

# Notes on Neo-Paganism

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"For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live". —**The Apostle Paul**

"*Quousque tandem, Europa, abutere patientia nostra?* (How long, Europe, will you abuse of our patience?) —Cicero

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## Part I

The theological connotation of the word *paganism* is the situation of human persons or groups alien to the people of the Covenant. From a Christian perspective "pagans" are those who have not yet been reached by the Christian preaching or, worse, refuse it. Not all those who are not baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are necessarily "pagans", however for, Jews and Muslims also worship "the God of Abraham". As important as it is to remember this, it is equally important it to remember that paganism is a religious value in the continuing history of humanity, not an obsolete curiosity in modern times, even more so now that it represents a radical antithesis to biblical Christianity.

### Neo-Paganism

Neo-paganism is a remarkable anti-Christian movement. Strictly speaking, though, the word *neo-pagan* is improper as a theological *terminus technicus*, as those who identify themselves with it profess to be, albeit baptized, post-Christian. They belong to groups of *religious humans* or refer to *other gods* than the revealed One.

To accurately evaluate Neo-paganism, a modern European phenomenon, a preliminary overview of the spiritual and religious climate of the old continent is necessary. Several factors either paved the way for its lightning advance or facilitated its wider acceptance in post-modern and meta-Christian western European society. In order not to overburden the reader with an exhaustive list, we need simply to remember the virulent atheism since the Renaissance, and more especially the Enlightenment, and the more recent trends of secularization. For our immediate purpose we will limit ourselves to the religious indifference of the intellectual and the wider masses as well as the proliferation in the amazing religious sub-culture.

## **Religious Indifference**

What does *religious indifference* mean? It is a social phenomenon, a phenomenon of public opinion. It is without definitive confines however, not easy to catch because it is vague; not easy to comprehend because of its unorganized nature. A phenomenon of dissentiment, even dissension, it introduces an alterity, an *otherness*, into the sense of identity, and therefore becomes a strong perturbing factor. Religious indifference may start with an intellectual disagreement, but it soon turns to social differentiation. Whereas in the past there was unity of belief, though relative and limited, nowadays two groups may look at each other as mutually external and radically hostile. Our world is a modern one—this is a truism—even a post-modern one, utterly different from the one which the Christian in the past had in mind. Ernest Renan, the apostate Roman Catholic priest, and famous historian of religions, already in the past century noted that there are no longer believing crowds. A large portion of the people no longer admit the supernatural. We may anticipate, he continued, the days when such beliefs will disappear as did superstitious beliefs in ghosts and elves. People will no longer go back to church. Religion has irrevocably become purely a matter of individual conscience. A Prussian Lutheran Minister in the Imperial palace of Berlin, observing the same fact, already in 1874 complained of the disaffection of the masses from the Church.

In what forms is religious indifference clad and how does it express itself? The question is not an academic one, a matter of theoretical concern. In a sense, one can easily understand the systematic incredulity of intellectual atheists. An intellectual attitude may propose some kind of a project, a word, some meaning, albeit negative. At times it may appear as principled, well-thought, organized, equipped for a struggle. *Indifference* has another figure. In it God is a stranger, a superfluous, encumbering entity; therefore, it is not easy to make a rational assessment of the ways which indifference chooses to follow, and it is impossible to establish any contact or to communicate with those who are indifferent. The faith the Christian professes means nothing to the religiously indifferent European. Is religious culture in danger? Christianity suffers from an acute crises; Neo-Pagans know this as well as Christians observers do. In their turn neo-pagans ask: how was such a crises born? What were the gigantic aberrations of which the Church is responsible? Disoriented and scandalized, the mass of the faithful is dissolving and vocations to priesthood or pastoral ministry are becoming more and more rare. Therefore we have to remind the clergy and inculcate them with laws of the past. We must keep

them from feeling completely isolated, suggest the Neo-pagans. Of all the crises the modern age has experienced the most serious one is undoubtedly the religious crisis. Thus, they put forth a new law which means forsaking the religion of God and choosing that of Man.

