

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Stimuli

Compiled by Michael C. Mason

1. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.
Phil. 3:8
2. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Ps. 33:9 (34:8); cf. 1Pet. 2:3; Heb. 6:4,5.
3. And if any have been so happy as truly to understand Christian annihilation, ecstasies, exolution, liquefaction, transformation, the kiss of the Spouse, gustation of God, and ingression into the divine shadow, they have already had an handsome anticipation of heaven; the glory of the world is surely over, and the earth in ashes unto them.
Sir Thomas Browne, Hydriotaphia.
4. The centre of gravity in religion has shifted from authority and tradition to experience.
Dean Inge, 1926.
5. Today man exalts experience above everything else, whereby he isolates himself from the source of religious authority and tradition.
Joseph Kitagawa, 1975.
6. . . . the search for authenticity: the feeling that nothing can ever outweigh the authority of what has come home to us in the most personal way.
E. Robinson, Original Vision, p. 133.
7. The childhood vision, which gave such an embracing sense of evolving life, light and meaning in the universe, was the fundamental measure against which I tested everything else. I saw people and things in terms of quality and quantity of light: the presence of light, or its lack, was my only yardstick of right and wrong. One outstanding and repeated experience was that, when I tried to speak to adults of the light, or tried to live by its implicit truth, this was often met with blank astonishment or, as I grew older, active annoyance. I was continually told not to be insolent when speaking what I thought was the straight truth as I saw it, however wrongly. And I learned only slowly to compromise with accepted norms and to keep silent on things that really mattered to me. Gradually I built a laughing and shallow persona to hide behind, which made me more socially accepted.
Respondent, female, 43, quoted in Robinson, OV p. 133.
8. I seem to recall feeling slightly puzzled that my mother and Darwin were the only ones to be right; . . . I began, perhaps about eleven, to sense the absurdity of supposing that the teaching of Christ had been distorted by the church for nearly two thousand years, only to be correctly interpreted by the rationalists of my mother's youth.
Respondent, female, 50, *ibid.* p. 141.
9. In important matters we understand, not as we simplify, but as we can tolerate the paradoxical.
E.R. Goodenough quoted in *ibid.* p. 144.
10. The still small voice, the grain of mustard seed, the one coin lost, the single sparrow dead--these are the stuff of which religious experience is made. The study of it must include the humdrum circumstance in which it may start, and those at first sight quite unremarkable moments that touch off *that recurrent urge in us all to make some sense of the world.*
(Robinson, *ibid.* p. 147.)
11. After the experience of the sense of presence I knew, as Walt Whitman expressed it, that there was more to me than was found between my hat and my shoes. It was up to me to find out more about that MORE; and so, as I see it, my minuscule will was linked up with the will that our forefathers called God. I don't know what that power is, nor do I call it God. But by it I live, and in my slow, often frustrated effort to learn means of communication with it I grow, inch by inch, into a person more nearly resembling a human being than was ever imagined by me to be possible. This power beyond my own

its devil component) is to be understood as resulting from the repression of transcendence in modern consciousness. . . It makes little sense to see this Diabolus Redivivus as a figure of moral depravity. Rather, he may be perceived as one of the Good Lord's harlequins, a not altogether unwelcome character, a reminder of transcendence.

Peter Berger, Facing Up To Modernity, pp. 202-210.

19. The veil is drawn again after all moments of rapture. But the significance of the definite crisis or emotional stimulus lies in the hunger it arouses, and in the charting of a direction of search for appeasing this hunger. Almost always the individual who has once experienced a vividly religious state of mind seeks throughout his life to recapture its inspiration.

Gordon W. Allport.

20. Comparative religion makes a person comparatively religious.

Ronald Knox.

21. Mysticism begins in mist and ends in schism.

Anon.

22. The peak-experiences of pure delight are for my subjects among the ultimate goals of living and the ultimate validations and justifications for it. That the psychologists should bypass them or even be officially unaware of their existence, or what is even worse, in the objectivistic psychologies, deny *a priori* the possibility of their existence as objects for scientific study, is incomprehensible.

Abraham Maslow, Towards a Psychology of Being, p. 74.

23. All great literature and pre-eminently Wordsworth's poetry, when it is read with enjoyment and understanding, is incomparably revealing about the complexities and possibilities of human nature and development.

Michael Paffard, Inglorious Wordsworths, p. 36.

24. This emotion (the mystical) is the inspirer of whatever is best in man.

Bertrand Russell, Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays, p. 1.

25. This spiritual elation and response to Nature is man's generic mark.

Robert Bridges.

26. I had found little access to the 'spiritual world' in church or creed, whereas in nature I could 'feel my faith'.

Basil Willey.

27. I have had a tremor of bliss, a wink of heaven, a whisper.

T.S. Eliot, Murder In The Cathedral.

28. There are underground connections between the mystical and the aesthetic (whether in poetry or in other forms of art) which are at present obscure and unexplained.

T.W. Stace.

29. I know a man in Christ who, fourteen years ago, was caught up--whether still in the body or out of the body, I do not know; God knows--right into the third heaven . . . and heard things which must not and cannot be put into human language.

2 Cor. 12:1-5.

30. The mystical man may be designated as religious, since all his life he consciously or unconsciously confronts the numinous; but he need not necessarily be a believer in God. Insight into the scope and ubiquity of the mystical phenomenon shows that there are theistic and atheistic and panentheistic, but also materialistic and idealistic, extraverted and introverted, personal and transpersonal forms of mystical experience.

