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The Particular Nature and Universality of the Christian Tradition

What, for want of a better term, we are obliged to call "Christian exoterism" is not in its origin and structure strictly analogous to the Jewish and Islamic exoterisms; for whereas the exoteric side of the two latter traditions was instituted as such from the very beginning, in the sense that it formed part of the Revelation and was clearly distinguishable from its esoteric aspect, what we now know as Christian exoterism hardly figured as such in the Christian Revelation except in a purely incidental manner. It is true that in some of the oldest texts, particularly those of Saint Paul, there are suggestions of an exoterist or dogmatist mode. Such is the case, for example, when the principial, hierarchic connection existing between esoterism and exoterism is represented as a sort of historical relationship between the New Covenant and the Old, the former being identified with the "spirit that giveth life" and the latter with the "letter that killeth",[1] a comparison that leaves out of account the integral reality inherent in the Old Covenant itself, namely, that element in it which is identified principially with the New Covenant and of which the latter is simply a new form or adaptation. This is a good example of how the dogmatist or theological point of view,[2] instead of embracing a truth in its entirety, selects one aspect only as a matter

1. The interpretation of these words in an exoteric sense is really an act of suicide, for they are bound inevitably to turn against the exoterism that has annexed them. The truth of this was demonstrated by the Reformation, which eagerly seized upon the phrase in question (2 Cor. 3:6) in order to make of it its chief weapon, thus usurping the place that normally should belong to esoterism.

2. Christianity inherited this point of view from Judaism, whose form coincides with the very origin of this perspective; it is almost superfluous to stress the fact that its

of expediency and purports to give it an exclusive and absolute value; it should not be forgotten, however, that without this dogmatic character religious truth would be inefficacious with regard to the particular end imposed upon it by the motives of expediency already mentioned. There is thus a twofold restriction put upon pure truth: on the one hand an aspect of the truth is invested with the character of integral truth, and on the other hand an absolute character is attributed to the relative. Furthermore this standpoint of expediency carries with it the negation of all those things which, being neither accessible nor indispensable to everyone indiscriminately, lie for that reason beyond the purview of the theological perspective and must be left outside it—hence the simplifications and symbolical syntheses peculiar to every exoterism.[3] Lastly, we may also mention, as a particularly striking feature of these doctrines, the identification of historical facts with principial truths and the

presence in primitive Christianity in no wise invalidates the initiatic essence of the latter. "There exist," says Origen, "diverse forms of the Word under which It reveals Itself to Its disciples, conforming Itself to the degree of light of each one, according to the degree of their progress in saintliness" (*Contra Celsum* 4:16).

3. Thus Semitic exoterisms deny the transmigration of the soul and consequently the existence of an immortal soul in animals; and they also deny the total cyclic dissolution that the Hindus call *mahâpralaya*, a dissolution which implies the annihilation of the entire creation (*samsâra*). These truths are not at all indispensable for salvation and involve certain dangers even for the mentalities to which the religious doctrines are addressed; thus, an exoterism is always obliged to leave unmentioned any esoteric elements which are incompatible with its own dogmatic form, or even to deny them. However, in order to forestall possible objections to the examples just given, two reservations need to be made. In the first place, with regard to the immortality of the soul in the case of animals, it should be said that the theological denial is justified in the sense that a being cannot in fact attain immortality while bound to the animal state, since this state, like the vegetable and mineral states, is peripheral, and immortality and deliverance can be attained only from the starting point of a central state such as the human. It will be seen from this example that a religious negation which is dogmatic in character is never entirely senseless. In the second place, with regard to the refusal to admit the *mahâpralaya*, it should be added that this negation is not strictly dogmatic and that the total cyclic dissolution, which completes a "Life of *Brahmâ*", is clearly attested by such formulations as the following: "For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:18). "They shall remain there (*khâlidîn*) for as long as the heavens and the earth endure, unless thy Lord willeth otherwise" (Koran, *Sûrah* "Hûd" [11]:107).

inevitable confusions resulting therefrom. For example, when it is said that all human souls, from that of Adam to the departed souls of Christ's own contemporaries, must await his descent into hell in order to be delivered, such a statement confuses the historical with the cosmic Christ and represents an eternal function of the Word as a temporal fact for the simple reason that Jesus was a manifestation of this Word, which is another way of saying that in the world where this manifestation took place, Jesus was truly the unique incarnation of the Word. Another example may be found in the divergent views of Christianity and Islam on the subject of the death of Christ: apart from the fact that the Koran, by its apparent denial of Christ's death, is simply affirming that Christ was not killed in reality—which is obvious not only as regards the divine nature of the God-Man, but also as regards his human nature, since it was resurrected—the refusal of Muslims to admit the historical Redemption, and consequently the facts that are the unique terrestrial expression of universal Redemption as far as Christian humanity is concerned, simply denotes that in the final analysis Christ did not die for those who are "whole", who in this case are the Muslims insofar as they benefit from another terrestrial form of the one and eternal Redemption. In other words, if it is true in principle that Christ died for all men—in the same way that the Islamic Revelation is principially addressed to everyone—in fact he died only for those who must and do benefit from the means of grace that perpetuate his work of Redemption;[4] hence the traditional distance separating Islam from the Christian Mystery is bound to appear exoterically in the form of a denial, exactly in the same way that Christian exoter-

4. In the same order of ideas, we may quote the following words of Saint Augustine: "That which today is called the Christian religion existed among the ancients and has never ceased to exist from the origin of the human race until the time when Christ himself came and men began to call Christian the true religion which already existed beforehand" (*Reconsiderations* I.13.3). This passage has been commented upon as follows by the Abbé P.-J. Jallabert in his book *Le Catholicisme avant Jésus-Christ:* "The Catholic religion is but a continuation of the primitive religion restored and generously enriched by Him who knew His work from the beginning. This explains why Saint Paul the Apostle did not claim to be superior to the Gentiles save in his knowledge of Jesus crucified. In fact, all the Gentiles needed to acquire was the knowledge of the Incarnation and the Redemption considered as an accomplished fact; for they had already received the deposit of all the remain-

ism must deny the possibility of salvation outside the Redemption brought about by Jesus. However that may be, although a religious perspective may be contested *ab extra*, that is to say, in the light of another religious perspective deriving from a different aspect of the same truth, it remains incontestable *ab intra* inasmuch as its capacity to serve as a means of expressing the total truth makes of it a key to that truth. Moreover it must never be forgotten that the restrictions inherent in the dogmatist point of view express in their own way the divine Goodness, which wishes to prevent men from going astray and which gives them what is accessible and indispensable to everyone, having regard to the mental predispositions of the human collectivity concerned.[5]