There is also a category of Christians who are indifferent to both Church and doctrine, but are involved in political activism. They invest time, energy, and intelligence towards bettering the world. They are utterly indifferent towards religious ritual, often even towards revealed truth. They strive for a better world, in an egalitarian democratic society. They pursue social, cultural and political objectives which in their eyes are the only legitimate concerns and just causes. An ineffective faith—desincarnated—is a superfluous Christianity, towards which they are not only indifferent but at times even hostile. There have been “Christian Marxists” and “Christian atheists” in Reformed Churches in Europe. In western Europe, we observe the transition from a lukewarm religiosity to an open indifference, and further even leading to a radical position against every tradition of Christian faithfulness, and against evangelical themes revolving around the meaning of life. Christian belief is absent from life. There is no discernment of the essential difference that Christ and the Gospels make for life's exigencies. Christ and religion are categorized as a history belonging to a culture inherited from the past, yet devoid of significance for the present, therefore completely obsolete. They are unable, even unwilling, to understand the irreplaceable character of the newness brought by the evangelical faith. Christianity is something in which they are not interested; it has become totally irrelevant. This is the sign of spiritual uprooting. A metaphysical flux is sweeping the depths of the Continent. Religious nomads are proliferating: 2 years with Christians, 3 years with Buddhism, 4 years in ranks of Krishna, and so forth!

We should consider four main targets of opposition to faith: The Institutional Church, Christian ethics, religious language, spirituality or prophetic and personalistic mysticism.

## **The Return of Religion**

Another essential assessment of the religious situation requires an observation about para-Christian “churches” and the para-religious movements. Despite the radical departure of the old Continent from Christian origins and tradition, the presence and activity of a religious sub-culture witnesses to the permanence of *pagan religious elements* which, strange to say, have accompanied Christianity in the course of its more than 15 centuries of history. Remnants of old paganism and vestiges of pseudo-mystical beliefs still cling stubbornly to elements of Christian beliefs and phagocytate them. Against the overwhelming predominance of secularization, at least on the surface, this sub-culture denotes the come-back of religion, and of old as well as of new sort of gods.

Observers and chroniclers of the religious events enlist the phenomenon of the “Return of Religion” among the factors which indicate significant, and even clearly expressed tendencies for the future. Those factors include, *inter alia*, a renewal of interest for the *spiritual dimension of life*. The *Return of gods* on the scene often takes place in a very wild manner. Aside from what can be termed as an interest for a purely spiritual

dimension of life, we also notice an increased preoccupation with magical practices, as well as the spreading revival of credulity and superstition. A sort of micro-culture is being developed. It occupies the little explored areas of an infra-religious universe. The sub-continent of spiritism, parapsychology, clairvoyance, demonology, mediums, astrology, witchcraft, sorcery, constitute its humus. The appeal of the occult, of the strange, of the irrational, have given birth to groups that have become substitutes for religion as understood by orthodox Christianity. The worship of extra-terrestrials, and the search for a higher state of consciousness are among those substitute-religions. Naturally, they reveal the permanence of archaic forms of the religious anxiety and restlessness, which can be normally expected during a period of hyper-rationalism and excessively mechanized civilization. Paradoxically the modern technocosm has favored it, if not originated, and fertilized the soil of such religious sub-cultures. Our contemporaries are anxiety stricken at the prospect of the near future, at the dawn of the 21st century, and almost certainly they expect a doom of apocalyptic nature, whence the explosion of all sorts of predictions. Some eastern spiritualities predict that humanity is penetrating into a Dark Age of Kali Yuga, to be followed by the dissolution of the entire universe. Instinctively, in times of universal uncertainties, people turn their face towards the magician or the guru, asking him for a word of appeasement.

The Christian will beware dismissing these attitudes with contempt only, considering them a mere fads which may soon become outmoded. They indicate a deeply hidden need for the transcendent, a thirst for spirituality, a hunger for a further dimension of human existence in the course of history, which imperatively must be other than material enjoyment. Churches have not always, some of them at least, adequately satisfied to these needs, therefore alchemy, kabbal, faith or miracle-healers, great *initiates* of esoterism, are highly popular and successful. The future is a frightening prospect for those who are devoid of hope, because they are alienated from the source of life and of meaning: God, Creator and Redeemer in His son Jesus-Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Who will overthrow this situation, purify the atmosphere of the miasmas, propose at least a plan of action? Amidst the multiplication of sects, which dangerously exploit each religious feeling, there is a serious search for *the* religious leader, be it a guru, a swami, an ayatollah or the Dalai-Lama, and any religious charlatan.

## **Paganism and Cultural Soil**

The forms in which the contemporary resurgence of religion occurs, facilitate the absorption of spiritual quests in the *Great Indiferenciate in which* the originality of biblical Revelation is completely dissolved. Indeed "Religion", (any type, excluding Christianity) during the present era of void (G. Lipovetsky) appears as one of the multiple means in action to achieve man's self-realization. The search for equilibrium of wisdom is on the par with Eastern ways of meditation and western movements of Human Potentiality(ies) Development. Each person may freely and anarchically elaborate his own religion according to his measure in a vast haze of opinions, borrowing elements from all kinds of beliefs. So, as we observe the renewal of old paganisms we may identify four aspects:

- archaic forms of the come-back of religion and the sacred;
- theoreticized paganism;
- paganized Christianity;
- gnosticism.