Erich Neumann.

31. When I am running on a cross-country run I force my body to its utmost limits purposely. I do not do this out of any desire to win the race, neither am I a good runner. I do it because when a certain stage has been reached, the pain which racks my body becomes a gloriously wonderful thing. It is as if I am

in another world. Countryside which would normally seem drab becomes exceedingly beautiful and an amazing amount of detail of the country through which I am passing sticks in my memory.

Respondent, M. 18.

32. That there are veridical experiences of the type usually called 'mystical' or 'religious' no-one would be so foolish as to deny, and a man may thank God for them as Paul did for his visions. But the capacity for religious or mystical awareness, as for aesthetic or psychic awareness, is largely a question of natural endowment. Women, for instance, appear to be naturally more religious--and more psychic--than men. To make the knowledge of God depend upon such experiences is like making it depend on an ear for music.

J.A.T. Robinson, Honest To God, p. 62.

33. I don't know whether religion is tied up with this or not for I am at the moment very much at sea as regards religion. I am confirmed C. of E. and go to church occasionally but though I try and concentrate and reap the full benefit from a service, I am sure something is sadly lacking--perhaps I expect too much. But I am sure there is something lacking in my religious life (if I indeed have one!). I feel closest to God at the time of these experiences [of nature and music], never at church services; there are too many people and as often as not there is some distraction--the clergyman is off-key or he has fumbled in his prayers and so on.

(Respondent, F.20.)

34. We may not experience these illuminations very often in our busy adult lives, but they were common in our childhood, and given half a chance we could achieve them still. Such moments are the nearest many of us will ever come to the divine agitation of the creative artist. . . . The child, the ordinary man, and the creative artist are all moved by a flash or self-identification in the same way, but there is no doubt that the child is moved more often and that these flashes illuminate his whole being with a more penetrating light.

Kenneth Clark, Moments of Vision.

35. A condition of complete simplicity
(costing not less than everything)

T.S. Eliot, Little Gidding.

36. A child has a picture of human existence peculiar to himself, which he probably never remembers after he has lost it: the original vision of the world. I think of this picture or vision as that of a state in which the earth, the houses on the earth, and the life of every human being are related to the sky overarching them; as if the sky fitted the earth and the earth the sky. Certain dreams convince me that a child has this vision, in which there is a completer harmony of all things with each other than he will ever know again.

Edwin Muir, Autobiography.

37. Such moments worthy of all gratitude,
Are scattered everywhere, taking their date
From our first childhood: in our childhood even
Perhaps are most conspicuous. Life with me,
As far as memory can look back, is full
Of this beneficent influence.

Wordsworth, The Prelude, XI, 274-9.

38. The last proceeding of reason is to recognise that there is an infinity of things which are beyond it. Pascal.

39. The cliffs are invariably deserted except for my dog and myself and it is then that I am most happy--nature simply overwhelms me on these occasions and I feel as if I am bursting with happiness and the luckiest person alive--I cannot stay out in this atmosphere for very long so I return home.

Respondent, F.17.

40. I seem to see into the heart of things momentarily, but, before anything can become intelligible, it

fades away.

Respondent, F.18.

41. I am oppressed by a feeling that everything I see has a meaning, if I could but understand it. And this feeling of being surrounded with truths which I cannot grasp amounts to indescribable awe sometimes.

Charles Kingsley.

42. Such experiences of something beyond, of realities half-revealed may even, in some degree, be universal. . . . For many, the experience leaves behind an indefinable longing and regret and the regret is, strangely, for what is somehow familiar. . . . We seem to glimpse a place to which we have already been and from which we should never have been parted.

Michael Paffard, Inglorious Wordsworths, p. 200.

43. Most men would have no more idea about painting, sculpture and literature than they have about architecture . . . were it not that they have fleeting intimations of the 'something beyond everything' on which all religions are founded, when gazing, for example, into the vastness of the night, or when they are confronted by a birth, a death, or even a certain face. Ignorance may partly explain the masses' dislike of modern art, but there is also a vague distaste for something in it which they feel to be a betrayal. Many men suspect that there exists a truly great art beyond the pictures giving them immediate pleasure, but they always think of it as being religious.

Andre Malraux, The Voices of Silence, pp. 278-9.

44. There is no doubt that great insights and revelations are profoundly felt in mystic or peak-experiences, and certainly some of these are, ipso facto, intrinsically valid as experiences. That is, one can and does learn from such experiences that, e.g., joy, ecstasy, and rapture do in fact exist and that they are in principle available for the experiencer, even if they never have been before. Thus the peaker learns surely and certainly that life can be worth while, that it can be beautiful and valuable. There are ends in life, i.e., experiences which are so precious in themselves as to prove that not everything is a means to some end other than itself.

Abraham H. Maslow, op. cit. p. 217.

45. I deem not profitless these fleeting moods
Of shadowy exaltation: not for this,
That they are kindred to our purer mind
And intellectual life; but that the soul
Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
Remembering not, retains as obscure sense
Of possible sublimity, to which,
With growing faculties she doth aspire,
With faculties still growing, feeling still
That whatsoever point they gain, they still
Have something to pursue.

Wordsworth, The Prelude, Bk. II, 331ff.

46. There is another (virtue) which, though hard to define, is both positive and important. The *arhat* and the quietist may not practise contemplation in its fullness; but if they practise it at all, they may bring back enlightening reports of another, a transcendent country of the mind; and if they practise it in the height, they will become conduits through which some beneficent influence can flow out of that other country into a world of darkened selves, chronically dying for lack of it.

