Augustine,” wrote Nygren, who goes on to say:

For Thomas, as for Augustine, all love is fundamentally acquisitive love; love corresponds to the acquisitive will, and this latter to the natural quest for happiness. As surely as everyone loves himself and wants his own happiness so surely must everyone be exposed, by nature and in accordance with reason, to love God above all things. Self-love properly understood must drive us to love God who, as the highest good, includes all that concerns our happiness. The reason why we love God at all is that we need Him as our *bonum*; indeed, Thomas does not hesitate to say: “Assuming what is impossible, that God was not man’s *bonum*, then there would be no reason for man to love him.” He agrees with Augustine, that whoever does not love God does not understand how rightly to love himself The good know that the chief part of their nature is reason (*ratio*) and that this finds full satisfaction only in the blessed contemplation of God (*visio Dei*). The bad, on the other hand, live in the error that the body and the senses are the chief parts of their nature, and by this they evaluate things, by this the direction of their love is determined.³⁴

Nygren concluded that “all the above is in closest agreement with Augustine.” And, since Augustine seems to coincide so closely with *eros* in the Platonic sense, it would seem fair to conclude that this perennial conception of love is “marked by two elements: the consequences of a present want, and the direction of this want toward the freedom of a higher and more blissful state.” This love is egocentric, directed out of the world of senses toward the “wholly other”

³⁴Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, pp. 624ff.

Divine, and “assumes the form of fleeing from the world.” Only a unique “personal” quality of the love seems to differentiate the Christian from the Greek conception. Since the Augustinian-Thomistic notion finds its real distinctive meaning as it is mediated through the Christ, one could regard their interpretation as “eros incarnate.”

In *The Art of Loving*, Fromm writes of love in these words:

. . . . mature love is the condition of preserving one’s integrity, one’s individuality. Love is an active power in man; a power which breaks through the walls which separate man from his fellow man, which unites him with others; love makes him overcome the sense of isolation and separateness, yet it permits him to be himself, to retain his integrity. In love the paradox occurs that two beings become one and yet remain two the active power of love can be described by stating that love is primarily giving, not receiving.³⁵

At first glance this type of love seems to be quite different from *eros*. However, in an analysis of Fromm’s basic perspective, which gives real meaning to his words, it can be concluded differently. Some insight may be had of the scholar’s world-view by an examination of some key statements, such as the following:

. . . . (man) has transcended nature -- although he never leaves it; he is a part of it, he cannot return to it; once thrown out of paradise -- a state of original oneness with nature – cherubim

³⁵Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (New York: Harper, 1956), pp. 21ff.

with flaming swords block his way, if he should try to return. . . all this makes his separate,

disunited existence an unbearable prison.

Man -- of all ages and cultures -- is confronted with the solution of one and the same question: the question of how to overcome separateness, how to achieve union, how to transcend one 's own individual life and find atonement.³⁶

The concept of man, as implied in Fromm's writing, is reminiscent of certain mystical characteristics. Man is wholly involved in the natural processes, but is somehow transcendent over nature. His individuality confronts him with the unpleasant reality of being separate from that with which he is involved. It is love which helps man experience oneness, to overcome separateness. The type of love suggests an erotic tendency in which one yearns for oneness because of a *lacking* in his individual nature.

Traditional interpretations and understanding of "love" analyzed here are consistent with the perennial perspective. In other words, most ideas of "love" are variations on *eros*, variations entertained by great pillars of thought such as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and Fromm.

Cherbonnier has not focused his attention on an interpretation of love within a mystical perspective. Rather, as reported in our analysis of Cherbonnier's treatment of" mystical or perennial consequences for living, the entire orientation

³⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 7ff.

points to an otherworldliness, a tragic sense of this life, egocentricity, and resignation to finitude (at least for the time being). However, in a seminar offered by Cherbonnier at Trinity College during the 1958-1959 academic year, the nature of love within mystical and biblical perspectives was the topic.³⁷ That *eros* is a way of capsuling consequences for living in mystical religion, or perennial values, for Cherbonnier became evident, With reference to the self-centered style of love as foreign to biblical thinking, Cherbonnier wrote some years later: "Whatever else the word 'love' may mean, it surely means that the idea of a solitary goodness is a contradiction in terms."³⁸ Variations on *eros* consist of what biblical love is *not*; for an understanding of mystical types of love in Cherbonnier's terms, it is necessary to refer to characteristics of non-biblical values, love, or commitments.³⁹ These characteristics fit well within the interpretations of love proposed by Plato, Aristotle, Augustine. Aquinas, and Fromm, as discussed above.

That an interpretation of love is directly related to a basic objective of religious education is implied clearly

³⁷*The Trinity College Catalogue, 1958-59*, p. 89.

³⁸Cherbonnier, "Self-Centeredness," a letter to the Editor, *The Trinity Tripod* (November 10, 1964), p. 6.

³⁹See Chapter V of *Hardness of Heart* for an analysis of Christian love and mystical values.

by Tillich. Noting the necessity of accepting persons as persons in creative love as the way for the community to grow, he wrote: "A community which has grown in this way is a triumph of creative love and is the aim of all education."⁴⁰ Tillich's awareness of love as the highest value supports the contention

that one's interpretation of love is an integral part of a philosophy that sets the perspective for the basic objective of religious education.

Therefore, *eros* as the perennial type of love, the axiological orientation for mystical religion, has a direct bearing on the basic objective. Because, as reported above, "one's *relationship* to God or Christ as the highest good was found to affect directly the goals of religious education ..." the nature of this relationship as a kind of love requires careful examination. *Eros*, reflecting a mystical relationship, implies a supernatural, non-physical axiological base for a basic objective. Such an orientation is consistent with the non-physical direction of the previously examined ingredients of mystical religion, but yet applies this world-view to both the intellect and the emotions of the person. It illustrates further that a basic objective for mystically oriented religious education must emphasize the ontological "Other" in one's heart as well as mind.

⁴⁰Paul Tillich, "Creative Love in Education," *World Christian Education* (Second Quarter, 1949), p. 27.

191

Summary

The significance of Cherbonnier's interpretation of mystical religion or perennial philosophy for a basic objective of religious education is as follows:

1. Reality is, depending upon the school of thought within mysticism, only or most significantly, the non-physical; a transcendent God, conceived analogically as personal, or no god may be within this perspective. Consequently, the basic objective acquires meaning within a non-physical monism or a metaphysical dualism.

2. The temporal world, including the visible and the invisible, is either unreal or a transient reality: consequently, the basic objective is oriented to the eternal, non-physically conceived.

3. Man consists of a body and soul, the latter of which yearns for liberation from the world and union with the divine: consequently, the basic objective looks toward life after death in some form as central.

4. Scriptures are at best analogical interpretations of the relations between the infinite and the finite. The most accurate religious knowledge is union with ultimate reality; consequently, verbal materials are secondary to actual experiences of the divine and the basic objective must focus on such mystical experiences.

192

5. The primary value is an orientation to the non-physical, exemplified in *eros*. Consequently, nurture in some form of *eros*, even *caritas*, is significant for a basic objective.