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CHAPTER 7

Christian Gnosis

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Christianity is that "God made Himself what we are, in order to make us what He is" (St. Irenaeus); it is that Heaven became earth, so that earth might become Heaven.

Christ retraces in the outward and historical world what has taken place, from the beginning of time, in the inward world of the soul. In man, the Pure Spirit becomes *ego*, in order that the *ego* may become Pure Spirit; the Spirit or Intellect (*Intellectus*, not *mens* or *ratio*) becomes *ego* by incarnating Itself in the mind in the form of intellection, or truth, and the *ego* becomes Spirit or Intellect by uniting with it.

Christianity is thus a doctrine of union, or the doctrine of union: the Principle unites with manifestation, so that manifestation can unite with the Principle; whence the symbolism of love and the predominance of the "bhaktic" way. God became man "because of His immense love" (St. Irenaeus), and man must unite with God also by "love," whatever be the meaning—volitive, emotive, or intellective—that one may give to this term. "God is Love": God—as Trinity—is Union, and desires Union.

Now, what is the content of the Spirit, or in other words, what is the message of Christ? For that which is the message of Christ is also, in our microcosm, the eternal content of the Intellect. This message or content is: love God with all thy faculties and, in function of this love, love thy neighbor as thyself; that is: unite—because "to love" means essentially "to unite"—with the Intellect and, in function of (and as a condition of) this union, abandon all egocentrism and discern the Intellect, the Spirit, the Divine Self, in all things. "Whatsoever ye have done unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

This message—or this innate truth—of the Spirit prefigures the cross, because here there are two dimensions, one "vertical" and the other "horizontal," namely love of God and love of one's neighbor, or Union with the Spirit and union with one's ambience, envisaged as a manifestation of the Spirit. From a somewhat different point of view, these two dimensions are represented respectively by Knowledge and

Love: one "knows" God and one "loves" one's neighbor, or again: one loves God by knowing Him, and one knows one's neighbor by loving him.

But the deepest meaning of Christ's message, or of the truth connatural with the Intellect, is that manifestation is not other than the Principle; this is the message of the Principle to manifestation.

In practice, the whole question is to know how to unite with the *Logos* or the Intellect. The central means is "prayer," the quintessence of which is objectively the Name of God and subjectively concentration, whence the obligation to invoke God with fervor. But this "prayer," this union of our whole being with its principle or divine source, would remain illusory without a certain union with our totality, our universal "neighbor," of which we are, as it were, a fragment; the scission between man and God cannot be abolished without the scission between "me" and "the other" being abolished also; we cannot recognize that God is within us, without seeing that He is in others, and in what manner He is in them. Manifestation must unite with the Principle, and—on the plane of manifestation and in function of this "vertical" union—the part must unite with the whole.

Inwardly, if we wish to understand that the intelligent soul is "essentially"—not in its accidentality—Intellect or Spirit, we must also understand that the *ego*, including the body, is "essentially" a manifestation of the Intellect or the Self. If we wish to understand that "the world is false, *Brahma* is true," we must also understand that "all things are *Ātmā*." This is the deepest meaning of love of one's neighbor.

The sufferings of Christ are the sufferings of the Intellect in the midst of passions. The crown of thorns is individualism, or "pride"; the cross is the forgetting or rejection of the Spirit and, along with it, Truth. The Virgin is the soul in submission to the Spirit and united with it.

The very form of Christ's teaching is explained by the fact that Christ addressed his message to all men, from the first to the last; he therefore could not give his message a mode of expression which would be unintelligible to some intelligences, and ineffective or even harmful for them. Shankara could teach pure gnosis because he did not address all, and he could refrain from addressing all because the Hindu tradition already existed and included *a priori* spiritual ways adapted to modest intelligences and passional temperaments. But Christ, as the founder of a spiritual and social universe, had of necessity to address all.

If it is wrong to reproach Christ for not having explicitly taught pure gnosis—which in fact he did teach by his very coming, and by his person, his gestures and his miracles—it is equally wrong to deny the gnostic meaning of his message, and thus to deny to intellective contemplatives—who are centered on metaphysical truth and pure contemplation, or on pure and direct Intelligence—any right to existence, and to offer them no spiritual way in conformity with their nature and vocation. This is contrary to the parable of the talents, and to the saying that "in my Father's house are many mansions."

The whole of Christianity is expressed in the Trinitarian doctrine, and this essentially represents a perspective of union; it already envisages union *in divinis*: God prefigures in His very nature the relationships between Himself and the world, relationships which are "external" only in illusory mode.

"The Light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not": the truth of these words has been manifested—and is still manifested—within Christianity, by the misunderstanding and rejection of gnosis. And this explains in part the destiny of the Western world.

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