Aldous Huxley, The Doors of Perception, pp. 33-4.

47. It seems likely that future historians looking back at the twentieth century will observe that we have generally been as reticent about the spirit or soul as the nineteenth century was about sex.

Michael Paffard, op. cit., p. 226.

48. My experience has been that whenever I have lectured approvingly about peak experiences, it was as if I had given permission to the peak experiences of some people, at least, in my audience to come into consciousness. That is, even mere words sometimes seem to be able to remove the inhibitions, the blocks and fears, the rejections which had kept the peak experiences hidden and suppressed.

Abraham Maslow, Religions, Values and Peak Experiences, p. 88.

49. Autobiographers describing their transcendental experiences: "The deepest and most essential secret of my life"; "My first clue to the meaning of the universe . . . my existence was transformed"; "The central story of my life is about nothing else"; "The highest moment of my religious life"; "The beginning of my life in the world of poetry". From these experiences they derived "joy which worked in my mind and body, a tangible power adding to my strength"; "an absolute freedom from mortality, accompanied by an indescribable calm and joy"; "an assurance of a beauty behind all phenomena, active through them, immanent, beneficent"; "a new gospel of courage and resolve . . . spilling over into hope and joy ineffable"; "a philosophy which I have never lost, a waking faith in the oneness of all life".

Cited in Paffard, op. cit., p. 230.

50. For most of us, there is only the unattended
Moment, the moment in and out of time,
The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,
The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning
Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply
That it is not heard at all, but you are the music
While the music lasts. These are only hints and guesses,
Hints followed by guesses.

T.S. Eliot, *The Dry Salvages*.

51. Be patient towards all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves like locked rooms . . . do not now seek the answers, that cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.

Rainer Maria Rilke, Letters to a Young Poet, p. 33.

52. Some forms of ecstasy are fascinating. . . . But the self-authenticating experience as an end in itself will ultimately not do. . . . In no religious tradition, in fact, are these 'highs' regarded as worth cultivating for their own sake, and in most the conscious seeking of such experiences is actively discouraged.

Robinson, Living the Questions, p. 7.

53. It was an overpowering feeling of joy and strength. It was against all my intellectual convictions, and yet it satisfied my aspirations. For the past year I've doubted, I've searched, but my attempts to deny it have only led to a realisation that for me this power is the only thing that matters. I had a growing sense of reality and personal identity which comes from being united to something more powerful than myself. Something that is helping me to be what I want to be, what I think I should be like. It's as though I'm at the beginning of my true development.

Respondent, F.20.

54. It is often those who deny having had such experience that find records like these most fascinating. They may even express the wish that something of this kind would happen to themselves. But how did they come to conceive the wish in the first place? The English word 'desire' is derived from the Latin *desiderium*, a word meaning not desire but a sense of loss--a loss, as its original root indicates, of the stars, like the condition of a ship at sea on a cloudy night. Without appealing to prenatal memories or the collective unconscious one can still believe that there is inherent in the very condition of being human some awareness that the stars do exist, and some recognition that it is we ourselves who are missing something if there have never in our experience been any moments when the clouds have

parted.

Robinson, op. cit., p. 15.

55. On many occasions, sometimes in religious services, but perhaps more often through works of art, through music, paintings, films, plays, books, through personal relationships and also in the stillness when alone, I have experienced something of which I could only say to myself, "This is real, this goes to the heart of things. This has value which I can only qualify by words like infinite, supreme, ultimate." Respondent, cited in Robinson, op. cit., p. 18.

56. Something which has existed since the beginning,
That we have heard,
And we have seen with our own eyes;
That we have watched
And touched with our hands
The Word, who is life--
This is our subject.

1Jn. 1:1.

57. A point that needs to be emphasised is that many of those who have engaged seriously with the possibility of theistic reality external to themselves have found that such externality has apparently engaged with them--and engaged in such a powerfully self-authenticating way that their initial ideas and concepts about 'god' have been broken down.

John Bowker, The Religious Imagination and the Sense of God, p. 27.

58. Emotion may appear initially to be a barrier to truth. Persons who get emotionally involved are thought less likely to see the truth than those who stand back and coolly analyse and organise information. However, as the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead has shown, it is in and through the emotional tone itself that we come to know the truth of event in their concrete totality. The fear and pain connected with a tragic death, for example, do not distract from its truth. They help us to perceive the tragedy in its fullness. That is why the truth of the Holocaust cannot be adequately conveyed in documents and statistics; the anguish and despair of the victims and their survivors are part of the truth and can often best be heard in fiction and poetry. Philip Wheelwright makes this point forcefully as it applies to poetic language. His thesis is that truly expressive symbolism awakens insight in and through the emotions it engenders; where an appropriate emotion is not aroused, full insight does not occur.

Kathleen Fischer, The Inner Rainbow, p. 19.

59. Christians everywhere in the settled world had suffered a kind of heart attack of the imagination, so that they no longer internalized the doctrines of Christianity in forms which would survive shock. They were interiorly numbed and they were not aware of it. What people were now internalising was the contradictory self-images of Church leaders.

Vincent Buckley, Cutting Green Hay, p. 291.

60. Therefore the thought of peace came down to be a work of peace: the Word became flesh and now dwells among us. He dwells in our hearts through faith, he dwells in our memory and thoughts, he penetrates even to our imagination. For what could a man conceive of God unless he first made an image of him in his heart? He was above our understanding, unapproachable; he was completely invisible and beyond our intellect; but now he wished to be comprehended, to be seen, to be pondered.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux.