It will be understood from what has just been said that any seeming contradiction or depreciation of the Mosaic Law that may be found in the words of Christ or the teaching of the Apostles is in reality but an expression of the superiority of esoterism over exoterism[6] and does not therefore apply at the same level as this Law,[7]

ing truths. . . . It is well to consider that this divine Revelation, which idolatry had rendered unrecognizable, had nevertheless been preserved in its purity and perhaps in all its perfection in the mysteries of Eleusis, Lemnos, and Samothrace." This "knowledge of the Incarnation and the Redemption" implies before all else a knowledge of the renewal effected by Christ of a means of grace that in itself is eternal, like the Law that Christ came to fulfill but not to destroy. This means of grace is essentially always the same and the only means that exists, although its modes may vary in accordance with the different ethnic and cultural environments to which it reveals itself; the Eucharist is a universal reality like Christ himself.

5. In an analogous sense it is said in Islam that "the divergence of the scholars is a blessing" (*Ikhtilâf al-'ulamâ'i rahmah*).

6. This is brought out in a particularly clear manner by the words of Christ concerning Saint John the Baptist. From an exoteric point of view, it is obvious that the Prophet who stands nearest to the Christ-God is the greatest among men, and on the other hand that the least among the Blessed in Heaven is greater than the greatest man on earth, always by reason of this same proximity to God. Metaphysically, the words of Christ express the superiority of what is principial over what is manifested, or, from an initiatic point of view, of esoterism over exoterism, Saint John the Baptist being in this case regarded as the summit and fulfillment of the latter, which explains furthermore why his name is identical with that of Saint John the Evangelist, who represents Christianity in its most inward aspect.

7. In Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans, one finds the following passage: "For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if the uncircumcised keep the

at least not *a priori*, that is, as long as this hierarchic relationship is not itself conceived in dogmatic mode. It is perfectly obvious that the main teachings of Christ transcend this viewpoint, and that is indeed the reason for their existence. They therefore likewise transcend the Law; in no other way could one explain the attitude of Christ with respect to the law of retaliation, or with regard to the woman taken in adultery, or to divorce. In fact the turning of the other cheek is not a thing that any social collectivity could put into practice with a view to maintaining its equilibrium,[8] and it has no meaning except as a spiritual attitude; the spiritual man alone firmly takes his stand outside the logical chain of individual reactions, since for him a participation in the current of these reactions is tantamount to a fall from grace, at least when such participation involves the center or the soul of the individual, though not when it remains purely an outward and impersonal act of justice such as

righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfill the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men but of God" (Rom. 2:25-29). The same idea reappears in a more concise form in the following passage from the Koran: "And they say: Become Jews or Nazarenes in order that you may be guided; answer: No, we follow the way of Abraham who was pure (or 'primordial', *hanîf*) and who was not one of those who associate (creatures with Allah or effects with the Cause or manifestations with the Principle). (Receive) the baptism of Allah (and not that of men); and who indeed baptizes better than Allah? and it is He whom we adore" (*Sûrah* "The Cow" [2]:135, 138). The "baptism" referred to here expresses the same fundamental idea that Saint Paul expresses by the word "circumcision".

8. This is so clearly true that Christians themselves have never turned this injunction of Christ into a legal obligation, which proves once again that it is not situated on the same level as the Jewish Law and consequently is neither intended nor able to take its place. There is a *hadîth* that shows the compatibility existing between the spiritual point of view affirmed by Christ and the social point of view, which is that of the Mosaic Law. It is related that the first thief among the Muslim community was led before the Prophet in order that his hand might be cut off according to the Koranic law; but the Prophet turned pale. He was asked, "Hast thou some objection?" He answered: "How should I have nothing to object to! Must I be the ally of Satan in enmity against my brothers? If you wish God to forgive your sin and conceal it, you also must conceal the sin of others. For once the transgressor has been brought before the monarch, the punishment must be accomplished."

that envisaged by the Mosaic Law. But it was precisely because this impersonal character of the law of retaliation had been lost and replaced by passions that it was necessary for Christ to express a spiritual truth which, although condemning only a false pretension, appeared to condemn the Law itself. All this is clearly evidenced in Christ's answer to those who wished to stone the woman taken in adultery, and who, instead of acting impersonally in the name of the Law, would have acted personally in the name of their own hypocrisy. Christ did not therefore speak from the standpoint of the Law, but from that of inward, supra-social, and spiritual realities; and his point of view was exactly the same on the question of divorce. Perhaps the most striking proof to be found in Christ's teachings of the purely spiritual and therefore supra-social and extra-moral character of his Doctrine is contained in the following saying: "If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). It is clearly impossible to oppose such teaching to the Mosaic Law.

Christianity accordingly possesses none of the normal characteristics of an exoterism instituted as such, but presents itself as an exoterism in fact rather than as one existing in principle. Moreover, even without referring to Scriptural passages, the essentially initiatic character of Christianity is apparent from certain features of the first importance, such as the Doctrine of the Trinity, the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and, more particularly, the use of wine in this rite, or again from the use of purely esoteric expressions such as "Son of God" and especially "Mother of God". If exoterism is "something that is at the same time indispensable and accessible to all",[9] Christianity cannot be exoteric in the usual sense of the word, since it is in reality by no means accessible to everyone, although in fact, by virtue of its religious application, it applies to everyone. This inaccessibility of the Christian dogmas is expressed by calling them "mysteries", a word which has a positive meaning only in the initiatic domain to which moreover it belongs, but which, when applied in the religious sphere, seems to attempt to justify or conceal the fact that Christian dogmas carry with them no direct intellectual

9. Definition given by René Guénon in his article "Création et Manifestation" (*Études Traditionnelles,* October, 1937).

proof, if such a manner of speaking is permissible. For example, the divine Unity is a truth that is immediately evident and therefore capable of exoteric or dogmatic formulation, for this idea, in its simplest expression, is one that is accessible to every man whose mind is sound; on the other hand, the Trinity, inasmuch as it corresponds to a more differentiated point of view and represents a particular development of the Doctrine of Unity among others that are equally possible, is not strictly speaking capable of exoteric formulation, for the simple reason that a differentiated or derived metaphysical conception is not accessible to everyone. Moreover, the Trinity necessarily corresponds to a more relative point of view than that of Unity, in the same way that "Redemption" is a reality more relative than "Creation". Any normal man can conceive of the divine Unity to some extent, because this is the most universal and therefore in a certain sense the simplest aspect of Divinity; on the other hand, the Trinity can be understood only by those who are capable of conceiving the Divinity under other more or less relative aspects, that is, by those who are able, through spiritual participation in the divine Intellect, to move as it were in the metaphysical dimension; but that, precisely, is a possibility which is very far from being accessible to everyone, at least in the present state of humanity upon this earth. When Saint Augustine said that the Trinity was incomprehensible, he was necessarily speaking—doubtless in conformity with the tendencies of the Roman world—from the rational point of view of the individual, a point of view which, when applied to transcendent truths, cannot but reveal its own inadequacy. The only thing that is completely incomprehensible, from the standpoint of pure intellectuality, is that which is totally unreal, in other words pure nothingness, which is the same thing as impossibility and which, being nothing, cannot become an object of understanding.