All four of these trends profess a radical opposition to the revealed biblical religion, in the name, they claim, of their deeply religious divergence with it. The latter two translate modern attempts to recapture Christianity in the name of religion although extracting from it its evangelical mind which is judged to be pernicious; thus they pretend to save the West by a conversion to its original pagan sources.

### **1- Archaic forms of return of the religious and the sacred**

There certainly is an equivocation concerning the meaning of the “return” of religion. In a sense it comes as a vigorous protest made by modern Westerners who refuse to listen to an explanation in terms of economic criteria of production and consumption. Nevertheless, it carries also attitudes and beliefs which cluster in an archaic religiosity.

We already touched on this wide-spread infatuation. When in times of instability as the present one, the future becomes frightening and panic seizes even the most “reasonable” people, many will place their faith in the magical, trust the Guru, consult the sorcerer, call the clairvoyant. These “professionals” of fake spirituality have become legion in the West. Such primitive forms of religious anxiety constitute a scrub of anarchy where the encounter with both depersonalizing practices, such as the ones in cults and sects, and beliefs detached from their original religious trunk, for instance reincarnation, or the “reasonable” in gnostic esotericism, the pathological such as the worship of extraterrestrials, the para-scientific, such as parapsychology, the para-religious such as spiritism, will not hesitate to colonize souls more and more. Each one of the above mentioned practices is the object of an adherence which is reminiscent in some way of religious belief betraying superstitious credulity rather than proving an “Our Reasonable Faith”. In the past they played their role inside paganism; they are not behaving differently at the end of the second millennium.

### **2- Profane pagan religion**

Another cluster gathers together the sacralizations of the secular, elevating it to the rank of a substitute-religion, an avatar, such as the modernized versions of the antique Pantheon, the religion of race (Naziism), of the party (Stalinism), of revolution (Maoism), of Eros and Mass-media, of Science and Technology, of Reason and Benefit.

Other manifestations are less easy to mark, although engrafted and incorporated into new “religious sub-cultures”. Vitalism favors the intensity of life more than conversion (to live, to be comfortable in one's skin, a carnal wisdom not so strange in many Christian churches!). The search for a communion with Nature is confused or identified with God, such as the return to Mother Earth (Gaia-Meter), a search which surely, and strongly, is animating certain ecological fervors. The worship of the exploration of the body and the enlarging of consciousness is practiced in groups of Human Potentiality Development.

Here is a cosmic pantheism where God is not a personal Being but an imprecise Id. Such is also the case with techniques of meditation which draw their inspiration from Buddhism and Hinduism but identify it with man's breath. The sentimental syncretisms take exception with every revelation and very specially historical ones, Jewish and Christian, and, under the pretext of religious tolerance, justify an absolute doctrinal relativism. All religions represent an equal value. The naturalistic monism bases religion as a mere matter of sentiment, feeling, experience, following the lines already traced by J.J. Rousseau and Goethe. Followers espouse a generous yet vague utopianism, devoid of a definitive hope, without origin or end, and dream of smiling and singing tomorrows. They seek to return to the Golden Age (or New Age). That is their mission. Among several other forms, we must note the reactivation, in the name of regionalism, of the search for roots of pagan traditions, of popular customs destined to maintain the cohesion of families, cities, and villages by the rhythm of works and days. In the same line, a modern group is attempting to resuscitate old Indo-european religions, which they then pretend will efficiently contribute to the construction of a unified Europe. This latter movement is linked with a second trend, that of theoreticized paganism.