61. Music and make-believe tell all the deepest truths.
Theodore Roszak, Unfinished Animal, epigraph.
62. The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. Aristotle.
63. Experience, when divorced from dogma, often leads to absurd and wholly irrational excesses.
R.C. Zaehner.
64. Dogma, when divorced from experience, often leads to absurd and wholly rational excesses.
Timothy Leary.
65. The only justification for our concepts and system of concepts is that they serve to represent the complex of our experiences; beyond this they have no legitimacy.
The most beautiful emotion we can experience is the mystical. It is the power of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead. To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty, which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms – this knowledge, this feeling, is at the centre of true religiousness. In this sense, and in this sense only, I belong to the rank of devoutly religious men.
Albert Einstein.
66. The crisis [of religion], which reached its most acute phase in the nineteenth century, was not primarily an intellectual crisis . . . I would prefer to say it was the tragedy of a starved imagination.
Paul Claudel.
Claudel diagnosed the collapse of Catholicism as a failure of imagination and sensibility; he stressed the resulting divorce between Catholicism and genuine art . . . the intellectual crisis would not have arisen as it did if reason and sensibility (that is, feeling) had not been separated so that imagination was held in contempt. . . The condemnation of Quietism (1699) was followed by the extinction of the spiritual, mystical tradition, which was ridiculed and equated with 'enthusiasm'. . . as a result of the fear of Quietism spirituality itself was externalised into 'devotions' and the emphasis was placed on outward expression of religion.
Alexander Dru.
67. The history of the experience of self, i.e. of man's interpretation of himself as achieved in freedom, is the history of his experience of God as well, and vice versa. The destruction of false idols, the act of attaining, or failing to attain, a state of transcendence over all reality definable in terms of particular categories and also reality as the necessary starting-point for our knowledge of God, extending up to the Mystery which is beyond all our conceiving or achieving, man's surrender of himself, constant yet ever renewed, to the inconceivable God, or the refusal of such surrender in a lying self-sufficiency--these and many other episodes in the history of the experience of God are events directly belonging to the history of the experience of the self as such as well and vice versa. . . It could be shown that in the history of experience of the self the experience of the loss of identity (to the extent and in the manner in which such a thing is possible, since in fact even that which is lost still always remains present in its own way) is also (in the same sense and with the same provisos) a loss of the experience of God or the refusal to accept the abiding experience of God.
Karl Rahner, Theological Investigations, 13, p. 131-2.
68. All these difficulties of modern man [with the content of revelation as it is often presented today] can be traced to a common formal structure: theological statements are not formulated in such a way that man can see how what is meant by them is connected with his understanding of himself, as witnessed to in his own experience.
Karl Rahner, Theological Investigations, 9, p. 41.
69. Augustine says pointedly, 'The Son is being sent wherever someone has knowledge or perception of him,' and 'perception' points to a kind of experiential awareness; this is precisely what wisdom is, a knowing that, as it were, is tasted.

Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theol. 1.43.4. Ad 2.

70. The devout Christian of the future will either be a 'mystic', one who has 'experienced' something, or he will cease to be anything at all. For devout Christian living as practised in the future will no longer be sustained and helped by the unanimous, manifest and public convictions and religious customs of all, summoning each one from the outset to a personal experience and a personal decision.

Karl Rahner, Theological Investigations, 7, p. 15.

71. Man can gather up himself and the world together into a basic and radical unity . . . Always provided that he commits himself to that unity of absolute fullness which we call God . . . Love of God is the only total integration of human existence.

Karl Rahner.

72. The mysteries govern the second birth of the person, the encounter with spiritual crisis. Their purpose is to teach our essential identity, the Self within the self, whose discovery may be the end of one life and the beginning of another . . . Traditionally, one approached the mysteries by way of initiation: a ritualized curriculum of ordeal, instruction, self-examination, and visionary exercise under the guidance of an experienced spiritual master. . . . Spiritual masters are notorious for their elusiveness; they simply will not pass the mysteries along in the form of reports. Rather, their way is to arrange for the mysteries to be learned by direct, personal understanding; they create spiritual environments in which the desired experience may flower . . . despite the efforts we see around us to reclaim a vanished spiritual discipline, only sadly debased strains of religious initiation have survived in the public awareness, mainly in social clubs and fraternities . . . when we turn to the religious mysteries, the importance of emotional and psychic preparation of a far more deep-reaching and discriminating kind is often summarily dismissed by both ardent believers and skeptics alike. In many mainstream churches, the deep truths of the faith are apparently meant to be learned from dry dogmatic instruction or rote catechism wholly without the aid of visionary insight.

Theodore Roszak, Unfinished Animal, p. 168-173.

73. The result [of laboratory research on religious experience] is a narrow emphasis on special effects and sensations: "peak experiences," "highs," "flashes," and such. Yet even if one wishes to regard ecstasy as the "peak" of religious experience, that summit does not float in mid-air. It rests upon a tradition and a way of life; one ascends such heights and appreciates their grandeur by a process of initiation that demands learning, commitment, devotion, service, sacrifice. To approach it in any more hasty way is like "scaling" Mount Everest by being landed on its top from a helicopter.

Rozsak, ibid., p. 50.