Let it be added that the esoteric nature of the Christian dogmas and sacraments is the underlying cause of the Islamic reaction against Christianity. Because the latter had mixed together the *haqîqah* (esoteric Truth) and the *sharî'ah* (exoteric Law), it carried with it certain dangers of disequilibrium that have in fact manifested themselves during the course of the centuries, indirectly contributing to the terrible subversion represented by the modern world, in conformity with the words of Christ: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."

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Since Christianity seems to confuse two domains that should normally remain separate, just as it confuses the two Eucharistic species which respectively represent these domains, it may be asked whether things might have been otherwise and whether this confusion is simply the result of individual errors? Assuredly not, and for the following reasons. The inward and esoteric truth must of necessity sometimes manifest itself in broad daylight, this being by virtue of a definite possibility of spiritual manifestation and without regard to the shortcomings of a particular human environment; in other words, the "confusion" in question[10] is but the negative consequence of something which in itself is positive, namely, the Christic manifestation itself. It is to this manifestation as well as to all other analogous manifestations of the Word, whatever their degree of universality, that the following inspired words relate: "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." It was necessary that Christ, by metaphysical or cosmological definition as it were, should break the shell represented by the Mosaic Law, though without denying it; being himself the living kernel of this Law, he had every right to do so, for he was "more true" than it, and this is one of the meanings of his words, "Before Abraham was, I am." It may also be said that if esoterism does not concern everyone, it is for the reason, analogically speaking, that light penetrates some substances and not others; but on the other hand, if esoterism must manifest itself openly from time to time, as happened in the case of Christ, and at a lesser degree of universality in the case of al-Hallaj, it is, still by analogy, because the sun illuminates everything without distinction. Thus, if the "Light shineth in darkness" in the

10. The most general example of this "confusion", which might also be called a "fluctuation", is the mingling in the Scriptures of the New Testament of the two degrees of inspiration that Hindus denote respectively by the terms *Shruti* and *Smriti*, and Muslims by the terms *nafas ar-Rûh* and *ilqâ ar-Rahmâniyah*: the latter expression, like the word *Smriti*, denotes a derived or secondary inspiration, while the first expression, like the word *Shruti*, refers to Revelation properly so called, that is, to the divine Word in a direct sense. In the Epistles, this mingling even appears explicitly on several occasions; the seventh chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians is particularly instructive in this respect.

principial or universal sense we are concerned with here, this is because in so doing it manifests one of its possibilities, and a possibility, by definition, is something that cannot not be, being an aspect of the absolute necessity of the divine Principle.

These considerations must not lead us to overlook a complementary though more contingent aspect of the question. There must also exist on the human side, that is, in the environment in which such a divine manifestation is produced, a sufficient reason for its production; now for the world to which Christ's mission was addressed, this open manifestation of truths that should normally remain hidden—under certain conditions of time and place at least—was the only possible means of bringing about the reorientation of which that world had need. This is sufficient to justify that element in the spiritual radiation of Christ, as we have defined it, which would be abnormal and illegitimate under more ordinary circumstances. This laying bare of the "spirit" hidden in the "letter" could not, however, entirely do away with certain laws that are inherent in all esoterism without changing the nature of the latter entirely: thus, Christ spoke only in parables, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 13:35). Nonetheless, a radiation of this nature, though inevitable in the particular case in question, constitutes "a two-edged sword", if one may use such an expression here. But there is another thing to be considered, namely, that the Christian way is essentially a "way of Grace", being in this respect analogous to the "bhaktic" ways of India and certain ways to be found in Buddhism. In methods like these, by reason of their very nature, the distinction between an outer and an inner aspect is attenuated and sometimes even ignored, in the sense that "Grace", which is initiatic in its kernel or essence, tends to bestow itself in the largest measure possible, which it is enabled to do by virtue of the simplicity and universality of the symbolism and means proper to it. It may also be said that while the difference separating the "way of Merit" from the "way of Knowledge" is of necessity very great, in view of the fact that these two ways refer respectively to meritorious action and intellectual contemplation, the "way of Grace" occupies in a certain sense a position midway between the two; the inward and outward applications go hand in hand in the same radiation of Mercy, while in the sphere of spiritual realization the differences

will be of degree rather than of principle; every intelligence and every will is able to participate in one and the same Grace according to the measure of its possibilities, in the same way that the sun illuminates everything without distinction, while acting differently on different substances.

Now apart from the fact that a synthetic mode of radiation such as that just described—with its laying bare of things a normal exoterism must keep under a veil—was the only possible way to give effect to the spiritual reorientation of which the Western world stood in need, it must be added that this mode also possesses a providential aspect in relation to cyclic evolution, in the sense of being included in the divine Plan concerning the final development of the present cycle of humanity. From another point of view one may also recognize, in the disproportion between the purely spiritual quality of the Christic Gift and the overly heterogeneous nature of the environment into which it was received, the mark of an exceptional mode of divine Mercy, which constantly renews itself for the sake of creatures: in order to save one of the "sick" parts of humanity, or rather "a humanity", God consents to be profaned; but on the other hand—and this is a manifestation of His Impersonality, which by definition lies beyond the religious perspective—He makes use of this profanation, since "it must needs be that offences come", in order to bring about the final decay of the present cycle of humanity necessary for the exhausting of all the possibilities included in this cycle, necessary therefore for the equilibrium of the cycle as a whole and the accomplishment of the glorious and universal radiation of God.

The dogmatist point of view is compelled, under penalty of having to admit that the actions of its personal God, the only one it takes into consideration, contradict one another, to define the apparently contradictory acts of the impersonal Divinity—when it cannot deny them purely and simply as it does in the case of the diversity of traditional forms—as "mysterious" and "unfathomable", while naturally attributing these "mysteries" to the Will of the personal God.

