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The Question of Protestantism

Christianity is divided into three great denominations: Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Protestantism, not to mention the Copts and other ancient groups close to Orthodoxy. This classification may surprise some of our regular readers since it seems to place Protestantism on the same level as the ancient Churches; what we have in mind here, however, is not liberal Protestantism or just any sect but Lutheranism, which incontestably manifests a Christian possibility—a limited one, no doubt, and excessive through certain of its features, but not intrinsically illegitimate and therefore representative of certain theological, moral, and even mystical values. If Evangelicalism—to use the term favored by Luther—were located in a world such as that of Hinduism, it would appear as a possible way and would no doubt be considered a secondary *darshana* among others; in Buddhism it would be no more heterodox than Amidism or the school of Nichiren, both of which, however, are quite independent with regard to the main tradition surrounding them.

To grasp our point of view, it is necessary to understand that religions are determined by archetypes, which are so many spiritual possibilities: on the one hand every religion *a priori* manifests an archetype, but on the other hand any archetype can manifest itself *a posteriori* within every religion. Thus Shiism, for example, is obviously not the result of a Christian influence but is instead a manifestation within Islam of the religious possibility—or the spiritual archetype—that affirmed itself in a direct and plenary fashion in Christianity; and this same possibility gave rise to Amidist mysticism within Buddhism, though in a way that accentuates another dimension of the archetype, namely, as a cosmic prodigy of Mercy—a prodigy requiring and at the same time conferring the quasi-charism of saving Faith; in the case of Shiism, on the other hand, the accent is upon the Superman, who opens Heaven to earth. It could be said in a similar way that the Germanic soul—treated by Rome in too Latin a manner, though this is another question—which is neither Greek nor Roman, felt the need of a simpler and more inward religious archetype, one less formalistic and therefore more "popular" in the best sense of the word; this in certain respects is the archetype of Islam, a religion based on a Book and conferring priesthood upon every believer. At the same time and

from another point of view, the Germanic soul had a nostalgia for a perspective that integrates the natural into the supernatural, that is, a perspective tending toward God without being against nature, a piety that is not monastic but accessible to every man of good will in the midst of earthly preoccupations, a way founded upon Grace and trust, not upon Justice and works; and this way incontestably has its premises in the Gospel itself.

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Here it is once again appropriate—for we have done so on other occasions—to clarify the difference between a heresy that is extrinsic, hence relative to a given orthodoxy, and another that is intrinsic, hence false in itself as well as with regard to all orthodoxy or to truth as such. To simplify the matter we could limit ourselves to pointing out that the first kind of heresy manifests a spiritual archetype—in a limited manner, no doubt, but nonetheless efficaciously—whereas the second is merely a human contrivance and therefore based solely on man's own productions;[1] and this settles the entire issue. To claim that a "pious" spiritualist is assured of salvation is meaningless, for in total heresies there is no element that can guarantee posthumous beatitude, even though—apart from all question of belief—a man can always be saved for reasons that elude us; but he is certainly not saved by his heresy.

On the subject of Arianism, which was an especially pervasive heresy, the following remark ought to be made: Arianism is unquestionably heterodox in that it takes Jesus to be a mere creature; this idea can have a meaning in the perspective of Islam, but it is incompatible with Christianity. Nonetheless, the lightning-like expansion of Arianism shows that it satisfied a spiritual need—a need corresponding to the archetype of which Islam is the most characteristic manifestation—and it is precisely to this need or expectation that Protestantism finally responded,[2] not by humanizing Christ, of course,

[1] Such as Mormonism, Bahaism, the Ahmadism of Kadyan, and all the "new religions" and other pseudo-spiritualities that proliferate in the world today.

[2] Arius of Alexandria was not a German, but his doctrine fulfilled a certain desire of

but in simplifying the religion and Germanizing it in a certain fashion. Another well-known heresy was Nestorianism, which rigorously separated the two natures of Christ, the divine and the human, and in this way saw in Mary the mother of Christ but not of God; this perspective corresponds to a possible theological point of view, and it is thus a question of an extrinsic, not a total, heresy.

Strictly speaking, all religious exoterism is an extrinsic heresy, clearly so in relation to other religions, but above all in relation to the *sophia perennis*; it is precisely this perennial wisdom that constitutes an esoterism when combined with a religious symbolism. An extrinsic heresy is a partial or relative truth—in its formal articulation—that presents itself as complete or absolute, whether it is a question of religions or, within these, of denominations; but the starting point is always a truth, hence also a spiritual archetype. An intrinsic heresy is entirely different: its starting point is either an objective error or a subjective illusion; in the first case the heresy lies more in the doctrine, and in the second it is *a priori* in the pretension of a false prophet; but it goes without saying that both can be combined and indeed are necessarily so in the second case. Even though no error is possible without a particle of truth, intrinsic heresy can have neither doctrinal nor methodic value, and it is impossible to justify it in relation to some extenuating circumstance, precisely because it projects no celestial model.

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It is not difficult to argue—against the Reformation—that the traditional authorities and Councils, by definition inspired by the Holy Spirit, could not have been mistaken; this is true, but it does not exclude paradoxes that mitigate an otherwise virtually self-evident claim. First of all—and this is what gave wings to the Reformers, starting with Wycliffe and Huss—Christ himself repudiated many "traditional" elements supported by the "authorities" in calling them "commandments of men"; furthermore, the excesses of "papism" at

the German mentality, whence its success with Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Vandals, Burgundians, and Langobards.

the time of Luther and well before prove at the very least that the papacy contains certain excesses, which the Byzantine Church is the first to note and stigmatize, if not that the papacy in itself is illegitimate. What we mean is that the Pope, instead of being *primus inter pares* as Saint Peter had been, has the exorbitant privilege of being at once prophet and emperor: as prophet he places himself above the Councils, and as emperor he possesses a temporal power surpassing that of all the princes, including the emperor himself; and it is precisely these unheard-of prerogatives that permitted the entry of modernism into the Church in our time, in the fashion of a Trojan horse and despite the warnings of preceding Popes; that Popes may personally have been saints does not at all weaken the valid arguments of the Eastern Church. In a word, if the Western Church had been such as to avoid casting the Eastern Church into the "outer darkness"—and with what a manifestation of barbarism!—it would not have had to undergo the counterblow of the Reformation.

Be that as it may, to say that the Roman Church is intrinsically orthodox and integrally traditional does not mean that it conveys all the aspects of the world of the Gospel in a direct, compelling, and exhaustive manner, even though it necessarily contains them and manifests them occasionally or sporadically; for the world of the Gospel was Oriental and Semitic and immersed in a climate of holy poverty, whereas the world of Catholicism is European, Roman, and imperial, which means that the religion was Romanized inasmuch as the characteristic traits of the Roman mentality determined its formal elaboration. Suffice it to mention in this regard its legalism and its administrative and even military spirit; these traits can be seen, among other places, in the disproportionate complication of rubrics, the prolixity of the missal, the dispersing complexity of the sacramental economy, and the pedantic manipulation of indulgences, as well as in a certain administrative centralization, indeed militarization, of monastic spirituality; nor is this to forget, on the level of forms—which is far from negligible—the Titanic paganism of the Renaissance and the nightmare of Baroque art. The following remark could also be made, again from the point of view of formal outwardness: in the Catholic world the difference between religious and secular dress is often abrupt to the point of incompatibility, and this was already the case even by the end of the Middle Ages; when the essentially worldly and vain, even erotic, trappings of the princes are compared to the

majestic garments of the priests, it is difficult to believe that the first, like the second, are Christians, whereas in Oriental civilizations the style of dress is in general homogeneous. In Islam there is no dividing line between religious personages and the rest of society; there is no lay society opposed at the level of appearances to a priestly one. This being said, let us close this parenthesis, the point of which was simply to show that the Catholic world presents certain traits—on its surface as well as in its depths—which certainly do not express the climate of the Gospels.[3]

Too often people have argued that it is sacred institutions that count and not the human accidents that disfigure them; this is obvious, and yet the very degree of this disfiguration indicates that some of the imperfection was due to a certain human zeal within the institutions themselves; Dante and Savonarola saw this clearly in their own way, and the very phenomenon of the Renaissance proves it. If we are told that the papacy—such as it was throughout the centuries—represents the only possible solution for the West, we readily agree, but the risks this unavoidable adaptation so unavoidably included should therefore have been foreseen, and everything should have been done to diminish, not increase, them; if a strongly marked hierarchy was indispensable, the priestly aspect of every Christian should have been insisted upon all the more.