74. Awareness commenting on awareness creates an escalating cycle of self-consciousness that inhibits spontaneity. It intensifies the feeling of inauthenticity that rises in the first place out of resentment against the meaningless roles prescribed by modern industry. Self-created roles become as constraining as the social roles from which they are meant to provide ironic detachment. We long for the suspension of self-consciousness, of the pseudoanalytic attitude that has become second nature; but neither art nor religion, historically the great emancipators from the prison of the self, retain the power to discourage disbelief. In a society based so largely on illusions and appearances, the ultimate illusions, art and religion, have no future. Credo quia absurdum, the paradox of religious experience in the past, has little meaning in a world where everything seems absurd, not merely the miracles associated with religious faith and practice.

Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism, p. 96.

75. God is the partner of your most intimate soliloquies. Whenever you are talking to yourself in utmost sincerity and ultimate solitude--he to whom you are addressing yourself may justifiably be called God. Anon.

76. Before passing judgement on cannibalism, we must always remember that it was instituted to give human beings the opportunity to assume a responsibility in the cosmos, to enable them to provide for the

continuity of vegetable life. The responsibility, then, is religious in nature. The Uito cannibals affirm it: "Our traditions are always alive among us. even when we are not dancing; but we work only that we may dance." Their dances consist in repeating all the mythical events, hence also the first slaying, followed by anthropophagy.

Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, p. 103.

77. I felt a strong compulsion to pray for everyone I loved or who loved me. It was a duty which must be performed before I went to bed. I was still, at six or seven, so much of an animist that I felt the need of propitiation towards the powerful spirits of love and friendship.

I write here 'love and friendship' because, for a child of six, the instinctive passionate relation of babyhood has long received definition. He knows what love is, by its name, and for me, at least, the animist's intense impression of living spirit everywhere about him had passed easily into the idea. God, Jesus, to me were spirits of power and love in a sense both far more potent and direct, far more ordinary and casual, than they became to my later intelligence. I was used to spirits of every size and force, phantoms that sighed along dark corridors, vast unseen presences that brooded over the woods.

I took my prayers very carelessly and I was not expected to make much of them. I gabbled them, especially that ever-lengthening list of names, and climbed eagerly into bed to hear my story. Prayers were a savage, a primitive ritual of duty, establishing a mutual bond, conciliating mysterious powers.

But they affirmed and confirmed in my mind, my idea of things, the faith with which every child is born, that there is goodness in the world, in life; that to know it is all the security, and the peace, that life can give. And this is a true faith.

Joyce Carey, Selected Essays, p. 23.

78. A healthy appetite for righteousness, kept in due control by good manners, is an excellent thing; but to 'hunger and thirst' after it is often merely a symptom of spiritual diabetes.

C. D. Broad.

79. The first thing which disturbs me is the number of mystics who have suffered from ill-health and various kinds of psycho-physical disturbances. . . In the Gospels, there is no suggestion that, in his human nature, Christ was anything but physically and psychologically normal, no reports of any mental crisis such as we read of in the life of Mahomet. Even more importantly, since the God-Man is unique case. the twelve Apostles whom he chose seem to have been equally healthy. . . . Then I am a little disturbed by the sometimes startling resemblances between the accounts of their experiences given by mystics and those given by persons suffering from a manic-depressive psychosis.

W.H. Auden, Forewords and Afterwords, p. 72.

80. Though no one in this life can experience the Vision of God without having, through a life of prayer and self-mortification, reached a high level of spiritual life, is it not possible that certain psycho-physical human types are more likely to have such experiences than others who have reached the same level? Whether this is so or not, both the ecclesiastical authorities and the mystics themselves have always insisted that mystical experience is not necessary to salvation or in itself a proof of sanctity.

Auden, ibid, p. 73.

81. But the Catholic Church has been, perhaps, overly aware, as the Protestant churches have certainly been insufficiently aware, of the spiritual danger implicit in all firsthand experience, the temptation to imagine one is a special person to whom the common rules do not apply, the temptation intellectually to suppose that since an experience is new to oneself, it is new to the human race, the thinkers of the past cannot possibly throw light on it, and one must construct a new philosophy of one's own.

But, at least during her post-tridentine phase, now happily over, the Catholic Church seemed more or less to take the view that the proper place for her protestants, those who claimed firsthand experience, was the priesthood or the cloister where she could keep a sharp eye on them, and that no more could be asked of the laity than obedience to her rules. The Protestant churches, on the other hand, probably asked more of the average layman than is, humanly speaking, possible. Kierkegaard, himself a Protestant, put the difference neatly:

Catholicism has the universal premise that we men are pretty well rascals . . . The Protestant principle is related to a particular premise: a man who sits in the anguish of death, in fear and trembling and much tribulation--and of those there are not many in any one generation.

Auden, *ibid*, p. 75.

82. Discipline might be defined as the kind of self-control which frees one from distraction and preserves one from dissipation. Ritual behaviour is a prime example of such discipline. By putting us through the same paces over and over again, ritual rehearses us in certain kinds of interaction over and over again, until the ego finally gives up its phrenetic desire to be in charge and lets the Spirit take over. The repetitiousness of the liturgy is something many would like to avoid; but this would be a profound mistake. It is not entertainment, or exposure to new ideas. It is rather a rehearsal of attitudes, a repeated befriending of images and symbols, so that they penetrate more and more deeply into our inner self and make us, or re-make us, in their own image . . . So there is a discipline of listening, looking and gesturing to be learnt: ways of standing, touching, receiving, holding, embracing, eating and drinking which recognize these activities as significant and which enable us to perform them in such a way that we are open to the meaning (the res) which they mediate. In terms of the assembly, the primary signifier, there is a way of being together with others in the liturgy--a way of which all these ritual activities are a part--which goes beyond mere juxtaposition of bodies and beyond the pain or pleasure of orchestrated responses, and which leads to the loss of self in favour of profound union with the Body. One acts without acting, speaks without speaking, sings without singing: for it is Christ who prays, blesses, touches and sings in the Body to which my own body is given over.