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The existence of a Christian esoterism, or rather the eminently esoteric character of primitive Christianity, appears not only from New Testament texts, those in which certain of Christ's words possess no exoteric meaning, or from the nature of the Christian rites—to speak only of what is more or less accessible "from without" in the Latin Church—but also from the explicit testimony of ancient authors. Thus in his work on the Holy Spirit, Saint Basil speaks of a "tacit and mystical tradition maintained down to our own times and of a secret instruction that our fathers observed without discussion and which we follow by dwelling in the simplicity of their silence. For they understood how necessary was silence in order to maintain the respect and veneration due to our Holy Mysteries. And in fact it was not proper to make known in writing a doctrine containing things that catechumens are not permitted to contemplate". Again, according to Saint Dionysius the Areopagite, "Salvation is possible only for deified souls, and deification is nothing else but the union and resemblance we strive to have with God. The things that are bestowed uniformly and all at once, so to speak, on the blessed Essences dwelling in Heaven, are transmitted to us as it were in fragments and through the multiplicity of the varied symbols of the divine oracles. For it is on these divine oracles that our hierarchy is founded. And by these words we mean not only what our inspired Masters have left us in the Holy Epistles and in their theological works, but also what they transmitted to their disciples by a kind of spiritual and almost heavenly teaching, initiating them from person to person in a bodily way no doubt, since they spoke, but, I venture to say, in an immaterial way also, since they did not write. But since these truths had to be translated into the usages of the Church, the Apostles expressed them under the veil of symbols and not in their sublime nakedness, for not everyone is holy, and, as the Scriptures say, Knowledge is not for all."[11]

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11. We may also quote a contemporary Catholic author, Paul Vulliaud: "We have put forward the view that the process of dogmatic enunciation during the first centuries was one of successive Initiation, or, in a word, that there existed an exoterism and an esoterism in the Christian religion. Historians may not like it, but one finds incontestable traces of the *lex arcani* at the origin of our religion. . . . In order

We have seen that Christianity is a "way of Grace" or a "way of Love" (the *bhakti-mârga* of the Hindus), and this definition calls for some further explanation of a general kind. The most pronounced dif-

to grasp quite clearly the doctrinal teaching of the Christian Revelation it is necessary to admit, as we have already insisted, the twofold nature of the gospel preaching. The rule enjoining that the dogmas should be revealed only to Initiates continued in operation long enough to enable even the blindest and most refractory observers to detect undeniable traces of it. Sozomen, a historian, wrote concerning the Council of Nicaea that he wished to record it in detail, primarily 'in order to leave for posterity a public monument of truth'. He was advised to remain silent concerning 'that which must not be known except by priests and the faithful'. The 'law of the secret' was in consequence perpetuated in certain places even after the universal conciliar promulgation of Dogma. Saint Basil, in his work *On the True and Pious Faith*, relates how he avoided making use of terms such as 'Trinity' and 'consubstantiality', which, as he said, do not occur in the Scriptures, although the things which they denote are to be found there. . . . Tertullian says, opposing Praxeas, that one should not speak in so many words of the Divinity of Jesus Christ and that one should call the Father 'God' and the Son 'Lord'. . . . Do not such locutions, practiced habitually, seem like the signs of a convention, since this reticence of language is found in all the authors of the first centuries and is of canonical application? The primitive discipline of Christianity included an examination at which the 'competent' (those who asked for baptism) were admitted to election. This examination was called the 'scrutiny'. The Sign of the Cross was made on the ears of the catechumen with the word *ephpheta*, for which reason this ceremony came to be called 'the scrutiny of the opening of the ears'. The ears were opened to the 'reception' (*cabâlâh*) or 'tradition' of the divine truths. . . . The Synoptico-Johannine problem . . . cannot be resolved except by recalling the existence of a twofold teaching, exoteric and achromatic, historical and theologico-mystical. . . . There is a parabolic theology. It formed part of that inheritance which Theodoret calls, in the preface to his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, the 'paternal inheritance', which signifies the transmission of the sense applicable to the interpretation of the Scriptures. . . . Dogma, in its divine part, constituted the revelation reserved to the Initiates, under the 'Discipline of the Secret'. Tentzelius claimed to have traced back the origin of this 'law of the secret' to the end of the second century. . . . Emmanuel Schelstrate, librarian of the Vatican, observed it with good reason in apostolic times. In reality, the esoteric manner of transmitting divine truths and interpreting texts existed among both Jews and Gentiles, as it later existed among Christians. . . . If one obstinately refuses to study the initiatic processes of Revelation, one will never arrive at an intelligent, subjective assimilation of Dogma. The ancient liturgies are not sufficiently put to use, and in the same way Hebrew scholarship is absolutely neglected. . . . The Apostles and the Fathers have preserved in secret and silence the 'Majesty of the Mysteries'; Saint Dionysius the Areopagite has of set purpose cultivated the use of obscure words; as Christ assumed the title 'Son of Man', so he calls baptism 'Initiation to *Theogenesis*'. . . . The discipline of the secret was fully justified. Neither the Prophets nor Christ him-

ference between the New Covenant and the Old is that in the latter the divine aspect of Rigor predominated, whereas in the former it is on the contrary the aspect of Mercy which prevails. Now the way