Be that as it may, what permitted Luther to separate from Rome[4] was his awareness of the principle of "orthodox decadence", that is,

[3] For someone like Joseph de Maistre, whose intelligence otherwise had great merits, the Reformers could not be other than "nobodies", who dared to set their personal opinions against the traditional and unanimous certitudes of the Catholic Church; he was far from suspecting that these "nobodies" spoke under the pressure of an archetypal perspective, which as such could not help but reveal itself in appropriate circumstances. The same author accused Protestantism of having done an immense evil in breaking up Christianity, but he readily loses sight of the fact that Catholicism did as much in rashly excommunicating all the Patriarchs of the East; and this is without forgetting the Renaissance, whose evil was—to say the least—just as "immense" as that of the political and other effects of the Reformation.

[4] He separated from the Roman Church only after his condemnation, by burning the bull of excommunication; one should not lose sight of the fact that at the time of the Reformation there was no unanimity on the question of the Pope and the Councils, and even the question of the divine origin of papal authority was not free from all controversy.

the possibility of decadence within the immutable framework of a traditional orthodoxy, an awareness inspired by the example of the scribes and Pharisees in the Gospel with their "commandments of men"; objectively, these are the specifications, developments, elaborations, clarifications, and stylizations that may be required by a given temperament though not by another.[5] Another association of ideas that was useful to Luther and to Protestantism in general is the Augustinian opposition between a *civitas Dei* and a *civitas terrena* or *diaboli*: in witnessing the disorders of the Roman Church, he was easily led to identify Rome with the "earthly city" of Saint Augustine. There is also a fundamental tendency in the Gospel that responds with particular force to the needs of the Germanic soul: namely, a tendency toward simplicity and inwardness, hence away from theological and liturgical complication, formalism, dispersion of worship, and the too often comfortable tyranny of the clergy. On the other hand the Germans were sensitive to the nobly and robustly popular appeal of the Bible; this has no relationship with democracy, for Luther was a supporter of a theocratic regime upheld by the emperor and the princes.

Without question, the perspective of Protestantism is typically Pauline; it is founded on what might be called the Gnostic dualism of the following elements: flesh and spirit, death and life, servitude and freedom, Law and Grace, justice through works and justice through faith, Adam and Christ. On the other hand Protestantism is founded, like Christianity as such, on the Pauline idea that the universality of salvation answers to the universality of sin or of the state of the sinner; only the redemptive death of Christ could deliver man from this curse; through the Redemption Christ became the luminous head of all humanity. But the typically Pauline accentuation of this Message is the doctrine of justification through faith, which Luther made the pivot of the religion, or more precisely of his mysticism.

[5] Hinduism—without mentioning the Mediterranean paganisms—furnishes another example of this kind, with the heavy and endless pedantry of the Brahmans, which it was not too difficult to escape, however, given the plasticity of the Hindu spirit and the suppleness of its corresponding institutions.

After the failure of Wycliffe and Huss—the tendencies of whose doctrine, if not the doctrine itself, it would have been good to retain—the Popes contributed to the Lutheran explosion by their impenitence;[6] after the failure—within the very framework of Catholic orthodoxy—of Dante, Savonarola, and other admonishers, Luther caused the Catholic renovation by his virulence; Providence willed both outcomes, the Protestant Church as well as the Tridentine Church. After the Council of Trent, the ideal situation would have been for Catholicism to assimilate the essence of Protestantism without disavowing itself, just as Protestantism should have rediscovered the essence of the Catholic reality; instead both parties hardened in their respective positions, and in fact it could not have been otherwise, if only for the same reason that there are different religions; for it is necessary that spiritual perspectives be entirely themselves before being modified, all the more so in that their over-accentuation responds to racial or ethnic needs.[7]

Each denomination expresses the Gospel in a certain manner; now this expression seems to us to be the most direct, the most ample, and the most realistic in the Orthodox Church, and this can already be seen in its outward forms, whereas the Catholic Church offers an image that is more Roman and less Oriental, and in a certain sense even more worldly since the Renaissance and the Baroque epoch, as we have pointed out above. Latin "civilizationism" has nothing to do with the world and spirit of the Gospel; in the final analysis, however, the Roman West is Christian, and therefore Christianity has the right to be Roman. As for the Protestant Church, the question of its forms of worship does not arise since in this respect it participates in Catholic culture, though it introduces into this culture a principle

[6] This is something Cardinal Newman and others have acknowledged from within the Catholic camp.

[7] In saying this we do not lose sight of the fact that the Germans of the South—the Allamanis (the Germans of Baden, the Alsatians, the German Swiss, the Swabians) and the Bavarians (including the Austrians)—have a rather different temperament from that of the Germans of the North and that everywhere there are mixtures; racial and ethnic frontiers in Europe are in any case somewhat fluctuating. We do not say every German is made for Lutheran Protestantism, for Germanic tendencies can obviously appear within Catholicism, just as conversely Protestant Calvinism expresses above all a Latin possibility.

of somewhat iconoclastic sobriety, while having the advantage of not accepting the Renaissance and its prolongations; what this means is that Protestantism retained the forms of the Middle Ages, artistically speaking and according to the intention of Luther, while at the same time simplifying them, and thus it escaped the unspeakable aberration of Baroque art. From the spiritual point of view Protestantism retains a spirit of simplicity and inwardness from the Gospel while accentuating the mystery of faith, and it presents these aspects with a vigor whose moral and mystical value cannot be denied; this accentuation was necessary in the West, and since Rome would not take it upon itself, it is Wittenberg that did so.

In connection with Protestant quasi-iconoclasm, we would point out that Saint Bernard also wished that chapels be empty, bare, and sober—in short, that "sensible consolations" be reduced to a minimum; but he wished this for monasteries and not cathedrals; in this case the sense of the sacred was concentrated on the essential element of the rites. We meet with this perspective in Zen as well as Islam, and above all we meet with it repeatedly in Christ, so much so that it would be unjust to deny any precedent in the Scriptures for the Lutheran attitude; Christ wanted one to worship God "in spirit and in truth" and to pray without using "vain repetitions, as the heathen do"; it is an emphasis on faith, with sincerity and intensity being preeminent.