### **3 - A neo-pagan Christianity**

In the past the church assimilated certain “values” of paganism, and in so doing freed herself from the dissolving germ of the gospel, from the affirmation of the equality of all men before God. Many centuries later this turned out to be a dramatically destructive egalitarianism for the elites. Christianity carries in itself germs of decomposition of man, Western experience proves it unquestionably. Historically it gave birth to the revolt of weak slaves, precipitated the collapse of the Roman empire, then delivered Europe to the hordes of barbarian invaders. According to L. Pauwels, following the steps the ultra-nationalist French Charles Maurras, in the beginning the Church launched the poor, with subversive venom, to the assault on Greco-Roman civilization, hence opening the doors for barbarian destroyers to come in. The great mistake of the Roman Church, after Vatican II is to return to her poisoned origins (Gospel for the poor, egalitarianism, etc), thus putting into parenthesis two millennia which were employed to hellenize the nazarenism and to dissolve a human folly into the wisdom of humanities. (*How One Becomes What He Is*, Paris 1978, p 153). Genuine Catholicism must fight against the derivatives of the Second Vatican Council and cease his efforts to go back to an unhealthy Gospel: Liberation theology looking for a Church to be “as the servant of the poor”, guilt-stricken for having, during the past century “lost the working classes”. These modern Christian activists desacralize their institutions in the name of evangelical purity, abusively insisting on the separation of Church and State. This version of neo-paganism intends to prevent the Church from a pernicious return to her infancy!

### **“Romantic Apotheosis of Modern Science”**

The realm of scientific thinking also offers several vistas not for mere reevaluation of former epistemologies, but very specifically for their contempt of Christianity. Raymond Ruyer, in his now famous *La Gnose De Princeton*, (The Princeton Gnosis) has

extensively analyzed the modern scientific worldview and adversity towards any religious faith, notably towards Christianity. Thomas Molnar in his *The Pagan Temptation*, refers to R. Ruyer. The question, though, regarding R. Ruyer is the—curious—production and naming of *La Gnose De Princeton!* Is there indeed such a Princeton Gnosis? (According to Jean Brun, who has shared it with the present writer, R. Ruyer confessed to him with some maliciousness that the whole thing was a hoax, but which attracted ignoramuses and amateurs of the sensational!)

Whatever the case, the analysis in itself is interesting, though instead of referring to him we deal at some length with another representative of the modern scientific world, Marcel de Corte.

The late Marcel de Corte, a Belgian Roman Catholic scientist, makes a pertinent analysis of the religious mysticism which surrounds the philosophy of science as an aura, in particular the evolutionist hypothesis of his fellow-believer Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the French Jesuit and archeologist. We would not have quoted M. de Corte for the sake of taking sides, pro or con on the hypothesis of evolution, were there not clearly expressed in it a religious presupposition, closely according, in our view, to neopaganism. It is the religious aspect of it that interests us mostly.

M. de Corte starts by stating that the conception of a universal Evolution proceeds from the extension to all phenomena of the *scientific imagination* which has been released from submission to any *measurable reality* as a *measurable reality*. This was an *emancipation* from its relation to facts, or Reality. Its popularity and success, as well as its religious character, can therefore be explained from this point only. It would be a mistake to think that it is the outcome of a legitimate generalization, as its adherents claim to be the case, an evolution strictly restricted to a life phenomena, which the sciences of biology have proved. In fact, the contrary is true, says M. de C. Ernst Cassirer (*The Philosophy of Enlightenment*). He remarked that the world of the historical culture, of which evolution is the dominant theme, and which romanticism takes pride in having discovered, did not unveil itself in its universal breadth until the philosophy of the Enlightenment, with a strong determination to turn its back to all metaphysics and traditional morals. This is evidence of the fact that in reality Teilhard invented nothing new; despite his reputation he was not an original thinker. With Teilhard, though, we are introduced to the realm of total pantheism. The divinization of the universe is on the move, during its perpetual evolution. Nothing is stable (cf. Heraclitus), not even truth, which like all else is constantly evolving—and this is contrary to Christian faith which states that God does not change. His Word, and the creation which it produced, remain immutable. Enlightenment, Romanticism, Existentialist philosophy, believe that *God is Becoming* in an *evolutionary process*; therefore He changes, consequently everything changes with Him. M. de C. quotes Haeckel, according to whom “our” theory (that of Evolution) will not be understood if one requires experimental proofs. Marcel de Corte comments: such a generalized Becoming is a phantasm, and evolution which pretends to seize it, is like a shadowy net attempting to catch the fish. One understands why the writings of Teilhard abound in neologisms, display a profusion of superlatives, are inflated by redundancies, and reveal oedemes of insolvency, barely dissimulated,