self revealed the divine secrets with such clearness as to make them comprehensible to all" (Paul Vulliaud, *Études d'Ésotérisme catholique*). Lastly we should like to quote, for the sake of documentation and despite the length of the text, an author of the early nineteenth century: "In the beginning Christianity was an initiation comparable to those of the pagans. When speaking of this religion Clement of Alexandria exclaims: 'O truly sacred mysteries! O pure light! Amid the gleam of torches falls the veil which covers God and Heaven. I become holy from the moment I am *initiated*. It is the Lord himself who is the hierophant; He sets His *seal* upon the adept whom he enlightens; and to reward his faith he commends him eternally to His Father. Those are the orgies of my mysteries. *Come and seek admission to them*.' These words might be taken in a merely metaphorical sense, but the facts prove that they must be interpreted literally. The Gospels are full of calculated reticences and of allusions to Christian initiation. Thus one may read: 'He that hath ears, let him hear.' Jesus, when addressing the multitude, always made use of parables. 'Seek,' he said, 'and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' The meetings were in secret, and people were admitted only under stated conditions. Complete understanding of the doctrine was achieved only after passing through three grades of instruction. The Initiates were consequently divided into three classes. The first class comprised the *hearers*, the second the *catechumens* or the *competent*, and the third the *faithful*. The hearers were novices, who were prepared, by means of certain practices and instructions, for the communication of the dogmas of Christianity. A portion of these dogmas was disclosed to the catechumens who, after the prescribed purifications, received baptism or *initiation to theogenesis* (divine generation), as Saint Dionysius calls it in his *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*; from that time onward they became *servants of the faith* and had free access to the churches. In the mysteries there was nothing secret or hidden from the faithful; all was accomplished in their presence; they could see all and hear all; they had the right to be present during the whole liturgy; it was enjoined upon them that they should watch attentively lest any profane person or initiate of inferior rank should slip in among them; and the *sign of the cross* served them as a sign of recognition. The mysteries were divided into two parts. The first was called the *mass of the catechumen*s because members of that class were allowed to attend it; it included all that is said from the beginning of the divine office up to the recitation of the creed. The second part was called the mass of the faithful. It included the preparation of the *sacrifice*, the sacrifice itself, and the giving of thanks which follows. When this mass was about to begin a deacon cried in a loud voice: *Sancta sanctis; foris canes*! 'The holy things are for the holy; let the dogs go out!' Thereupon they expelled the catechumens and the penitents, the latter being members of the faithful who, having some serious fault on their conscience, had been subjected to the penances prescribed by the Church, and thus were unable to be present at the celebration of the *awful mysteries*, as Saint John Chrysostom calls them. The faithful, once alone, recited the symbol of the faith, in order to ensure that all present had received initiation and so that one might safely hold converse before them

of Mercy is in a certain sense easier than the way of Rigor because, while corresponding at the same time to a more profound reality, it also benefits from a special Grace: this is the "justification by Faith", whose "yoke is easy and burden light", and which renders the "yoke of Heaven" of the Mosaic Law unnecessary. Moreover this "justification by Faith" is analogous—and its whole esoteric significance rests on this—to "liberation by Knowledge", both being to a greater or less extent independent of the "Law", that is to say, of works.[12] Faith is in fact nothing else than the "bhaktic" mode of Knowledge and of intellectual certitude, which means that Faith is a passive act of the intelligence, its immediate object being not the truth as such, but a symbol of the truth. This symbol will yield up its secrets in propor-

openly and without enigmas concerning the great mysteries of the religion and especially of the Eucharist. The doctrine and the celebration of this sacrament was guarded as an inviolable secret; and if the doctors referred to it in their sermons or books, they did so only with great reserve, by indirect allusion and enigmatically. When Diocletian ordered the Christians to deliver their sacred books to the magistrates, those among them who obeyed this edict of the emperor from fear of death were driven out of the community of the faithful and were looked upon as traitors and apostates. Saint Augustine gives us some idea of the grief of the Church at seeing the sacred Scriptures handed over to unbelievers. In the eyes of the Church it was regarded as a terrible profanation when a man who had not been initiated entered the temple and witnessed the holy mysteries. Saint John Chrysostom mentions a case of this kind to Pope Innocent I. Some barbarian soldiers had entered the Church of Constantinople on Easter Eve. 'The female catechumens, who had just undressed in order to be baptized, were compelled by fear to flee in a state of nakedness; the barbarians did not allow them time to cover themselves. The barbarians then entered the places where the sacred things are kept and venerated, and some of them, *who had not yet been initiated into our mysteries,* saw all the most sacred things that were there.' In the seventh century, the constant increase in the number of the faithful led to the institution by the Church of the minor orders, among which were numbered the porters, who succeeded the deacons and subdeacons in the duty of guarding the doors of the churches. About the year 700, everyone was admitted to the spectacle of the liturgy; and of all the mystery which in early times surrounded the sacred ceremonial, there remained only the custom of reciting secretly the canon of the mass. Nevertheless even today, in the Greek rite, the officiating priest celebrates the divine office behind a curtain, which is drawn back only at the moment of the elevation; but at this moment those assisting should be prostrated or inclined in such a manner that they cannot see the holy sacrament" (F. T. B. Clavel, *Histoire pittoresque de la Franc-Maçonnerie et des Sociétés secrètes anciennes et modernes*).

12. A distinction analogous to the one that sets in opposition "Faith" and the "Law" is to be found within the initiatic realm itself; to "Faith" correspond here the various spiritual movements founded upon the invocation of a divine Name

tion to the greatness of the Faith, which in its turn will be determined by an attitude of trust or emotional certitude, that is, by an element of *bhakti* or love. Insofar as Faith is a contemplative atti-

(the Hindu *japa*, the Buddhist *buddhânusmriti*, *nien-fo*, or *nembutsu*, and the Muslim *dhikr*); a particularly characteristic example is provided by Shri Chaitanya, who threw away all his books in order to devote himself exclusively to the "bhaktic" invocation of *Krishna*, an attitude comparable to that of the Christians, who rejected the "Law" and "works" in the name of "Faith" and "Love". Similarly, to cite yet another example, the Japanese Buddhist schools called *Jôdo* and *Jôdo-Shinshû*, whose doctrine, founded on the *sûtra*s of Amitabha, is analogous to certain doctrines of Chinese Buddhism and proceeds, like them, from the "original vow of Amida", reject the meditations and austerities of the other Buddhist schools in order to devote themselves exclusively to the invocation of the sacred Name of *Amida*: here ascetic effort is replaced by simple confidence in the Grace of the Buddha Amida, a Grace which he bestows out of his Compassion on those who invoke him, independently of any "merit" on their part. "The invocation of the holy Name must be accompanied by an absolute sincerity of heart and the most complete faith in the goodness of Amida, whose wish it is that all creatures should be saved. In place of virtues, in place of knowledge, Amida, taking pity on the men of the 'Latter Days', has allowed that there be substituted faith in the redemptive value of his Grace, in order that they may be delivered from the sufferings of the world." "We are all equal by the effect of our common faith and of our confidence in the Grace of Amida Buddha." "Every creature, however great a sinner it may be, is certain of being saved and enfolded in the light of Amida and of obtaining a place in the eternal and imperishable Land of Happiness, if only it believes in the Name of Amida Buddha and, abandoning the present and future cares of the world, takes refuge in the liberating Hands so mercifully stretched out towards all creatures, reciting his Name with an entire sincerity of heart." "We know the Name of *Amida* through the preaching of *Shâkya-Muni*, and we know that included in this Name is the power of Amida's wish to save all creatures. To hear this Name is to hear the voice of salvation saying: 'Have confidence in Me, and I shall surely save you,' words which Amida addresses to us directly. This meaning is contained in the Name *Amida*. Whereas all our other actions are more or less stained with impurity, the repetition of the *Namu-Amida-Bu* is an act devoid of all impurity, for it is not we who recite it but Amida himself who, giving us his own Name, makes us repeat It." "When once belief in our salvation by Amida has been awakened and strengthened, our destiny is fixed: we shall be reborn in the Pure Land and shall become Buddhas. Then, it is said, we shall be entirely enfolded in the Light of Amida, and, living under his loving direction, our life will be filled with joy unspeakable, the gift of the Buddha" (*Les Sectes bouddhiques japonaises*, by E. Steinilber-Oberlin and Kuni Matsuo). "The original vow of Amida is to receive in his Land of Felicity whoever shall pronounce his Name with absolute confidence: happy then are those who pronounce his Name! A man may possess faith, but if he does not pronounce the Name his faith will be of no use to him. Another may pronounce the Name while thinking of that alone, but if his faith is not sufficiently deep, his re-birth will not