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The celibacy of priests, which was imposed by Gregory VII after a thousand years of the contrary practice—the ancient practice being maintained to this day in the Eastern Church—presents several serious drawbacks. In the first place, it needlessly repeats the celibacy of monks and separates priests more radically from lay society, which in this way becomes all the more laic; in other words this measure reinforces a feeling of dependence and lower moral value in the laity, marriage being in practice belittled by yet another ukase. Furthermore, when celibacy is imposed upon an enormous number of priests—for society has all the more need of priests as it grows increasingly numerous, and Christianity embraces all the West—it inevitably creates moral disorders and contributes to a loosening of morals, whereas it would have

been better to have good married priests than bad celibate priests; the only alternative is to reduce the number of priests, which is impossible since society is large and needs them. Finally, the celibacy of the clergy is an obstacle to the procreation of men of religious vocation and thus impoverishes society; if only men without a religious vocation have children, society will become more and more worldly and "horizontal" and less and less spiritual and "vertical".

Be that as it may, Luther in turn lacked realism: he was astonished that during his absence from Wittenberg—this was the year of Wartburg—the promoters of the Reformation gave themselves up to all kinds of excesses; at the end of his life he even went so far as to regret that the mediocre masses had not remained under the rod of the Pope. Not much concerned with collective psychology, he believed the simple principle of piety could replace the material supports that contribute so powerfully to regulate the behavior of the crowds; it not only keeps this behavior in equilibrium in space but stabilizes it in time. In his mystical subjectivism he did not realize that a religion needs symbolism in order to survive, that the inward cannot live within a collective consciousness without outward signs;[8] but as a prophet of inwardness he scarcely had a choice.

The Latin West has too often lacked realism and moderation, whereas the Greek Church, like the East in general, has better understood how to reconcile the demands of spiritual idealism with those of the everyday human world. Adopting a particular point of view, we would like to make the following remark: it is very unlikely that Christ, who washed the feet of his disciples and taught them that the "first shall be last", would have appreciated the imperial pomp of the Vatican court: the kissing of the foot, the triple crown, the *flabella*, the *sedia gestatoria;* on the other hand there is no reason to think he would have disapproved of the ceremonies surrounding an Orthodox Patriarch, these being of a priestly and not imperial style; he would no doubt have disapproved of the cardinalate, which further raises the princely throne of the Pope and constitutes a dignity that is not sacerdotal and is more worldly than religious.[9]

[8] This, let it be said in passing, is what is forgotten even by most of the impeccable *guru*s of contemporary India, beginning with Ramakrishna.

[9] "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are breth-

We have spoken above of the celibacy of priests imposed by Gregory VII, and we must add a word concerning the Evangelical counsels and monastic vows. When one reads in the Gospel, "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold," one immediately thinks of monks and nuns; now Luther thought it was solely a question of persecutions, in the sense of this saying from the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven";[10] and he is all the more sure of his interpretation in that there were neither anchorites nor monks before the fourth century.

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Viewed in its totality, Protestantism has something ambiguous about it: on the one hand it is inspired sincerely and concretely by the Bible, but on the other hand it is bound up with humanism and the Renaissance. Luther incarnates the first aspect: his perspective is medieval and so to speak retrospective, and it gives rise to a conservative and at times esoterizing pietism. In Calvin, on the contrary, the tendencies of humanism, hence of the Renaissance, mingle with the movement rather strongly, if indeed they do not determine it; no doubt he is greatly inspired in his doctrine by Luther and the Swiss Reformers, but he is a republican in his own way—on a theocratic basis, of course—and not a monarchist like the German Reformer; and it can be said on the whole that in a certain manner he was more opposed to Catholicism than Luther was.[11]

ren." "Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ" (Matthew 23:8, 10).

[10] He says so in a marginal note of his translation: "Whosoever believes must suffer persecution and risk all" (*alles dran setzen*). And he repeats it in his hymn *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*: "Even if they [the persecutors] take body, goods, honor, child, and wife, let them go (*lass fahren dahin*); they shall receive no benefit; the Kingdom [of God] shall be ours" (*das Reich muss uns doch bleiben*).

[11] As for Protestant liberalism, Luther eventually foresaw its abuses, and he would in any case be horrified to see this liberalism as it appears in our time—he who could

The fundamental ideas of the Reformation had already been "in the air" for some time, but it is Luther who lived them and made of them a personal drama. His Protestantism—like other particular perspectives contained within a general perspective—is an over-accentuated partitioning, but one that is nonetheless sufficient and efficacious, hence "nonillegitimate".[12]

One cannot study the question of Protestantism without taking into consideration the powerful personality of its real, or at least its most notable, founder. First of all, and this follows from what we have just said, there are no grounds for asserting that Luther was a modernist ahead of his time, for he was in no way worldly and sought to please no one; his innovations were assuredly of the most audacious kind, to say the least, but they were Christian and nothing else; they owed nothing to any philosophy or scientism.[13] He did not reject Rome because it was too spiritual, but on the contrary because it seemed to him too worldly—too "after the flesh" and not "after the Spirit", from his particular point of view.

The mystic of Wittenberg[14] was a German semiticized by Christianity, and he was representative in both respects: fundamentally German, he loved what is sincere and inward, not clever and formalistic; Semitic in spirit, he admitted only Revelation and faith and did not wish to hear of Aristotle or the Scholastics.[15] On the one hand

bear neither self-sufficient mediocrity nor iconoclastic fanaticism.

[12] Evangelical Protestantism, properly so called, which is at the antipodes from liberal Protestantism, was perpetuated in pietism, whose father was de Labadie, a mystic converted to the Reformation in the seventeenth century, and whose most notable representatives were no doubt Spener and Tersteegen; this pietism, or piety, always exists in various places in either a diminished or a quite honorable form.

[13] As is the case on the contrary with Catholic modernism. The fact that this modernism is open not only to Protestantism but also to Islam and other religions gets us nowhere since this same modernism is just as open to no matter what—to everything except Tradition.

[14] For he was a mystic rather than a theologian, which explains many things.

[15] It might be objected that the Semites adopted the Greek philosophers, but this is not the question, for the adoption was varied and unequal, not to mention undertaken with numerous hesitations. And in any case Luther—a cultivated man—was also a logician and could not be otherwise; in certain respects he was Latinized of necessity—as was an Albert the Great or an Eckhart—but this was only on the surface.

there was something robust and powerful (*gewaltig*) in his nature, with a complement of poetry and gentleness (*Innigkeit*); on the other hand he was a voluntarist and an individualist, who expected nothing from either intellectuality or metaphysics. No doubt his impetuous genius was capable of being crude—to say the least—but he lacked neither patience nor generosity; he could be vehement but no more so than a Saint Jerome or other saints who reviled their adversaries, "devoured" as they were by "zeal for the house of the Lord"; and no one can deny that they found precedents for this in both Testaments.[16]

The message of Luther is expressed essentially in two legacies, which attest to the personality of the author and to which it is impossible to deny grandeur and efficaciousness: the German Bible and the hymns. His translation of the Scriptures, while conditioned in certain places by his doctrinal perspective, is a jewel of both language and piety; as for the hymns—most of which are not from his hand, although he composed their models and thus gave the impulse to all this flowering—they became a fundamental element of worship, and they were a powerful factor in the expansion of Protestantism.[17] The Catholic Church itself could not resist this magic; it ended by adopting several Lutheran hymns that had become so popular they seemed as essential as the air one breathes. In summary, the whole personality of Luther is in his translation of the Psalms and in his famous hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" (*Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*), which became the "war song" (*Trutzlied*) of Protestantism and whose qualities of power and grandeur cannot be denied. But more gently, this personality is also seen in his commentary on the *Magnificat*, which attests to an inner devotion to the Holy Virgin, whom Luther never rejected; having read this commentary without knowing its author, Pope Leo X remarked, "Blessed be the hands that wrote this!" Clearly

[16] When the Reformer calls the "papist mass" an "abomination", we are made to think of the bonze Nichiren, who claimed that it sufficed to invoke Amida only once to fall into Hell, not to mention the Buddha, who rejected the *Veda*, the castes, and the gods.