attempting to hide the effort to compensate for the absence of reality. One understands why the Jesuit Father capitalizes the majority of his concepts. He breathes into them newly coined terms, a sort of personality, thus transforming them into active principles. “Scientists”, wrote Honoré de Balzac as early as in 1840, “live by nomenclature”. This is exactly the phenomenon of *nomen—numen* of present day evolutionists, the (same) extraordinary catalog of names of the Roman gods. Once again, like in the past, the word replaces the thing! Reality is lost for the sake of the word. They forsake the prey for its shadow. For Teilhard, matter is the matrix of mind. The Jesuit father discovered in matter the feminine and the maternal element, which *his mind* will fertilize. He cannot think of matter independently of the mind, because his spirit is not distinct from it. Matter does not exist independently from his own thought. Those are indeed inseparable, for they are organically linked. The case of the Teilhardian evolutionism is the most thorough and encompassing one which has ever appeared in the course of History, illuminated in every part and corner. Teilhard is sheer imagination. His mind never did attain reality, a single fact. During exceptional moments of lucidity, when frightened at the sight of twistings he imposes to fundamental Christian concepts, he admits it. Christ in particular is mutated from a person in flesh and bones, who had appeared during a determined point of history, in a given place, into a mutating entity, whom the imagination of the Jesuit amalgamates with the becoming process of the Cosmos. For our part, according to the Reformed interpretation of it, we observe in such an amalgamation a new version of the old doctrine of Transubstantiation, albeit secularized, an almost neo-pagan changing of the body and blood of the Savior into a perpetual becoming of an impersonal Cosmos, until it reaches the *Point Omega*. Henri Rambaud was right: despite all agonizing attempts by the Fathers of the Jesuit Company to hide it, Teilhard is not a Christian. To be Christian writes M. de C. is to believe in a Presence. Teilhard does not believe in such a representation, for the divine evolution has no other existence but in his imagination. The incense-bearers of Teilhard have seen in him a new Aristotle, a new Thomas Aquinas, even a new Paul, if not also another Christ! The Jesuit father goes as far as to loudly declare that if he were to lose his Christian faith, he would still cling to his faith in evolution.

This reinterpretation surprisingly exercises a powerful influence on the mind of many believers. It attracts even non-believers—naturally to Teilhardian evolutionism—not to Christ; the non-Christian will adapt it to his/her own imaginary *noosphere*. It is believed to be the enlightened modern version of faith, which, at last, was unable to reconcile itself with Modern *Science*. Nevertheless crowds which adhere to this hypothesis and elevate it into a new infallible dogma, are unable to distinguish the predominant mystical component and the clear traces of mystification from the fundamental genuine elements of the Christian Confession of Faith. They have stepped into the dedalic Labyrinth and are caught—a modern Labyrinth, tainted with religious varnish, of the sheer imaginary. An incredible credulity, indeed, in the name of modern science, which in the final analysis dictates to Faith its modern Categorical Imperative. Such an ability to believe anything which is, is properly limitless. Fed with words, modern man is unable to verify his belief in the light of corresponding, existing, reality. M. de Corte, concludes: Evolutionism à la Teilhard, is the religion of Narcissus in ecstasy at the sight of his own image reflected in the universal becoming. It tolls the mortal bell of intelligence. It could

not be otherwise, for it is the “Romantic apotheosis of Science”.

#### 4- Gnosticism

The Gnostic is “the one who knows”; he has received a revelation. He is saved by knowledge, not by free grace offered in Jesus Christ. This claim makes him a pagan, and also a neo-pagan, clad with new forms and adopting modern expressions. To the Gnostic, salvation means to be incorporated into a chosen group of disciples and encounter a Master who awakens consciousness, not to be clothed like a “beggar” in his encounter with God. Neognostics often refer to some Master of esoterico-occult school which was flourishing at the turn of the century, such as Allan Kardec, Eliphas Levi, and H. Petrovskia Blavatsky. They also imitate Christians, referring to the Bible, and introduce themselves as adherents of a simple wisdom considered to be superior to faith, yet not in contradiction with it. They pretend to represent the way of excellence in order to practice a better and a genuine Christianity, of an esoteric type. Each independent gnostic movement feels to be the privileged holder of absolute Knowledge, the new world religion, destined to replace *exoteric* Christianity, which has reached its ultimate, final end; they even aim to accelerate Christianity's decadence to hasten the arrival of the future cosmic religion. Neo-paganism linked to gnosticism is one of the greatest challenges for Christianity at the end of the century.

Esoterism and occult sciences are surprisingly in vogue these days and are the object of a lively infatuation. A multitude of clusters and various schools appear under different denominations, all of them claiming to belong to Gnosticism. These trends flourish, develop and advocate on the “market” a new anthropology, a new cosmology and a theology of pure gnostic tailoring. The modern Gnostic, no less than his predecessor, does not “believe”, for faith is inferior to knowledge. He “knows”, he is an initiate to the contemporary resurgence of the “eternal gnosis”. Each cluster claims to be the privileged holder of the absolute knowledge, which at the end of the present millennium, marking the end of the era of Pisces, and the dawn of that of Aquarius is inaugurating a new world religion for the New Age. This new Religion will then toll the death of all exoteric religion, naturally of Christianity.