tude, its subject is the intelligence; it can therefore be said to constitute a virtual Knowledge; but since its mode is passive, it must compensate for this passivity by a complementary active attitude, that is to say, by an attitude of the will the substance of which is precisely trust and fervor, by virtue of which the intelligence will receive spiritual certitudes. Faith is *a priori* a natural disposition of the soul to admit the supernatural; it is therefore essentially an intuition of the supernatural brought about by Grace, which is actualized by means of the attitude of fervent trust.[13] When, through Grace, Faith becomes whole, it will have been dissolved in Love, which is God; that is why, from the theological standpoint, the Blessed in Heaven no longer have Faith, since they behold its object, namely, God, who

take place. But he who believes firmly in re-birth as the goal of *nembutsu* (invocation) and who pronounces the Name, the same will without any doubt be reborn in the Land of Reward" (*Essays in Zen Buddhism*, Vol. 3, by Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki). It will not have been difficult to recognize the analogies to which we desired to draw attention: *Amida* is none other than the divine Word. *Amida-Buddha* can therefore be translated, in Christian terms, as "God the Son, the Christ", the Name "Christ Jesus" being equivalent to the Name *Buddha Shâkya-Muni*; the redemptive Name *Amida* corresponds exactly to the Eucharist and the invocation of that Name to communion; lastly, the distinction between *jiriki* (individual power, that is, effort with a view to merit) and *tariki* ("power of the other", that is, grace apart from merit)—the latter being the way of *Jôdo-Shinshû*—is analogous to the Pauline distinction between the "Law" and "Faith". It may be added that if modern Christianity is suffering in some measure from a decline of the intellectual element, this is precisely because its original spirituality was of a "bhaktic" nature, and an exteriorization of *bhakti* leads inevitably to a regression of intellectuality in favor of sentimentality.

13. The life of the great *bhakta* Shri Ramakrishna provides a very instructive example of the "bhaktic" mode of Knowledge. The saint wished to understand the identity between gold and clay; but instead of starting out from a metaphysical *datum* which would have enabled him to perceive the vanity of riches, as a *jnânin* would have done, he kept praying to Kali to cause him to understand this identity by a revelation: "Every morning, for many long months, I held in my hand a piece of money and a lump of clay and repeated: *Gold is clay, and clay is gold.* But this thought brought no spiritual work into operation within me; nothing came to prove to me the truth of such a statement. After I know not how many months of meditation, I was sitting one morning at dawn on the bank of the river, imploring our Mother to enlighten me. All of a sudden the whole universe appeared before my eyes clothed in a sparkling mantle of gold. . . . Then the landscape took on a duller glow, the color of brown clay, even lovelier than the gold. And while this vision engraved itself deeply on my soul, I heard a sound like the trumpeting of more than ten thousand elephants, who clamored in my ear: *Clay and gold are but*

is Love or Beatitude. It should be added that from an initiatic point of view, as expressed for example in the teaching of the Hesychast tradition, this vision can and even should be obtained in this life.

Another aspect of Faith that may be mentioned here is the connection between Faith and miracles, a connection that explains the great importance of miracles not only in the case of Christ, but in Christianity as such. In Christianity, by contrast with Islam, the miracle plays a central and quasi-organic part, and this is not unconnected with the "bhaktic" nature of the Christian way. Miracles would in fact be inexplicable apart from the place that they hold in Faith; possessing no persuasive value in themselves—for otherwise satanic miracles would be a criterion of truth—they nevertheless possess this value to an exceptional degree in association with all the other factors that enter into the Christic Revelation. In other words, if the miracles of Christ, the Apostles, and the saints are precious and venerable, this is solely because they are associated with other criteria which *a priori* permit of their being invested with the value of divine "signs". The essential and primordial function of a miracle is either to awaken the grace of Faith—which assumes a natural disposition to admit the supernatural, whether consciously or not, on the part of the person affected by this grace—or to perfect a Faith already acquired. To define still more exactly the function of the miracle, not only in Christianity but in all religious forms—for none of them disregard miraculous facts—it may be said that a miracle, apart from its symbolical character, which links it with the object of Faith itself, is able to evoke an intuition that becomes an element of certitude in the soul of the believer. Lastly, if miracles can awaken Faith, Faith can in turn bring about miracles, for "Faith can move mountains". This reciprocal relationship also shows that these two things are connected cosmologically and that there is

one thing for you. My prayers were answered, and I threw far away into the Ganges the piece of gold and the lump of clay." In the same connection, we may quote the following reflections of an Orthodox theologian: "A dogma that expresses a revealed truth, which appears to us an unfathomable mystery, must be lived by us by means of a process whereby, instead of assimilating the mystery to our own mode of understanding, we must on the contrary watch for a profound change, an inward transformation of our spirit, so as to make us fit for the mystical experience" (Vladimir Lossky, *Essai sur la théologie mystique de l'Église d'Orient*).

nothing arbitrary in this connection, for the miracle establishes an immediate contact between the divine Omnipotence and the world, while Faith establishes in its turn an analogous but passive contact between the microcosm and God; mere ratiocination, that is, the discursive operation of the mental faculty, is as far removed from Faith as are natural laws from miracles, while intellectual knowledge will see the miraculous in the natural and vice versa.