Mark Searle, "Images and Worship", *The Way*, 24:2 (Apr. 1984) 110.

83. The whole life of a person is a slow trek to recover the two or three simple images in whose presence his heart first moved.

Albert Camus.

84. I wandered into a church where Vespers was just starting. It was the First Vespers of the Feast of the Sacred Heart. As I entered the church, I heard the familiar words, "*Unus militum lancea latus eius aperuit, et continuo exivit sanguis et aqua* (One of the soldiers opened his side with a spear, and immediately there came forth blood and water)". And I had what I can only describe as a sense of fullness of truth. Somehow, everything that was to be said about life and its renewing was in those words. Somehow my life, my destiny, was in those words.

Sebastian Moore, *The Inner Loneliness*, p. 119.

85. Melancholy--the common sense of those who know that no matter what triumphs the real world of time and place may bring, they are never quite enough to satisfy the deepest longings of hearts that reach impossibly for perfection.

Richard Marius, *Thomas More*.

86. Religion, when taken too far, induces a certain softness of mind.

Cardinal Newman's father.

87. Only those moments remain when an imperishable world broke through.

Jung.

88. Experience is a great teacher of fools.

Proverb.

89. Personal experience teaches you much about little.

Proverb.

90. I thought I saw childhood. I thought of Ham [his childhood home] and the various glimpses which memory barely retains of that earliest time of life when one seems almost to realise the remnants of a pre-existing state.

J.H. Newman, Letter to Harriet, 1832.

91. Amongst those who, in the face of these criticisms, retain their conviction that there is a facet of

human experience which can justifiably be described as religious, there has tended to be a division: between those who see no need to identify this experience with specifically Christian traditions or values and those who regard the Christ-event as the crown or the criterion of all religion. The former seek a religion which is open and expansive and universal in character: the latter one which is concrete and intensive and expressed in a particular form. The former strives towards fulfilment, the latter towards commitment.

F. W. Dillistone, Religious Experience and Christian Faith, p. 2-3.

92. Interdependence, unlike dependence, is unpredictable. And desire launched on the unpredictable is headed for the ultimate mystery of desire. A deep relationship makes you wonder what you want from life.

Sebastian Moore, Let This Mind Be In You, p. 55.

93. I recall that in the early days after my awakening to the discontinuity in myself there was a rebirth in feeling, in compassion, of a kind that I have never had since with the same intensity, and to whose subsequent dimming I must attribute a dulling of the heavenly vision itself. For the capacity to feel must be locked up in this primal sense of lostness, wonder, and desire.

Sebastian Moore, *ibid.* p. 61-2.

94. . . . the consciousness that we have now, what might be called Adamic consciousness, is only the beginning of consciousness. The you that is now is only the beginning of you . . . the separate self is only half a self. The other half is my body, is the others, is the world, is the universe. To be rejoined with that other half is the state that is sometimes called cosmic consciousness . . . the self is a destiny whose completion is cosmic. Do you really think that sunset over the mountains that filled you with peace was meant to be only a view? No, it was a premonition of your true home, which is the whole universe.

Sebastian Moore, *ibid.* p. 115.

95. My thoughts were wandering when suddenly my name, "Jerry", said itself in my mind. I stopped in my tracks. I whispered to myself: 'I am.' It was astonishing. 'I exist.' I began to walk again, but very slowly. And my existence was walking with me, inside me. I am fourteen years old and I am.

Jacob Needleman, The Heart of Philosophy.

96. I don't know who--or what--put the question, I don't know when it was put. I don't even remember answering. But at some moment I did answer Yes to someone--or something--and from that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that, therefore, my life, in self-surrender, had a goal.

Dag Hammarskjöld, Markings.

97. Feeling should not be confused with emotion. Although "emotion" and "feeling" are often treated as synonyms, "emotion" directly refers to bodily agitation. A person is said to be under great emotion when much perturbed in body; sobbing or crying, shouting or screaming, breathing irregularly, or behaving in some similar fashion. And even when emotions are not violent, as a rule they are identified with changes in the bodily organism.

Feelings do include the emotions as their bodily component, but "feeling" directly refers, not to the organic reverberations of our affective life, but to our affective responses when understood as conscious, insightful responses to intelligently grasped situations. When we speak of feeling, we imply an element of rational appreciation of what is felt. Hence, strength of feeling and vehemence of emotion do not always correspond. Commercial entertainment plays upon the emotions--exciting the sensations associated with love, tenderness, sorrow, dread, horror, and so forth--without genuine feelings, because intelligent appreciation of the situation is deliberately smothered rather than evoked. To arouse strong feelings by an art that is true to the reality of human existence is considered, not without reason, as too disturbing for individuals--"humankind cannot bear very much reality," T.S. Eliot said--and too threatening to the established social and political order. Consequently, people are offered every emotional excitement and thrill, while their feelings are kept dormant or deadened. Commercialized sex is a good example of emotion without feeling.

