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Response to Comments

DANIEL E. BASSUK

I should like to thank my critics for giving me a thorough reading. I in turn have a profound respect for John Yungblut and greatly treasure the year we spent together.

The difficulty I have with Yungblut's critique is his refusal to acknowledge the distinctions that I and others have tried to point out. The counsel given by Rufus Jones to Yungblut, "If you seek reality in religion, read the mystics," is clever advice. However, what did Jones mean by the word "reality"? Did he mean by "reality" a direct and firsthand spiritual experience, or the Reality of the universe? This distinction is essential and corresponds to my distinction between "mystical" and "mysticism," which Jones adhered to in 1917. Slurring over this difference led Jones to be divided in his feelings toward Plotinus and Eckhart, as my essay points out; Yungblut's response is to sing of paradoxology. And "read the mystics" is good advice until one finds them disagreeing among themselves (*e.g.*, Fox and Norris, Jones and Eckhart). Then what happens to the search for "reality in religion"?

As for the minor points, first allow me to point out that the word "egregious," which my critic stumbled over, was in a quotation of our editor. I chose to use it to illustrate that I am not alone in observing the ambiguity into which Rufus Jones has led us.

Second, Yungblut places Jones in the good company of Underhill, Herman, Inge, von Hugel, James, Otto, and Stace, on mystical experience. But upon closer inspection he should see that Otto and Stace moved out from Jones and James and with delight dealt with the metaphysical realm of mysticism as experienced by Eckhart, Shankara, and Plotinus, while Jones cringed over it.

Finally, I heartily agree with Yungblut that the synchronicity of mystical experience does have relevance. But so does mysticism, which Jones so disliked and tried so hard to extirpate.

In response to J. Floyd Moore, I can only say that I have indeed read all the literature he has cited, and more (pardon the pun), and that at the editor's discretion my analysis of Alsobrook, Moore, and Dwyer was deleted for lack of space. Since he asks me what I think of Alsobrook's analysis, let me say that Alsobrook's dissertation is primarily an analysis and that the critical evaluation he offered was based mainly on the works of Barth, Brunner, Berdyaev, and Kierkegaard. The fault with this dissertation lies in the contrast between the Quaker views of Jones and the views of the aforementioned neo-orthodox theologians, who are in a tradition totally at odds with Jones's liberal theology. The critical evaluation would have been more pertinent had it been based upon sources from within Jones's own Quaker tradition, rather than from a totally foreign one.

I find it revealing to see Moore referring to Quakerism as a "liberating spiritual movement which can find a meeting place of the divine with all humanity." His view, that Quakerism "has much to learn from Buddha, Lao-tzu, Shankara, the Sufis, Gandhi, and the empiricism of native African religion," shows me that Moore is expressing an attitude which combines two main lines of interpreting Quakerism today: as mystical Quakerism and as liberal Quakerism. For the exponent of the liberal interpretation of Quakerism,

Quakerism means freedom to roam all over the religious map, and he values his liberty to do this and enjoys observing his fellow Quakers roaming freely about, even though they may be moving in directions very different from the direction in which he is moving himself. For many such the Society is primarily a refuge for those who want freedom to follow their own individual bent in an atmosphere that is mildly religious and fiercely tolerant. They see the Society of Friends as one of the liberal denominations and feel a certain kinship with other liberal denominations.¹

Moore also presents us with the mystical interpretation of Quakerism. According to this view,

Quakerism is one of many outcroppings of mystical religion that have occurred from time to time in Christian history. In support of this view an attempt has been made to trace the spiritual ancestry of the Quakers through a long chain of Christian mystics. The Quakers are represented as one of the links in this chain. . . . Quakers of the mystical type . . . begin to think of their faith as the Christian version of mystical religion and to claim a spiritual kinship with mystics belonging to non-Christian traditions. In fact, some Friends maintain that the special historical task of the Quakers is to be that Christian denomination that embodies the spirit of Christian mysticism and thereby serves as a bridge between Christianity and the mystical element in other religions. . . . There is a universalism that belongs to mystical Quakerism but it is not the universalism of the Christian faith. It is the universalism of mysticism. For the mystic, Christianity is one particular manifestation in history of an "eternal gospel" whose truth is not dependent on any historical events.²

I fully agree with Moore that Rufus Jones did point us in these directions. But what is left unanswered is why Jones had so much trouble with the type of mysticism exemplified in Buddha, Lao-tzu, and Shankara. I should like to ask Moore if he is ready to accept these so-called life-negating mystics, who describe the Godhead as *Neti, Neti*, into his ethical, rational, social Quakerism?

It is beyond my ken to deal with "the future of the Society of Friends in the world community." My perspective is religious studies, with special attention to mysticism and the mystical. I am concerned with the analysis of Jones and with looking carefully at the way in which he changed Quakerism from within. Even if Rufus Jones was pointing us in the direction of the future world community, should that prevent us from subjecting him to a scholarly analysis? We should have nothing to fear, for Quakerism will undoubtedly survive in the world community regardless of our theological debate.

To my dear mentor, Lewis Benson, I can only say that once again I find his inner light radiant, clear, and glowing. The way he reads me is the way I would like everyone to understand what I am trying to convey. I agree with his point that metaphysical mysticism does not exclude experience and that Jones's own particular form of mystical experience, affirmative mysticism, does not exclude metaphysics. However, I feel that he and I would agree that it is too simple to just slur over the differences between mystical experience and metaphysical mysticism, as Jones would do.

Both Lewis Benson and John Yungblut criticize me for not making a true analogy between Benson's categories of prophetic and philosophical Quakerism, and experiential and metaphysical mysticism. Allow me to clarify this. First of all, I was not trying to say that they are identical. I merely said that the two traditions are *analogous* to the categories of mystical and mysticism. I wholly agree that Jones's affirmation mysticism is vastly different from Benson's prophetic Quakerism, which is grounded in the biblical tradition. Affirmation mysticism is a mixed breed, combining the Hebraic with the Hellenistic. In this essay I have attempted to draw out the distinction between the mystical and mysticism. In order not to overly complicate matters, I have ignored a third religious mode, the prophetic. As I see it, in *Prophetic Quakerism* Benson is dealing with the prophetic mode and contrasting it with the mode of metaphysical mysticism, which he calls "philosophical." On the other hand, I am dealing with the experiential-mystical mode and the mode of metaphysical mysticism. The mode to which Jones's affirmation mysticism belongs is experiential-mystical — neither Benson's prophetic nor my metaphysical mysticism, but rather a hybrid which falls somewhere between the two. Jones's affirmation mysticism helped to create the contemporary trend of mystical Quakers who refer to the Inner Light and that of God in such a way as to fit them in with today's dabblings with consciousness-raising, nature and aesthetic "highs," spiritual experiences, peak-experiences, and psychedelic and visionary experiences. This is where Rufus Jones has led contemporary Quakerism. It is for me, as I believe it is for Lewis Benson, a mild and passive

form of religion which lacks the power, strength, and vigor felt by the early Quakers. I well understand his anguish and his call for the revitalization within Quakerism of the history-making quality that once existed. May we all be guided by the Light that enlightens the world.

1. Lewis Benson, *Catholic Quakerism: A Vision for All Men* (Philadelphia: Book & Publications Committee, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 1968), pp. 4-5.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-4.