As for Charity, which is the most important of the three theological virtues, it possesses two aspects, one passive and the other active. Spiritual Love is a passive participation in God, who is infinite Love; but love is on the contrary active in relation to created things. Love of one's neighbor, insofar as it is a necessary expression of the Love of God, is an indispensable complement to Faith. These two modes of Charity are affirmed by the Gospel teaching regarding the Supreme Law, the first mode implying consciousness of the fact that God alone is Beatitude and Reality, and the second consciousness of the fact that the ego is only illusory, the "me" of others being identified in reality with "myself";[14] if I must love my "neighbor" because he is "me", this implies that I must love myself *a priori*, not being other than my "neighbor"; and if I must love myself, whether in "myself" or in my "neighbor", it is because God loves me and I ought to love what He loves; and if He loves me it is because He loves His creation, or in other words, because Existence itself is Love and Love is as it were the perfume of the Creator inherent in every creature. In the same way that the Love of God, or the Charity that has as its object the divine Perfections and not our own well-being, is Knowledge of the one and only divine Reality, in which the apparent reality of the created is dissolved—a knowledge that implies the identification of the soul with its uncreated Essence,[15] which is yet another aspect of the symbolism of Love—so the love of one's neighbor is basically nothing else than knowledge of the indifferentiation before God of all that is created. Before

14. This realization of the "not-I" explains the important part played in Christian spirituality by humility; a similar part is played in Islamic spirituality by "poverty" (*faqr*) and in Hindu spirituality by "childlikeness" (*bâlya*); the symbolism of childhood in the teaching of Christ will be recalled here.

15. "We are entirely transformed into God," says Meister Eckhart, "and changed into Him. Just as, in the sacrament, the bread is changed into the body of Christ,

passing from the created to the Creator, or from manifestation to the Principle, it is in fact necessary to have realized the indifferentiation, or let us say the "nothingness", of all that is manifested. It is toward this that the ethic of Christ is directed, not only by the indistinction that it establishes between the "me" and the "not me", but also, in the second place, by its indifference with regard to individual justification and social equilibrium. Christianity is thus situated outside the "actions and reactions" of the human order; by primary definition, therefore, it is not exoteric. Christian charity neither has nor can have any interest in "well-being" for its own sake, because true Christianity, like every orthodox religion, considers that the only true happiness human society can enjoy is its spiritual well-being, its flower being the presence of the saint, the goal of every normal civilization; for "the multitude of the wise is the welfare of the world" (Wisd. of Sol. 6:24). One of the truths overlooked by moralists is that when a work of charity is accomplished through love of God, or in virtue of the knowledge that "I" am the "neighbor" and that the "neighbor" is "myself"—a knowledge that implies this love—the work in question has for the neighbor not only the value of an outward benefit, but also that of a benediction. On the other hand, when charity is exercised neither from love of God nor by virtue of the aforesaid knowledge, but solely with a view to human "well-being" considered as an end in itself, the benediction inherent in true charity does not accompany the apparent benefaction, either for the giver or for the receiver.

* * *

As for the monastic orders their presence can be explained only by the existence, in the Western as well as the Eastern Church, of an initiatic tradition going back—as Saint Benedict and the Hesychasts alike testify—to the Desert Fathers and so to the Apostles and to Christ. The fact that the cenobitism of the Latin Church can be traced back to the same origins as that of the Greek Church—the

so am I changed into Him, in such wise that He makes me one with His Being and not simply like to it; by the living God, it is true that there is no longer any distinction."

latter, however, consisting of a single community and not different orders—clearly proves that the first is esoteric in essence like the second; moreover, the eremitical life is considered by both to mark the summit of spiritual perfection—Saint Benedict said so expressly in his Rule—and it may therefore be concluded that the disappearance of the hermits marks the decline of the Christic flowering. Monastic life, far from constituting a self-sufficient way, is described in the Rule of Saint Benedict as a "commencement of religious life", while for "him who hastens his steps towards the perfection of monastic life, there are the teachings of the Holy Fathers, the carrying out of which leads man to the supreme end of religion";[16] now these teachings contain in a doctrinal form the very essence of Hesychasm.

The organ of the spirit, or the principal center of spiritual life, is the heart; here again the Hesychast doctrine is in perfect accord with the teaching of every other initiatic tradition. But what is more important from the standpoint of spiritual realization is the teaching of Hesychasm on the means of perfecting the natural participation of the human microcosm in the divine Metacosm, that is, the transmutation of this participation into supernatural participation and finally into union and identity: this means consists in the "inward prayer" or "Prayer of Jesus". This "prayer" surpasses in principle all the virtues in excellence, for it is a divine act in us and for that reason the best of all possible acts. It is only by means of this prayer that the creature can be really united with his Creator; the goal of this prayer is consequently the supreme spiritual state, in which man transcends everything pertaining to the creature and,

16. We would like to quote the remainder of this passage, which is taken from the last chapter of the book, entitled "That the Practice of Justice is Not Wholly Contained in This Rule": "What page is there of the Old or New Testament, what divinely authorized word therein, that is not a sure rule for the conduct of man? Again, what book of the holy catholic Fathers does not resolutely teach us the right road to attain our Creator? Furthermore, what are the Discourses of the Fathers, their Institutions and their lives (those of the Desert Fathers), and what is the Rule of our holy Father Basil, if not a pattern for monks who live and obey as they ought, and authentic charters of the virtues? For us who are lax, who lead blameful lives and are full of negligence, herein is indeed cause to blush with confusion. Whoever then thou mayest be who pressest forward toward the heavenly homeland, accomplish first, with the help of Christ, this poor outline of a rule that we have traced; then at last, with the protection of God, wilt thou reach those sublimer heights of doctrine and virtue the memory of which we have just evoked."

being directly united with the Divinity, is enlightened by the divine Light. This supreme state is "holy silence", symbolized by the black color given to certain Virgins.[17]

To those who consider "spiritual prayer" a simple and even superfluous practice, the Palamite doctrine replies that this prayer represents on the contrary the most exacting way possible, but that in return it leads to the highest pinnacle of perfection, on condition—and this is essential and reduces to nothing the shallow suspicions of moralists—that the activity of prayer is in harmony with all the rest of one's human activities. In other words, the virtues—or conformity to the divine Law—constitute the essential condition without which spiritual prayer would be ineffective; we are therefore a long way from the naïve illusion of those who imagine that it is possible to attain God by means of merely mechanical practices, without any other commitment or obligation. "Virtue"—so the Palamite teaching maintains—"disposes us for union with God, but Grace accomplishes this inexpressible union." If the virtues are able in this way to play the part of modes of knowledge, it is because they retrace by analogy "divine attitudes"; there is in fact no virtue which does not derive from a divine Prototype, and therein lies their deepest meaning: "to be" is "to know".