[17] Among composers of hymns, there were notably the pastor Johann Valentin Andrea, author of the "Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz", and later Paul Gerhardt, Tersteegen, and Novalis, whose hymns are among the jewels of German poetry; and let us add that the religious music of Bach testifies to the same spirit of powerful piety.

the German Reformer was not able to maintain public devotion to the Virgin, but this was because of the general reaction against the dispersion of religious sentiment, hence in favor of worship concentrated on Christ alone, which had to become absolute and therefore exclusive, as is the worship of Allah for Muslims. And in any case Scripture treats the Virgin with a somewhat surprising parsimony—a fact that played a certain role here—though there are also the crucial, and doctrinally inexhaustible, declarations that Mary is "full of grace" and that "all generations shall call me blessed".[18]

The German Reformer was a mystic in the sense that his way was purely experimental and not conceptual; the pertinent demonstrations of a Staupitz were of no help to him. To discover the efficacy of Mercy he needed first the "event of the tower": having meditated in vain on the "Justice" of God, he had the grace of understanding in a flash that this Justice is merciful and that it liberates us in and by faith.

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The great themes of Luther are Scripture, Christ, the Inward, Faith; the first two elements belong to the divine side and the second two to the human side. By emphasizing Scripture—at the expense of Tradition—Protestantism is close to Islam, where the Koran is everything; by emphasizing Christ—at the expense of the Pope, hierarchy, clergy—Protestantism recalls devotional Buddhism, which places everything in the hands of Amitabha; the liturgical and ritual expression of this Christic primacy is Communion, which is as real and as important for Luther as it is for Catholics. The Lutheran tendency toward the "inward", the "heart" if one will, is incontestably founded on the perspective of Christ, as is the emphasis on faith, which moreover evokes—we repeat—Amidist mysticism as well as Muslim piety. We would not dream of making these seemingly needless comparisons if they did not serve to illustrate the principle of the archetypes we mentioned above, which is of crucial importance.

[18] As Dante said: "Lady, thou art so great and possesseth such power that whosoever desireth grace and has not recourse to thee, it is as if his desire wished to fly without wings" (*Paradiso*, 33:13-15).

As for Christ made tangible in Communion, it is not true that Luther reduced the Eucharistic rite to a simple ceremony of remembrance, as did his adversary Zwingli;[19] on the contrary he admitted the Real Presence, but neither transubstantiation—which the Greeks also do not accept as such, although they ended up accepting the word—nor the bloodless renewal of the historical sacrifice; nonetheless these sacramental realities as perceived by Catholics are implied—objectively though not subjectively—in the Lutheran definition of the Eucharist, so much so that this definition could be said to be acceptable even from the Catholic point of view, provided one is conscious of the implication. For Catholics this implication constitutes the very definition of the mystery, which is perhaps disproportionate if one takes into account the somewhat dispersing and "casual" usage Catholicism makes of its Mass;[20] certain psychological facts—human nature being what it is—would no doubt have required the mystery to be presented in a more veiled fashion and handled with more discretion. Lutheran Communion is certainly not the equivalent of Catholic Communion, but we have reasons for believing—given its overall context—that it nonetheless communicates the graces Luther expected of it to a sufficient degree;[21] this assumes that the intention of the ritual change was fundamentally Christian and free from all ulterior motives of a rationalist, let alone political, kind—as was in fact the case.

If Lutheran Communion is not the equivalent of Catholic Communion, it is because its spiritual virtualities are not as extensive; but this is as it should be, for these initiatic virtualities are in fact too lofty

[19] Whose thesis has been retained by liberal Protestantism; Calvin attempted to restore more or less the position of Luther. The idea of a commemorative rite pure and simple is intrinsically heretical, since "to do in memory of" is meaningless from the standpoint of sacramental efficacy.

[20] For one must not "cast pearls before swine" nor "give what is holy unto the dogs". For the Orthodox the Mass is the center and has priests at its disposal, whereas it could be said that for Catholics it is in practice the priest who is the center and who has Masses at his disposal.

[21] With perhaps certain reservations that are difficult to specify, the same could be said for Calvinist and Anglican Communions, but not for those of the Zwinglians or liberal Protestants, nor again—and at first sight this will seem quite paradoxical—for the "conciliar" or "post-conciliar" masses, which are not covered by a valid archetype and which, with their ambiguous intentions, are merely the result of human arbitrariness.

for the average man, and to impose them on him is to expose him to sacrilege. From another point of view, if the Mass were always equal to the historic Sacrifice of Christ, it would become a sacrilege because of its profanation by the more or less trivial manner of its usage: hurried low Masses, Masses attributed to this or that, including the most contingent and profane occasions. No doubt the Mass coincides potentially with the event of Golgotha, and this potentiality or virtuality can always give rise to an effective coincidence;[22] but if the Mass itself had the character of its bloody prototype, at each Mass the earth would tremble and be covered by darkness.

One of the most absurd arguments with which Zwingli, Karlstadt, Oekolampad, and others opposed both the Catholic Church and Luther was the following: if the bread is really the body of Christ, do we not eat human flesh when communing?[23] To this there are four responses. First, Christ said what he said, and one must take it or leave it; there is nothing to change in it, unless one wishes to leave the Christian religion. Second, Christ in fact offers neither flesh nor blood, but bread and wine, so why the complaint? Third, the crucial point is the question of knowing what is signified by this body that one must eat and by this blood that one must drink; now this meaning or content is the remission of sins, Redemption, the restitution of man's glorious nature, innocence at once primordial and celestial; man eats and drinks what he must become because this is what he is in his immortal essence; and to eat is to become united. Fourth, the fact that bread is not flesh and that wine is not blood can be seen without difficulty; why then ask in what manner bread is the body and wine is the blood? This does not concern us and has no interest for us; it is God's concern. What alone is important for us is the transforming and deifying power of the sacrament—its capacity to grant us salvific impeccability, that of Christ.[24]

[22] And this is independent of the intrinsic efficacy of the sacrament, though this efficacy is realized only in proportion to the holiness, hence receptivity, of the communicant.

[23] This argument is supposed to allow us to conclude that the bread "signifies"—hence "is not"— the body of Christ; the weakness of the argument is at the level of its intention.

[24] In the mysteries of Eleusis, too, bread and wine were used "eucharistically" and

The Lutheran doctrine is founded mainly on the anthropological pessimism and predestinationism of Saint Augustine: man is fundamentally a sinner, and he is totally determined by the Will of God.

What then does Saint Augustine mean by the idea that man is irremediably a sinner—that he is powerless as long as he is left to rely on his own strength? It means that the "fall" has the effect of destroying the equilibrium between the inward and outward, the vertical or ascending and the horizontal or earthly; that the exteriorizing and worldly tendencies prevail over the interiorizing and spiritual tendencies; and that when left to itself the horizontal tendency leads *ipso facto* to the descending tendency. Now works are not enough to rectify the situation; faith alone can accomplish this marvel, which does not mean that faith can suffice without works—that it can be perfectly itself in their absence.

