

GOD AND MYSTICISM

All religions have a mystical side to them. A mystic is a person who attempts to transcend and transform observed realities to unite with Absolute Reality — God. Mysticism begins with one's search for the divine within oneself. Mystics perceive God experientially, which is very different from the ways of common believers.

GOD OF HINDU MYSTICS

Hindu mysticism has its roots in Vedanta philosophy, which is based on the Upanishads. Vedanta philosophy teaches that the human soul, in its primordial form, is not only divine but also identical with Absolute Reality — *Brahman* (or God). The Upanishads say: *Tat Tvam Asi*, which means “Thou art that.” Absolute Reality cannot be described except in a triad of words, *Sat–Chit–Ananda*, which mean “Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss.” These three terms cannot be understood except through a direct mystical experience with our core being, when we can see the self as identical with God. The great ninth-century philosopher Adi Shankara declared: *Brahma satya jagat mithya, javo brahmaiva naparah* — God is the only truth, the spatiotemporal world is an illusion, and there is ultimately no difference between God and the individual self.

EVOLUTION OF GOD

The God of mystics is a personal God, attained by abnegation of the self.

GOD OF JEWISH KABBALISTS

Kabbalah is a form of Jewish mysticism. It is not about worship or belief, but about a direct path to communion with the Supreme Being. Kabbalists call God *Ein Sof*, which literally means “endless.” In their view, God is everywhere and transcends the universe; he is indescribable and remote. According to the Kabbalists, the ultimate goal of human existence is union with the Divine (*devekut*). Rabbi Moshe Cordovero (1522–1570), one of the early Kabbalists, wrote: “The essence of divinity is found in every single thing—nothing but it exists.... Do not attribute duality to God. Let God be solely God. If you suppose that [*Ein Sof*] emanates until a certain point, and that from that point on is outside of it, you have dualized. God forbid! Realize, rather, that *Ein Sof* exists in each existent. Do not say, ‘This is a stone and not God.’ God forbid! Rather, all existence is God, and the stone is a thing pervaded by divinity.”

GOD OF CHRISTIAN MYSTICS

Christian mysticism has its roots in Neoplatonism. Christian mystics believe in a God who is inside the human soul and with whom a direct personal relationship is possible through love and devotion. The great Christian mystic Meister Eckhart wrote: “When I preach, I usually speak of detachment and say that a man should be empty of self and all things; and secondly, that he should be reconstructed in the simple good that God is; and thirdly, that he should consider the great aristocracy