Lastly, we must emphasize the fundamental and truly universal significance of the invocation of the divine Name. This Name, in the Christian form—as in the Buddhist form and in certain initiatic branches of the Hindu tradition—is a name of the manifested Word,[18] in this case the Name of "Jesus", which, like every revealed divine Name when ritually pronounced, is mysteriously identified with the Divinity. It is in the divine Name that there takes place the mysterious meeting of the created and the Uncreated, the contingent and the Absolute, the finite and the Infinite. The divine Name is thus a manifestation of the Supreme Principle, or to speak still

17. This "silence" is the exact equivalent of the Hindu and Buddhist *nirvâna* and the Sufic *fanâ*; the "poverty" (*faqr*) in which "union" (*tawhîd*) is achieved refers to the same symbolism. Regarding this real union—or this re-integration of the finite in the Infinite—we may also mention the title of a book by Saint Gregory Palamas: *Witnesses of the Saints: Showing that Those who Participate in Divine Grace Become, Conformably with Grace Itself, without Origin and Infinite*. We may also recall in this connection the following adage of Muslim esoterism: "The Sufi is not created."

18. We are thinking here of the invocation of Amida Buddha and of the formula *Om mani padme hum*, and as regards Hinduism, of the invocation of Rama and Krishna.

more plainly, it is the Supreme Principle manifesting itself; it is not therefore in the first place a manifestation, but the Principle itself.[19] "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come," says the prophet Joel, but "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered,"[20] and we may also recall the beginning of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, addressed to "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord", and the injunction contained in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians to "unceasing prayer", on which Saint John Damascene comments as follows: "We must learn to invoke God's Name more often than we breathe, at all times and everywhere and during all our labors. The Apostle says: 'Pray without ceasing,' which is to say that we must remember God at all times, wherever we are and whatever we are doing."[21] It is not without reason therefore that the Hesychasts consider the invocation of the Name of Jesus as having been bequeathed by Jesus to the Apostles: "It is thus"—according to the *Century* of the Monks Kallistos and Ignatios—"that our merciful and beloved Lord Jesus Christ, at the time when he came to his Passion freely accepted for us, and also at the time when, after his Resurrection, he visibly showed himself to the Apostles, and even at the moment when he

19. Similarly, according to the Christian perspective, Christ is not in the first place man, but God.

20. The Psalms contain a number of references to the invocation of the Name of God: "I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and He heard me out of His holy hill." "Then called I upon the Name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul." "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth." Two passages also contain a reference to the Eucharistic mode of invocation: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." So also Isaiah: "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near." And so Solomon in the Book of Wisdom: "I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me."

21. In this commentary by Saint John Damascene, the words "invoke" and "remember" are used to describe or illustrate the same idea; it will be recalled that the Arabic word *dhikr* signifies both "invocation" and "remembrance"; in Buddhism also "to think of Buddha" and "to invoke *Buddha*" are expressed by one and the same word (*buddhânusmriti*; the Chinese *nien-fo* and the Japanese *nembutsu*). On the other hand, it is worth noting that the Hesychasts and the Dervishes use the same word to describe invocation: the recitation of the "prayer of Jesus" is called by the

was about to re-ascend to the Father . . . bequeathed these three things to his disciples (the invocation of his Name, Peace, and Love, which respectively correspond to faith, hope, and charity). . . . The beginning of all activity of the divine Love is the confident invocation of the saving Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, as he himself said (John 15:5): 'Without me ye can do nothing.' By the confident invocation of the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we steadfastly hope to obtain his Mercy and the true Life hidden in him. It is like unto another divine Wellspring, which is never exhausted (John 4:14) and which yields up these gifts when the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ is invoked, without imperfection, in the heart." We may also quote the following passage from an Epistle (*Epistula ad Monachos*) of Saint John Chrysostom: "I have heard the Fathers say: Who is this monk who forsakes and belittles the rule? He should, when eating and drinking, when seated or serving others, when walking or indeed when doing anything whatsoever, invoke unceasingly: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.'[22]

Hesychasts "work", while the Dervishes name every form of invocation "occupation" or "business" (*shughl*).

22. This formula is often contracted to the Name of Jesus alone, particularly by those who are more advanced in the way. "The most important means in the life of prayer is the *Name of God*, invoked in prayer. Ascetics and all who lead a life of prayer, from the anchorites of the Egyptian desert to the Hesychasts of Mount Athos . . . insist above all on the importance of the Name of God. Apart from the Offices there exists for all the Orthodox a rule of prayer, composed of psalms and different orisons; for the monks it is much more considerable. But the most important thing in prayer, the thing that constitutes its very heart, is what is named the Prayer of Jesus: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' The repetition of this prayer hundreds of times, and even indefinitely, is the essential element of every monastic rule of prayer; it can, if necessary, replace the Offices and all the other prayers, since its value is universal. The power of the prayer does not reside in its content, which is simple and clear (it is the prayer of the tax-collector), but in the sweet Name of Jesus. The ascetics bear witness that this Name contains the force of the presence of God. Not only is God invoked by this Name; He is already present in the invocation. This can certainly be said of every Name of God; but it is true above all of the divine and human Name of Jesus, which is the proper Name of God and of man. In short, the Name of Jesus present in the human heart communicates to it the force of the deification accorded to us by the Redeemer" (S. Bulgakov, *L'Orthodoxie*). "The Name of Jesus", says Saint Bernard, "is not only light; it is also nourishment. All food is too dry to be assimilated by the soul if it is not first flavored by this condiment; it is too insipid unless this salt relieves its tastelessness. I have no taste for thy writings if I cannot read this Name

Persevere unceasingly in the Name of our Lord Jesus that thy heart may drink the Lord and the Lord may drink thy heart, to the end that in this manner the two may become One."

The Particular Nature and Universality of the Christian Tradition
by Frithjof Schuon

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there; no taste for thy discourse if I do not hear it resounding therein. It is honey for my mouth, melody for my ears, joy for my heart, but it is also a medicine. Does any one among you feel overcome with sadness? Let him then taste Jesus in his mouth and heart, and behold how before the light of his Name all clouds vanish and the sky again becomes serene. Has one among you allowed himself to be led into a fault, and is he experiencing the temptation of despair? Let him invoke the Name of Life, and Life will restore him" (*Sermon 15 on the Song of Songs*).