As in Amidism, the first condition of salvation—according to Luther—is an awareness of abysmal and invincible sin, hence of the impossibility of vanquishing sin by our own strength. Man is practically the same thing as sin for Luther, as is the case for Christianity in general;[25] on God's side there is Grace—which Luther identifies with the "Justice" of a redeeming God—and between these two extremes there is faith, where the sinner and Grace meet. In a lecture on the Epistle to the Romans, Luther declares that Christ "made his Justice mine, and my sin his", and he adds: "For him who throws himself body and soul into God's Will it is impossible to remain outside of God." Likewise, in speaking about Justice he says that "faith raises the human heart so high that it becomes one spirit with God (*dass er ein Geist mit Gott wird*) and acquires the very Justice of God".

The mysticism of Luther—tormented and yet in its own way finally victorious—evokes all the tension between knowing and believing or between knowledge and faith. For Luther there is nothing

communicated a divine power.

[25] In a similar manner Islam views every man as a "slave", and Asharism practically concludes from this that every man is capable only of fear and obedience—that he is intellectually a "villain", or a *shūdra* as Hindus would say.

but faith; but he could not deny that a faith united with Grace to the point of being "one spirit with God" is a manner of knowing God through God or that it is the divine Knowledge in us; for all certainty is knowledge, and there is no faith without certainty. To deny this would be to deny the Holy Spirit and along with it our deiformity.

"Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed": this is the very definition of faith; faith is the key—or the anticipation—of knowledge; it is a kind of "sympathetic magic" with regard to transcendent realities. But faith may also be viewed in another manner: when the starting point is metaphysical certainty or intellection—and this is a "naturally supernatural" mystery—faith is the life of knowledge in the sense that it causes knowledge to penetrate into all our being; for it is necessary to "love God with all our strength", hence with all we are.

A very important aspect of the question of faith that we have alluded to already is the relationship between faith and works: for Luther works contribute nothing to salvation; to believe they do would be to doubt the Redemption—to imagine that our actions, intrinsically sinful, could take the place of the saving work of Christ or could add anything whatsoever to it. It is therefore faith alone that saves, and this is acceptable if we specify—and Melanchthon did not fail to do so—that works prolong faith and are an integral part of it, proportionate to its sincerity; in short they prove faith. Without works faith would not quite be faith, and without faith works would be eschatologically inoperative.

If Luther, who despite his occasional violence was a virtuous man, underestimated the role of works, this could also have been because he included works in virtue and virtue in faith; virtue is in fact situated between these two poles, for it is a dimension of sincere faith and at the same time is expressed by works; but virtue is independent of works, and needless to say it is better to be virtuous without works than to accomplish works without virtue. Moreover, it is fitting to distinguish between works that are obligatory and those that are optional, and it follows that the man of little virtue ought to insist all the more upon meritorious actions in order to compensate for his moral indigence and remedy this indigence gradually.

For Luther faith ennobles even insignificant actions, except for sins of course; faith for him is a kind of sanctity, and indeed it is the only sanctity possible. But what his mystical subjectivity seemed

unable to realize, at least *a priori*, is that this mystery of faith cannot constitute a rule of life for the masses; in this the German reformer was as unrealistic as the Popes, who wished to impose a kind of monastic perfection on the clergy—or even, practically speaking, on the whole of Christianity, though to a lesser degree.

All this brings us to the crucial question of asceticism and permits us to insert some parenthetical remarks on this subject. There is an *ascesis* that simply consists of sobriety, and this is sufficient for the naturally spiritual man; there is another that consists of fighting against the passions, and the degree of this *ascesis* depends upon the demands of the individual nature; finally there is the *ascesis* of those who mistakenly believe themselves to be burdened with every sin or who identify themselves with sin through a mystical subjectivism, without forgetting those who practice an extreme asceticism in order to expiate the faults of others or even simply to give a good example in a world that needs it. Of these modes of asceticism, Protestantism retains only the first, and this is for two reasons: first because it is faith that saves, and not works; second—and this reason coincides on the whole with the first—because it is not for us to add our insignificant merits to the infinite merits of Christ.

In summary: according to Luther the grace obtained by and in faith regenerates the soul and permits it to become united with the divine Life; it enables man to resist and combat evil and to exercise charity toward others. Works are useful when we do not consider them meritorious; in this case they become integrated into faith.

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In the Lutheran perspective the awareness of being a sinner is everything since strength of faith depends upon this awareness; according to Luther it is better to sin and be aware of one's misery than not to sin and not have this awareness.

But in connection with the crucial idea of sin there is also the fear of damnation and the scruple of not burdening oneself with yet another sin by rashly yielding to the contrary certitude; the tensions and complexities resulting from this attitude are altogether characteristic of voluntaristic and sentimental individualism, which is not to be found in other forms of piety; it is a fact, however, that this

attitude determines the entire perspective with Semitic peoples. Be that as it may, the solution to the problem is the following, and it is furnished by esoterism, which always considers the simple nature of things: it is true that the individualistic sentiment of being saved can easily—though not necessarily—give rise to a quasi-narcissistic and morally paralyzing satisfaction, which is liable to compromise the tension toward God and above all the virtue of fear; now the healthy attitude here—the virtue of hope, if one prefers—consists of a conditional and nearly unarticulated certainty; that is, certainty of salvation is included in an eminent and sufficient manner in the certainty of God. One should say: thanks to the knowledge and love of God, no fear of damnation; and not: thanks to good works, certainty of salvation; for by its very nature, or rather by reason of the mechanism of the human soul, the latter conviction risks drawing us away from God insofar as it becomes rooted in consciousness; it draws one away from God because it practically takes the place of God.

It follows from all of this that the terrors and despairs of Luther were logically unnecessary, although mystically fruitful and necessary in fact; if Scripture must contain threats of hell, it is because most men are wild beasts, and subtle considerations regarding the relationship between cause and effect would be ineffectual, to say the least. On the one hand a great number of souls have been saved thanks to the image of eternal suffering; on the other hand this image has not sufficed to prevent innumerable crimes; if we wish to take pity on men, let us also take pity on Scripture.

As for the scruple we mentioned above, it is appropriate to add the following precisions: when our starting point is intellectual certainty concerning absolute Reality and its hypostatic dimensions, we would say that this certainty has as its consequence, and also in a certain manner as its condition: first, that we abstain from everything that takes us away from the supreme Reality in principle or in fact; and second, that we practice what brings us closer or what leads us to it; these two consequences are an integral part of metaphysical certainty to the extent it is really ours. It is in certainty concerning the Sovereign Good, and nowhere else, that we have certainty of salvation—of salvation as such and not of our own salvation only—and we have it to the very extent the second certainty is absorbed in the first.

Gnostically speaking, there are "psychics", who can be saved or damned; then the "pneumatics", who by their nature cannot but be

saved; and finally the "hylics", who cannot but be damned. Now for all practical purposes Luther conceived only of this third category, though theoretically—with reservations and conditions—he also conceived of the "psychics"; but in no way did he consider "pneumatics", hence all the tormentedness of his doctrine. In reality all three seeds are found in every man, the "pneumatic", the "psychic", and the "hylic"; it remains to be seen which predominates. In practice it is enough to know that saying "yes" to God while abstaining from what takes one away from Him and accomplishing what brings one closer to Him pertains to the "pneumatic" nature and assures salvation, every question of "original sin" and "predestination" aside; thus in practice there is no problem, except what we imagine and impose on ourselves.