A certain number of indexes reveal its widespread influence. The esoterico-gnostic literature makes sustained progress by making compilations and reissuing past sacred texts, such as classics of the *Hidden Way*. Reincarnation is one of the central themes of Gnosis. A certain number of Christian practices allow even a double belonging: Christians may become Rosicrucians yet maintain their allegiance to both Christianity and Spiritism; profess Christian faith and Anthroposophy. They may maintain their Christian vocabulary on God, Jesus, the Gospel, the Church, though emptying it of its original authentic meaning. Cosmic Energy, Christic Spirit, secret words of Jesus, Gospel of Saint John which will replace the Church of Saint Peter; the end of the world, the beginning of a new cycle, Reincarnation and Karma, are some of the elements of the Gnostic “knowledge”. The revival of old gnosticism and its modern expression is associated with the return of esoterism as a way to search for hidden Knowledge. At the end of the last century, it had inspired symbolism in literature; it raised a haze in the

Sixties with L. Pauwels (before his surprising "conversion to Roman-Catholicism) and J. Bergiers, in "Le Matin des Magiciens", followed by the publication of the review "Planète", while in the USA the first movements of the New Age were born. Today's gnostic, as its predecessor, is still an anxiety stricken man due to his condition as *homo viator*, thrown into existence without his will, while the surrounding society is tragically lacking in "Meaning". He is in search of the hidden way to escape from the world by means of a saving illumination in order to get rid of his "anxiety". Those ways proliferate in periods of social crises, while the witness of the Church seem so weakened.

R. Bergeron has distinguished two main groups (*Le Cortège de fous de Dieu*, Montreal, 1982). One of them draws its inspiration from the Christian Bible (Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons), the other offer an amalgamation and syncretism, drawing from both eastern religions and esoteric tradition and tending to enlarge the human consciousness. In this second group, the Judeo-Christian stock is completely remodeled and reinterpreted in order to enter into a varied synthesis, though carrying the same familiar air, i.e. the old gnosticism. The second group is Theosophy, Anthroposophy, Rosi-crucianism, Universal White Brotherhood, The Graal Movement, Traditional Order of Martinists, New Acropolis, Atlantis, Metanoia, New Thinking and other schools at the periphery of Spiritism, Cosmic Sciences, extra terrestrials, Human Potentiality Development, and so forth. It inspires various scientific speculations concerning the secret of the universe, the esoteric rediscovery of past civilizations (Charles Hoy Fort), lost and secret traditions, occult and strange literature, religions with a renewal of interest on the genuine content of the Message of Jesus, reissuing of the Apocryphal Gospels; psychological emphasis being laid on the religious structure of the conscience, hence the renewed interest in Carl Jung and Victor Frankl; literature interested in the strangeness of human condition, the approach of the symbolic poetry of Charles Baudelaire and Rimbaud (In France; E.A. Poe, Whitman, Thoreau, and Emerson in the USA?), surrealism of André Breton (a contemporary esoteric thinker). In comparison to religions, these movements claim to be the depositaries of the ultimate truth. According to their estimate, Churches are offering mere external and limited explanations of the existing reality. They are, they maintain, to be the real heart of True Religion. One can join their ranks while conserving his other allegiance. In the meetings of AMORC Rosi-crucianism each adept is invited to worship the God of his heart. Rudolf Steiner asks every adept of Anthroposophy to practice his own worship. The New Acropolis, the Movement of Graal, declare: We will help you to better practice your religion. They claim to present to western society a new wisdom, of which each one declares to be part of the primordial wisdom, the original source of particular religions. They find the universality of the time and space of symbols and religious myths to affirm the common origin of different esoterisms which would express themselves in their turn by the mediation of official exotic religions of which they pretend to be the essence. In fact, they claim that in the beginning there existed a primordial and atemporal tradition, which was preserved around privileged depositories in centers of initiates. The majority of these movements recognize in Jesus one of the links of the chain. Some refer to hidden sources, to secrets reserved exclusively to elites. They assure their followers that they hold the key of that which is behind the hollow side of reality which is more real than the right side, a mere deceiving façade!