Where feelings differ from emotions, then, is in their being spiritual and rational in their animating core. The word "rational" will cause a negative reaction in some people, who will take it as a virtual denial of the distinctive place and function of feeling as feeling. However, it is a mistake to oppose affectivity and rationality. The heart may have its reasons which reason does not know, as Pascal says; but it does have reasons. Genuine affective responses are rational.

Thus, Erich Fromm in The Art of Loving argues that love must be objective or else it is no more than narcissistic self-deception. Pointing out that reason is the faculty to think objectively, he states: "To have acquired the capacity for objectivity and reason is half the road to achieving the art of loving." He is reiterating what we all know: to love without the objectivity that opens us to truth is to love our own fantasies, not the reality of the other person.

Charles Davis, Body As Spirit, p. 3-5.

98. In any major Christian Church, especially over a period of time, there are several substantially different religions, even if those belonging to them all recite the same creeds.

Charles Davis, *ibid.* p. 159.

99. Any critique of religious experience today that confines itself to theological writing is playing on the periphery. Even apart from its expression in action, religion today is articulated in other than theological writing; namely philosophical, literary, political, and, indeed, scientific in the social sciences. For example, no adequate account of religion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is possible without a study of the novel.

Charles Davis, *ibid.*, p. 161.

100. It was not man who implanted in himself the taste for the infinite and the love of what is immortal. These sublime instincts are not the offspring of some caprice of the will; their foundations are embedded in nature; they exist despite a man's effort.

de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, p. 535.

101. The mystery of God, then, is intricately involved in the mystery of the self. St. Augustine saw this clearly when he recognized that the "know thyself" of Socrates depends on a knowledge of God. Authentic religious experience will not only make God present to man, but in that very presence man will become integrally present to himself.

George Brantl, The Religious Experience, Vol 1, p. x.

102. No one has ever seen God, but as long as we love each other God remains in us and his love comes to its perfection in us.

1 Jn. 4:12.

103. A feeling granted everyone
Of living in two worlds
One of which is unsayable

Charles Simic.

104. I am a deeply religious unbeliever.

Einstein.

105. Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it for a religious motive.

Pascal.

106. O world invisible we view thee.
O world intangible we touch thee.
O world unknowable we know thee.
Inapprehensible we clutch thee.

Not where the wheeling systems darken
And our benumbed conceiving soars,
The drift of pinions, would we hearken,
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors

Francis Thompson, "In No Strange Land".

107. He was speaking of poetry itself, of the hidden part it played in their lives, especially here in Australia, though it was common enough - that was the whole point of it - and of their embarrassment when it had, as now, to be brought into the light. How it spoke up, not always in the plainest terms, since that wasn't always possible, but in precise ones just the same, for what is deeply felt and might otherwise go unrecorded: all those unique and repeatable events, the little sacraments of daily existence, movements of the heart and intimations of the close but inexpressible grandeur and terror of things, that is our other history, the one that goes on, in a quiet way, under the noise and chatter of events and is the major part of what happens each day in the life of the planet, and has been from the very beginning. To find words for that; to make glow with significance what is usually unseen, and unspoken too - that, when it occurs, is what binds us all, since it speaks immediately out of the centre of each one of us; giving shape to what we too have experienced and did not till then have words for, though as soon as they are spoken we know them as our own.

David Malouf. *The Great World* p. 283-284

108. "But to return to my own experience, and the disappointment or disbelief of those who look to me for a lead. When I tell them I don't know the answers, I've got to admit I'm not being strictly truthful- I do or I have known them and shall again but only intermittently, the result of a daily wrestling match, and then only by glimmers as through a veil. None of the great truths can be more than half grasped. I doubt I should have arrived anywhere near my inklings of them if it weren't for what I sense as links with a supernatural power. Some of you will see it as a sign of reaction and weakness to introduce mysticism, perhaps even necromancy, into a situation where power politics and increasingly sophisticated technological resources, would seem to be leading us inevitably towards nuclear war. However, because I've been asked to give some idea of how I think the Australian people might prepare themselves to face the situation, I can only stick my neck out and offer my humble beliefs. If I become an outsider by doing so this won't be a great hardship, as I've been that as far back as I can remember. Something strange and unacceptable in the eyes of those who believe they see straight . . ."

"... This I see as the positive side of the nuclear threat, the spirit may triumph where politics, the League and the United Nations, sociopolitical faiths such as Marxism, Italian fascism and German National Socialism all have failed. I see our only hope in faith, charity and in humbling ourselves before man and God. In the fourteenth century, an anonymous English mystic wrote a book called The Cloud of Unknowing, the main theme of which is that God cannot be apprehended by man's intellect and that only love can pierce the cloud of unknowing which lies between him and us. I feel that in my own life, anything I've done of possible worth has happened in spite of my gross worldly self. I've been no more than the vessel used to convey ideas above my intellectual capacities. When people praise passages I have written, more often than not I can genuinely say "Did I write that?" I don't think this is due to my having a bad memory, because I've almost total recall of trivialities. I see it as evidence of the part the supernatural plays in lives which would otherwise remain earthbound. It occurred to me in a recent re-reading of the Cloud of Unknowing, and through my discovery of Tom Merton's Works, that there may be a connection between the cloud in which God's wisdom is hidden from the human intellect, and that other cloud which is never dispersed from above Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It could be that this satanic mushroom, preserved by photographic plates and human memory, is given us as an icon, or reminder that we contain the seeds of evil and destruction as well as the seeds of divine regeneration. Time is running out. In 1983 it is up to us to choose which we are going to cultivate."