The "pneumatic" is the man who incarnates as it were the "faith that saves" and thus also its content, the "grace of Christ"; strictly speaking, he cannot sin—except perhaps at the level of form—because all he touches turns to gold, his substance being "faith" and therefore "justification by faith". Being "avataric" above all, this possibility is extremely rare, and yet it exists, and cannot but exist.

Be that as it may, Luther does not seem to know what to do with a good conscience, the one Catholics obtain through confession and works; he confuses it with self-satisfaction and laziness, whereas it is the normal and healthy basis for the requirements of loving God and neighbor. But the essential here is not the fact of this confusion, but the consequence Luther draws from it and the stimulation he obtains from it.

The question of knowing whether we are good or bad may be asked approximately, for we possess intelligence, but it cannot be asked in all strictness, for God's measures are not at our disposal; now to say we cannot answer a question means we do not need to ask it.

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On the subject of faith and works, let us insert the following parenthetical remarks. Just as Luther puts faith in place of moral works, so Shinran—well before him and on the other side of the globe—puts faith in place of spiritual means: it is not necessary to invoke Amida in order to obtain birth in the "Pure Land"—for this would be to rely on "self-power" to the detriment of "other-power"—but it is neces-

sary to do so out of gratitude to Amida, who has saved us *a priori* by granting us faith; Shinran has but one concern, which is to avoid—or circumvent—the idea that we save ourselves thanks to our own merit. The notion of "gratitude" is here a euphemism intended to veil the fact that it is impossible to deprive ourselves of a realizing initiative; and in any case, if faith is not ours, whose is it, and if it is Amida's, what proof is there that it belongs to us or that we benefit from it? One of two things: either the act of gratitude is optional, in which case one may do without it, it being sufficient to believe instead of invoking Amida; or else the act of gratitude is obligatory, in which case there is no longer a question of gratitude, and the argument is merely a ruse masking "self-power", which determines every act and which we, as free and responsible creatures, cannot escape.

Neither Luther nor Shinran can change the nature of man, which in fact entails a certain liberty and thus a possibility of "self-power", hence of merit; but like the Japanese mystic, the German Reformer is in love with the experience of faith and with the Scripture that nourishes it, and perish all the rest. There is also in Luther a share of Asharism: like the Arab theologian, Luther sacrifices intelligence to faith and freedom to the Foreknowledge and Omnipotence of God. And if an Ashari and a Shinran are "orthodox" in their fashion, as their respective traditions acknowledge, we do not see why we cannot grant Luther the same extenuating circumstances or the same approving evaluations, *mutatis mutandis*.

Like Shinran, Luther believes that in putting faith in place of works he brings a certain consolation and liberation, but this is solely a question of spiritual temperament. It is much more reassuring for some men to base themselves upon works, which are something objective, concrete, tangible, and definable, whereas one can always torment oneself with the question of whether one really has faith or whether one has understood what faith is.

Be that as it may, in the thought of Luther as in that of Shinran—and this follows from certain of our preceding demonstrations—there are compensatory arguments that re-establish equilibrium in such a way that our objection has a merely relative import, except for minds that abuse the formulations in question. One thing is certain, and it is the essential element here: faith sometimes saves in the absence of outward works, but works never save without faith.

Man cannot escape the duty of having to do good; it is in fact impossible under normal conditions not to do good; but what matters is that he knows it is God who acts. A meritorious work belongs to God, though we participate in it; our works are good—or better—to the extent we are penetrated by this awareness.

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As for predestination, which is so important in Augustinian and then in Lutheran thought, it is fundamentally none other than ontological necessity insofar as it refers to a determined possibility. Now God may displace or change the mode of a possibility, but He cannot make a possibility become impossible.

Predestination as such is situated in Relativity—in *Māyā*, if one prefers—since it concerns the relative or contingent; but its root in the Absolute is reducible to Necessity. Absolute Being comprises both Necessity and Freedom, and the same therefore holds true for relative or contingent Being, the world; thus it is false to deny the possibility of freedom in the world, just as it is false to deny predestination. A work freely accomplished by man always contains predestination as a different dimension; but with a change of emphasis it could also be said that a freely done work is located within predestination as in an invisible mold pertaining precisely to another dimension; the difference is like that between space and time inasmuch as time is totally different from the three spatial dimensions and yet is always present. Space then corresponds to necessity in the sense that the things within it are what they are and are found where they are found, whereas time corresponds to freedom in the sense that things can change or move; all this is a purely symbolic, hence indirect and partial, analogy, for in reality necessity and freedom are found everywhere.

Be that as it may, it follows from all we have said that it is an error to reduce works to predestination, thereby denying their freedom, and that it is no less an error to deny all predestination in works, thereby lending them an absolute freedom belonging only to God. For the principle is this: freedom as such is always freedom, and necessity as such is always necessity, but whereas Necessity and Freedom are absolute in God, they are relative in the world, for there is no manifested necessity that does not include an element of freedom because

of contingency any more than there is a manifested freedom that does not include an element of necessity because of predestination. To reduce our actions to predestination is to attribute absoluteness to them; to believe they are free in relation to the Absolute is to attribute its Liberty to them. Ontologically our actions are predestined, and we must know this in order not to believe we are as sovereign as God or could be situated outside His Will; but practically our actions are free, hence meritorious, and we must know this in order to be able to act and merit.

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In theology there is an opposition, however, not only between predestination and freedom but between faith and knowledge; just as some believe freedom must be denied in the name of predestination, or conversely, so others believe knowledge must be rejected in the name of faith, or on the contrary—as is the case with rationalists—that faith must be rejected in the name of what they believe to be knowledge. In reality there is no incompatibility here, any more than there is between freedom and predestination; for if these latter two principles are complementary dimensions of one and the same possibility of manifestation, the same holds true for knowledge and faith in the sense that there is no faith without knowledge and no knowledge without faith. Nonetheless knowledge takes precedence: faith is an indirect and volitive mode of knowledge, whereas knowledge suffices unto itself and is not a mode of faith; on the other hand, when knowledge is situated within Relativity it requires an element of faith to the extent it is *a priori* intellectual and not existential, mental and not cardiac, partial and not total; otherwise all metaphysical understanding would imply sanctity *ipso facto*. Be that as it may, all transcendent certainty has something divine about it, though as certainty only and not necessarily as the acquisition of a particular man.

In other words, in a Semitic climate much is made of the incompatibility between knowledge and faith and of the pre-eminence of the second—to the point of holding the first in contempt and forgetting that within Relativity the one goes hand in hand with the other. Knowledge is the adequate perception of the real, and faith is the conformity of will and sentiment to a truth imperfectly perceived by

the intelligence; if the perception were perfect it would be impossible for the believer to lose his faith.

Even when theoretical knowledge is perfect and hence unshakable, however, it always requires a volitive element, which contributes to the process of assimilation or integration, for we must "become what we are"; and this operative element or element of intensity stems from faith. Conversely, in religious faith there is always an element of knowledge that determines it, for in order to believe it is necessary to know what one must believe; moreover, in plenary faith there is an element of certainty, which is not volitive and the presence of which we cannot prevent, regardless of our efforts to reject all knowledge in order to benefit from the "obscure merit of faith".

In God alone is knowledge excused from an element of realizational intensity or totalizing will; as for faith, its prototype *in divinis* is Life or Love; and in God alone are Life and Love independent of every motive justifying or determining them *ab extra*. It is by participation in this mystery that Saint Bernard could say, "I love because I love", which is like a paraphrase of the Saying of the Burning Bush, "I am that I am": "That which is".