All gnostic doctrines are fundamentally esoteric. In addition to their literary and obvious meaning the words of Jesus contain hidden meanings intelligible to those who possess the key of their interpretation. These latter are assured that they will rediscover the original unity of the meaning beyond the duality of the expression, an absolute knowledge, the powers of salvation, which all western wisdom pretends to deliver. On this point they radically oppose orthodox Christianity according to which the message of Jesus can be and must be universally comprehensible. They blame the Church for having concealed the words of Christ evoking the practice of esoterism. (Cf Matth 4:11-12 cf 33-34). Their exegesis will reduce the Gospel texts to a mere symbolic significance, secret and mythical, appealing to atemporal mysterious sources. This exegesis called “consciential” makes of Christian Scriptures a guide which will offer an access to superior states of consciousness. The desire to know the genuine thinking of Jesus recedes before a will to pierce the realm of the unknown in order to appropriate it, so that to know the occult mechanism of things and manipulate them by identifying oneself with God and eventually becoming the masters of reality, and even of the divine itself.

The modern gnostics want to stretch this secret teaching which until now was reserved for an elite, and benefit all humans, because, at the proximity of the year 2000, the time of Apocalypse is imminent. For the group Metanoia the discovery in Nag Hammadi of the “authentic” words of Jesus in the Fifth Gospel, was the great chance offered at our times, precisely at the moment when Churches are unable to answer to essential interrogations. While Judeo-Christian-ism is “dying under our eyes” the Gospel according to Thomas is inaugurating a new cycle, and has already opened the way to realization for the men of the third millennium.

## Part II

### **What is the nature of this Gnostic religious experience?**

The new Gnostic religions consider themselves to be indispensable to modern times as the adepts of the Religion of Aquarius; they represent the Cosmic Religion, the Universal Gospel, the Age of the Ultimate revelation, permitting the realization which exoteric religions ignore, because the latter live on the surface only of the real, while they claim they possess a cosmic and a divine dimension. This orientation constitutes more than a given secret teaching; their gnostic approach offers an interior regenerating experience, a divinizing one, through which man recalls and repossess the consciousness of himself, of his origins, of his genuine nature. In illumination he recognizes himself to be as in God; he knows God; for he is an emanation of God; he is stranger to the world, but is on the right track and saved from all eternity! The salvation he is advocating is the outcome of the re-cognition of the I as a spark of the divine, which was totally absent from the redemptive action of Jesus Christ and stranger to orthodox Christianity. The ambiguity arises from the fact that modern gnosis(s), currently use the term (cosmic) Christ and

*christic* for designating the divine reality in an earthly state. They introduce gnostic esoteric teaching as the search of the interior Master who will lead to a christic and divine state, followed by the total mastery of one's self and the acquisition of powers like those of Jesus, the Miracle maker, the Thaumaturgos. Gnosis is the fact of the I which is in search of his real divine Identity. He will attain the human potential development and penetrate into the Internal Space by experiencing different levels of consciousness, until he may achieve union with the cosmic consciousness. By nature Man is spirit! *I am that which is; by Mystical experience of realization of myself, I discover the Divine in Me.*

Gnosis is the religion of the New Age. The resolution of the new gnosis, whose links with neo-paganism is a fact, is to constitute a universal religion, in order to replace exoteric Christianity. The religion of Christ belonged to the Age of Pisces, which will disappear in the same way as did the Mesopotamian religion, of the era of the Taurus and the Mosaic Religion of the Ram. It is necessary, even imperative therefore to accelerate the decadence of Christianity in order that the future cosmic religion's arrival be hastened. If the Christian implicated in it becomes aware of the syncretism he will discover that he is adopting reincarnation, or becoming the disciple of Jesus as the great avatar, as a simple awakener in search of a Kingdom of God, which is no more than the advent of cosmic Consciousness, the search for powers and Knowledge helping him to realize his being; in which case there is no need for a Savior. In the past gnosticism was a formidable peril to Christianity. It is certainly the case at the end of the present century. (cf. "Néo-paganism", *Encyclopedie Des Religions*, P.U.F. Paris).

## **The Spokesmen of Theoreticized Neo-Paganism**

The neo-pagan writers of today, like the Christian writers in the second and third centuries, begin by elucidating their theses about the emergence of a new civilization and by drawing on and taking up positions against earlier suppositions. In fact, it appears that at a crucial juncture developments in the study of myth and its interpretations by some Christian scholars and thinkers has given support to the neo-pagan position, writes Thomas Molnar (*The Pagan Temptation*).