Patrick White. (At the ANU Symposium on the Consequences of Nuclear War, June, 1983)

109. Eventually he fell into a half-waking state, like the one he had found on the train, in which brightly illuminated scenes from the last two or three years occurred at random in his mind. Incidents and men he had forgotten recurred with vivid immediacy, and then were gone. He tried to pull himself back from the lurid sequence of memories. He kept seeing Douglas falling off the stretcher on to the slippery floor of the trench as a shell landed; he could hear the lifeless thump of his passive body. A man he forgotten, called Studd, came back to his mind, his helmet blown back and his scalp raked by machine gun bullets as he bent to help another man who had fallen. Stephen climbed off the bed. His hands were shaking like Mid Weir's during a bombardment. He breathed in deeply, hearing the catch in his chest. It seemed to him extraordinary that he should be feeling the shock now, when

he was safe in a tranquil English village.

The thought of his surroundings stirred him. It was a long time since he had been in England. Perhaps it would be good for him to walk outside and look at it.

His boots echoed on the uncarpeted wooden steps as he went down, hatless, into the hall and out into the air.

He heaved his shoulders up, then let them drop in a long, broken sigh. He began to walk along the green, then turned down a lane that led away from the village. He tried to relax himself. I have been under fire, he thought; but now, for the time being, it is over. Under fire. The words came back. How thin and inadequate the phrase was.

The hedgerows were deep and ragged where he walked, covered with the lace of cow parsley. The air had a feeling of purity as though it had never been breathed; it was just starting to be cool with the first breeze of evening. From the tall elms he could see at the end of the field there was sound of rooks, and a gentler calling of wood pigeons close at hand. He stopped, and leaned against a gate. The quietness of the world about him seemed to stand outside time; there was no human voice to place it.

Above him he saw the white moon, early and low above the elms. Over and behind it were long jagged wisps of cloud that ran in ribbed lines back into the pale blue of the sky, then trailed away in gestures of vaporous white.

Stephen felt himself overtaken by a climactic surge of feeling. It frightened him because he thought it would have some physical issue, in spasm or bleeding or death. Then he saw that what he felt was not an assault but a passionate affinity. It was for the rough field running down to the trees and for the path going back into the village where he could see the tower of the church: these and the forgiving distance of the sky were not separate, but part of one creation, and he too, still by any sane judgment a young man, by the repeated tiny pulsing of his blood, was one with them. He looked up and saw the sky as it would be trailed with stars under darkness, the crawling nebulae and smudged lights of infinite distance: these were not different worlds, it seemed now clear to him, but bound through the mind of creation to the shredded white clouds, the unbreathed air of May, to the soil that lay beneath the damp grass at his feet. He held tightly on to the stile and laid his head on his arms, in some residual fear that the force of binding love he felt would sweep him from the earth. He wanted to stretch out his arms and enfold in them the fields, the sky. The elms with their sounding birds; he wanted to hold them with the unending forgiveness of a father to his prodigal, errant but beloved son. Isabelle and the cruel dead of the war; his lost mother, his friend Weir: nothing was immoral or beyond redemption, all could be brought together, understood in the long perspective of forgiveness. As he clung to the wood, he wanted also to be forgiven for all he had done; he longed for the unity of the world's creation to melt his sins and anger, because his soul was joined to it. His body shook with the passion of the love that had found him, from which he had been exiled in the blood and the flesh of long killing.

He lifted his head, and found that he was smiling. He walked in peace along the road for perhaps an hour, though he had no track of time. The evening stayed light as far as he went, the fields in their different shades and the trees in ones or clumps or alone where a chance seed had dropped.

As the road fell and turned a corner he found himself coming into a small village. There were two boys playing on a big green space beyond a ditch that separated it from the road. Stephen went into a pub opposite and found himself in what looked like a private parlour. An irritable old man asked him what he wanted. He fetched beer from an unseen barrel in a back room; with the pint mug he brought a smaller glass containing some cinnamon drink. Stephen took both glasses outside and sat on a bench by the green, watching the boys at play until the sun at last went down and the white moon glowed.

Sebastian Faulks, *Birdsong*, pp. 290-291.

110. All the sweetness of religion is conveyed to the world by the hands of storytellers and image-makers. Without their fictions the truths of religion would for the multitude be neither intelligible nor apprehensible; and the prophets would prophesy and the teachers teach in vain.

George Bernard Shaw, *Back to Methuselah* (Preface).

111. The fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of true art and true science...It is the experience of mystery – even if mixed with fear – that engendered religion.

Albert Einstein

112. She disliked the miracles in the Gospels.
She never believed in the mystery of contact
here below, between a human being and God
She despised popular tales of apparitions.

But that afternoon in Assisi she wandered
through the abominable Santa Maria degli Angeli
and happened upon a little marvel of Romanesque
purity where St. Francis liked to pray.

She was there a short time when something absolute
and omnivorous, something she neither believed
nor disbelieved, something she understood – but what
was it? – forced her to her knees.

Edward Hirsch 'Simone Weil in Assisi', in *Burning Bright: An Anthology of Sacred Poetry*, ed. Patricia Hampl, Ballantine Books, New York, 1995.

113. The vertebrate brain seems to operate as a device tuned to the recognition of patterns. When evolution gifted consciousness in human form upon this organ in a single species, the old inherent search for patterns developed into a propensity for organising these patterns into stories, and for explaining the surrounding world in terms of the narratives expressed in such tales.
Stephen Jay Gould, *I Have Landed*, Jonathan Cape, London, 2002, p. 55.