It is knowledge, or the element truth, that gives faith all its value; otherwise we could believe no matter what as long as we believed; it is only as a function of truth that the intensity of our faith has meaning. And quite paradoxically it is predestination that makes us freely choose truth and goodness; without freedom there is no choice. In the final analysis Predestination is all we are.

But divine Freedom requires a predestination that is paradoxically relative and relates to modes and degrees together with the Predestination that is absolute. Likewise divine Necessity requires a relative freedom together with the Freedom that as such is absolute; this relative freedom is ours, and while it cannot be anything other than freedom it nonetheless falls within the framework of a necessity that surpasses it.

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Just as the early Churches conceive a hierarchy that places monks and priests above the laity and the worldly, so also Luther—who had nothing of the revolutionary or even of the democrat in him—con-

ceives a hierarchy that places those who truly live by faith above those who have not yet reached this point or are simply incapable of it. He intended to appeal to those who "willingly do what they know and are capable of acting with firm faith in the beneficence and favor of God" and "whom others ought to emulate"; but not to those who "make ill use of this freedom and rashly trust in it, so that they must be driven with laws, teachings, and warnings", and other formulations of this kind. What this means is that there was a kind of esoterism in his intention at least in practice: "Faith does not suffice," he declares, "except the faith that takes shelter under the wings of Christ"; now Christ is love.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels . . . though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love (*caritas*, *agapē*), I am nothing. . . . And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." This crucial passage of the First Epistle to the Corinthians seems to contradict all the Apostle taught concerning justification by faith in his Epistle to the Romans; how to explain this paradox? The answer on the one hand is that love is the greatest thing since "God is Love" and the noblest of the Commandments is the love of God and neighbor; but on the other hand faith has primacy since it is the key to everything and it is faith that saves. The mystic of Wittenberg would even say that in practice—not in principle—faith is greater because love, being too great, is impracticable and cannot be attained except by and in Christ and through faith; that love is too great follows precisely from the passage in the Epistle to the Corinthians, in which the Apostle believes he must call upon the intercession of the "tongues of angels", the "gift of prophecy", the understanding of "all mysteries, and all knowledge", and the faith that "removes mountains". Basing himself on the doctrine of the Epistle to the Romans, Luther not unreasonably deduces that love is realizable only indirectly or virtually by and in faith, except for the level that is accessible to us naturally, namely, charity toward our neighbor. In a word, to affirm that love is the greatest thing is not the same as saying it is the most immediately essential; it is often necessary to interpret a particular passage of Scripture in light of another given passage, which, though seeming to contradict it, in reality defines it and renders it concrete.

Furthermore, there is an element of Semitic stylization in this famous verse to the Corinthians in the sense that exaggeration, taken

to the point of absurdity, serves to underscore the grandeur of the thing spoken of; it is what one might call a "henotheistic" logic, that is, a logic that lends an absolute character to the thing whose excellence one wishes to demonstrate to the detriment of another thing, which is nonetheless presented in a quasi-absolute light at another moment. Taken literally, however, it is clearly absurd to maintain that someone whose faith can move mountains, *et cetera*, is nothing if he does not have love, for a faith of such strength could lack nothing, or else it would not be so strong; Luther rightly noticed this in his own way.[26]

We could also say that the Apostle has slipped from one perspective to another, namely, from that of faith to that of love, or rather that both points of view forced themselves upon his mind successively, independently of each other. Now a choice must be made: Catholicism and Orthodoxy—which were united for more than a thousand years—accorded the pre-eminence to love, whereas Protestantism wished to emphasize faith; love with faith in the first case, faith with love in the second. In all justice both accentuations should have always co-existed, and indeed they often did before the Reformation; but in fact the Abrahamic and moreover somewhat "Quietistic" idea of the faith that saves had lain dormant during that period of mystical heroism and superstitious abuse we call the Middle Ages.

The proof of the primacy of love is that the supreme Commandment is the love of God and neighbor; and the proof of the primacy of faith is that the creed is in practice more essential than charity since it is better to believe in God without charity than to exercise charity without believing in God. Catholicism starts with the idea of the primacy of love and with the fact of our freedom, and it demands ascetic zeal; Protestantism for its part starts with the primacy of faith and with the fact of our powerlessness, and it demands steadfastness in trust.

We might mention an analogy here that brings us back to our considerations of religious archetypes: Vishnuism distinguishes

[26] Nonetheless, not all his arguments are conclusive. Let us note at this point that in all interdenominational controversies one meets with purely "functional" arguments, which are inadequate in themselves; for example, the Epistle to the Romans attributes all vices to the pagans, whereas they cannot be attributed to the best of the Stoics or Neoplatonists. Some arguments are meant to clear the ground and not to serve the truth as such; these are necessarily two-edged.

between *bhakti*, love properly so called and heroic when necessary, and *prapatti*, confident abandonment to divine Mercy; these are the two ways it offers the faithful. Now the way of love corresponds analogically to the priestly and monastic perspective of early and Patristic Christianity, whereas the way of trust or faith is found in Protestantism; analogy is not identity, but in the final analysis the fundamental attitudes and celestial archetypes from which they derive are the same on both sides.

Love is on the one hand our tendency toward God—the tendency of the accident toward the Substance—and on the other hand our consciousness of "myself" in the "other" and of the "other" in "me"; it is also the sense of beauty, above us and around us as well as in our own soul. Faith is saying "yes" to the truth of God and immortality—the truth we carry in the depths of our heart—and seeing concretely what appears as abstract; to speak in Islamic terms, it is "serving God as if thou sawest Him, and if thou seest Him not, He nonetheless seeth thee"; and it is also the sense of the goodness of God and trust in Mercy. He who has faith has goodness, and he who has love has beauty; but at the same time each of these poles contains the other. We are the accidents, and the Substance is Beauty, Goodness, and Beatitude.

Love and faith: the one like the other is a door to knowledge; and knowledge in turn gives rise to both faith and love. Love opens to *gnosis* because it tends toward union; faith opens to it because it is founded on truth; to love is to want to be united, and to believe is to acknowledge what is true and to become what one acknowledges.

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In plucking the ears of corn, the Apostles violated the Sabbath; it is the inward Sabbath that counts and that takes priority over the outward. Saint Paul suppressed "circumcision in the flesh" in the name of "circumcision in the spirit"; Meister Eckhart teaches that if we knew God is everywhere we would receive Communion even when eating ordinary bread. All this becomes clear in the light of this principle: outward means are necessary only because—or to the extent that—we have lost access to their inward archetypes; a sacrament is the exteriorization of an immanent source of grace—the "living water" of

Christ—just as Revelation is an outward and macrocosmic manifestation of Intellection. Luther was certainly unaware of this principle or mystery; nonetheless his exclusive recourse to faith, his tendency to interiorize everything for the sake of the "spirit" and against the "flesh", hence also his reduction of the sacraments with regard to their form and number, all refer logically and mystically to the principle of inwardness or immanence we have just spoken of.[27]

The Koran gives more than one example of the principle of abrogation (*naskh*): certain verses annul other verses, and in most cases the meaning of one—whether the "nullifying" (*nāsikh*) or the "annulled" (*mansūkh*)—is more universal than that of the other. The profound significance of this phenomenon is that every form can be abrogated by a more essential form, and with all the more reason by their common essence; a form is never a pure absolute, although it may be "relatively absolute", as is the case precisely with sacred forms. In a Hindu and Buddhist climate this transition from the formal to the essential—whether gradual or abrupt—is an acknowledged possibility, whereas in the Semitic West it is excluded; the notion of heresy does not allow for relativizing, or even justifying, reservations; this is the spirit of alternativism, which in many cases is justified—in the East as well as in the West—but not in all cases. As for the principle of abrogation, we had to mention it in the context of Lutheran audacities in order to demonstrate at least indirectly that if a spiritual perspective is indeed possible it may well draw conclusions exceeding what one would normally expect or undermining the usual bases of a given traditional criteriology.

If Luther rejects all that Catholicism understands by "tradition", it is because of an association of ideas connected with the "commandments of men" mentioned in the Gospel, as we pointed out earlier;

[27] If this perspective, which could not but appear at a given moment of the Christian cycle, were intrinsically false and ineffectual, one could not explain how an esoterist such as Jakob Boehme could flower in such a climate, not to mention other Rosicrucian and Hermetic Lutheran theosophists. Moreover, it is known that Luther's coat-of-arms features a rose with a heart and cross in the center, which perhaps is more than chance. Let us also mention in this context such Anglican esoterists as John Smith the Platonist and William Law, the mystical theologian, without forgetting the isolated mystic of the first half of the twentieth century who was the anonymous author (Lilian Staveley) of *The Golden Fountain*, *The Prodigal Returns*, and *The Romance of the Soul.*

he allows only "Scripture" to remain, and it becomes everything; bibliolatry is the pivot of his religion, as is also the case in Judaism and Islam.

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Scholastic theology teaches that man can—and therefore must—obtain grace not only through a supernatural gift of God but also by natural means, such as virtues and works. Luther was well aware that we cannot produce the grace of God—and in fact no one has ever said the contrary—but he seems to have been unaware that we can remove the obstacles separating us from grace, just as it is enough to open a shutter in order to let in sunlight; one does not attract light by magic any more than one creates it, but one removes what renders it invisible.

The mystic of Wittenberg is "more Catholic than the Pope" in feeling that it is pretension on the part of man to believe in the quasi-theurgical virtue of certain actions—to believe a good act can *ipso facto* precipitate a concordant grace, as if man had the power to determine the divine Will; and this feeling furnishes Luther with a reason, perhaps the main one, for rejecting the Mass. In fact to believe we can determine the divine Will by our comportment—*Deo juvante*—is in no way pretentious, given that God created us for precisely this; it is a normal or "supernaturally natural" consequence of our theomorphism; thus there is no harm in the idea that our actions can be meritorious before God, and no one obliges us to become proud of them. A good conscience is a normal phenomenon; it is the normal climate within which a man runs toward God; there is nothing in a good conscience that attracts us to the world, it being perfectly neutral in this respect, unless we are hypocrites. On the contrary, it draws us toward Heaven since by its very nature it is a taste of Heaven.

What constitutes the Lutheran message fundamentally is an emphasis on faith within an awareness of our misery, or by this very awareness, though also in spite of it. All the limitations of this point of departure have indirectly the function of a key or symbol and are compensated for, beyond words, by the ineffable response of Mercy; in the final analysis the initial torment is resolved in a quasi-mystical experience of the faith that appeases, vivifies, liberates.

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The idea that no work can be "justice" before God because all human work is tainted with sin—first with concupiscence and then with pride as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve—has its logical basis in the limitation of the human "I" in the face of the divine "Self" and in the impossibility for the "I" to liberate itself without the decisive concurrence of the "Self". Analogy is certainly not identity, and theology is not metaphysics in spite of points where they meet; but where there is analogy there can always be identity by way of exception and to some degree, as the spark can always flash forth from the flint. The Christian denominations as such can never be of the same order as *gnosis*, any more than can any other exoterism; and yet a Meister Eckhart and a Jacob Boehme manifest this perspective in their own way, the first within the framework of Catholicism and the second within that of Protestantism.[28] Both saw the "immanent transcendence" of the pure Intellect, Eckhart in recognizing the *increatum et increabile* character of the kernel of human intelligence and Boehme in referring to "inward illuminations" (*innere Erleuchtungen*) of a sapiential, hence intellective, nature. Similarly each was able to account for *Māyā*, the principle of universal Relativity, Eckhart in establishing the distinction between hypostatic differentiation and the "ineffable Depth" (*der Ungrund*) and Boehme in posing the principle of opposition or contrasts, rooted in God and operating in the world in order to make God knowable in an objective and distinctive mode.[29]

[28] It is true that certain convictions of Boehme stray from Lutheran—or post-Lutheran—orthodoxy, but even so he did not become a Catholic; he lived and died in the Protestant Church, and his death was that of a saint. We could also mention Paracelsus—by whom Boehme was moreover inspired—who was at once Rosicrucian theosophist, mystic, and physician and to whom is owed a "spagyric medicine", that is, one akin to Hermeticism and based upon the *solve et coagula* of the alchemists. It would be inexplicable for so eminent a mind to have chosen Protestantism if it were intrinsically heretical. As for Boehme, let us note in passing that his anthropology, like that of certain Fathers of the Church, was not immune to an anti-sexual and moralizing angelism, which sees the original fall in the form of the body and not in matter alone, whereas Hindu doctrine, for example, takes seriously the sexual aspect of human theomorphism.

[29] In theology the pure Intellect is prefigured by the objectifying notion of the Holy

One finds certain tendencies in Luther that are very similar to those of the "friends of God" (*die Gottesfreunde*), a mystical society that flourished in the fourteenth century in the Rhineland, Swabia, and Switzerland, whose most eminent representatives were Tauler and the blessed Suso. The former—known to Luther—made himself the spokesman of the Eckhartian doctrine of "quietude" (*Gelassenheit*) and fought against "justice through works" (*Werkgerechtigkeit*) and against outward religiosity.

According to Tersteegen[30]—one of the saintly men of the Protestant Church—"The true theosophers, of whom we know very few after the time of the Apostles, were all mystics, but it is very far from the case that all mystics are theosophers, not one among thousands. The theosophers are those whose spirit [not reason] has explored the depths of the Divinity under divine guidance and has known such marvels thanks to an infallible vision."[31]

What exoterism does not and cannot say—neither Catholic nor Orthodox any more than Protestant—is that the Pauline or Biblical mystery of faith is none other at its root than the mystery of *gnosis*, which is to say that *gnosis* is the prototype and underlying essence of faith. If faith can save, it is because intellective knowledge delivers—a knowledge that is immanent while being transcendent, and conversely. The Lutheran theosophers were gnostics within the framework of faith, and the most metaphysical Sufis emphasized faith on the basis of knowledge; no doubt there is a faith without *gnosis*, but there is no *gnosis* without faith. The soul can go to God without direct assistance from the pure Intellect, but the Intellect cannot manifest itself

Spirit and *Māyā* by the temporalizing notion of predestination; the Holy Spirit enlightens, strengthens, and kindles, and predestination makes creatures and things to be what they are, and what they cannot not be.

[30] In an epistle entitled *Kurzer Bericht von der Mystik.*

[31] The theosopher Angelus Silesius would not perhaps have left the Lutheran Church had he not been expelled for his esoterism; in any case Bernardine mysticism seemed to correspond best to his spiritual vocation. This makes us think somewhat of Sri Chaitanya, who as an Advaitin threw out all his books one fine day so as to think only of Krishna; and let us note at this point that this *bhakta*, while accepted as orthodox, rejected the ritual of the Brahmans and the castes in order to put the entire accent on faith and love, not on works.

without giving the soul peace and life and without requiring from it all the faith of which it is capable.

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