The purpose of theoreticians of neo-paganism, following the line traced by Nietzsche, is not to practice a return back to old paganism as such but to allow westerners to reappropriate a "religious" homeland for himself. We recall Nietzsche's (pitiless) verdict on Christianity: "I finally reach the conclusion and now I pronounce my verdict. I *condemn* Christianity, I raise against the Christian Church the most terrible accusation which has ever been pronounced. To my sight it is the worst of conceivable corruptions, in deliberate knowledge it wanted to bring the *summum* of the worst possible corruptions. The corruption of the Christian Church did spare nothing; it made of all values a non-value, of all truth a lie, of all sincerity a meanness of soul (...). I call Christianity the unique great curse, the unique great intimate corruption, the unique great instinct of vengeance, for which any means is not venomous enough, secret enough, underground enough, mean enough,—I call it the immortal blemish of humankind" (*The Anti-Christ*, 118-120, my translation from the French).

It is essential to understand that the enterprise of repaganization is not a return to the past and to its gods, it is rather a new way of apprehending reality, a new epistemology, a new wisdom, in the pagan sense. Under such circumstances history has no meaning because for the neopagan nominalist epistemology a superhuman giver of meaning, ultimately a unique theos, creator of the unchanging structure of being, does not exist. It would be false to suggest that neopaganism means a nostalgic attachment to tradition, earlier values, a glorious cultural heritage, indeed to olden Western civilization. The neopagans are nominalists who reject any concepts and entities that are not of certified, ad hoc human invention, who consider themselves masters of concepts that they make and unmake at will, according to need, utility, or policy. Since ultimately only human beings and the material universe waiting to be shaped by them exist, the highest rank belongs to the best human, the strongest self shaper, and shaper of others. (Th. Molnar, ib.) It would be interesting to expound also the particular criticism that Neo pagan thinkers (Pierre Vial) address to what they call a caricatured explanation of the neopagan nominalism.

## **Return to Western Polytheism of Origins**

Neo-Paganism manifests itself as the form of spirituality which refuses to accept the idea of a unique truth being exclusive of other truths, but able to firmly establish a genuine religious tolerance. To begin with it accepts the *legitimate multiple ways leading to the sacred*. For, a theoretical system which admits an unlimited number of gods will also admit, not a mere plurality of worships, but also the plurality of mores, of political and social systems, conceptions and of cosmologies, of which the gods are the sublimated expressions". Furthermore, Neo paganism recognizes the continuity between God and the world, which are not in opposition, as is the case in Christianity, for they are made of the same raw material, they are of divine nature. In such perspective, the Westerner may expect to realize himself, become what he is (L. Pauwels), no longer subject to a monotheistic moral Christianity, which is deeply animated by resentment, abasement and destructive egalitarianism of human energies. Neo-paganism declares itself a sustained effort to emancipate the Westerner from the degrading hegemony of Christianity. Christianity may become utterly detrimental to the building of Europe; for it represents a religious ideology which does not behove Europeans. People(s) must live according to their rhythm, which cultures develop on schemes of thinking and of which they are themselves the originators. Judaism, for instance, is certainly good for Jews, as Islam is for Arabs. Therefore Europe must go back to its deep Indo-european roots and not look for, nor cling to, Judeo-Christian origins. Hence the haste to look again to Norman, Celtic, and Germanic religions, a marked interest in druidism and Odinism. Neo-pagan groups constituted in Iceland, France, and the USA, usually are associated with archaic religious practices (Magic, sorcery, toast to the health of Thor, funeral services where participants form the chain of strength when passing to each other the cup of mead (hydromel). These symbolic celebrations and community festivities of Nature and Energy challenge the supremacy of the Judeo-Christian presence and declare they will replace it. *Strictly speaking it is not returning to the past but being open to the past in the present!*

The hostility of Neopaganism toward monotheism is exceptionally violent. In response to

monotheistic religion, which concentrates all the positive values in God, leaving humanity in a submissive position, neopagans assert a pagan worldview which claims myths as superior, because polytheism grants its adherents a greater independence, a larger area of choice, a more serene, unruffled conscience, insofar as they serve a variety of gods with relative interests, rather than one absolute God. The amoral nature of pagan gods permits the pagan to jettison the moral burden and, in long run, to adopt a value free reflection, focusing not on moral betterment, but on the improvement of intellectual, psychological, and biological qualities. The objective is to produce a non-scriptural human being, a non-Christian, a pagan. For Thomas Molnar “Its main philosophical charge against Hebrew and Christian religions is that within their framework humans receive their existence and their values exclusively from an outside agent. Facing the holy and good divinity who imposes, by right of perfection, alien standards of thought and behavior on his worshippers, human beings have no choice but to divest themselves of their natural instincts,... Pagan deities, Hegel has observed, are nothing but the magnified imaginary projections of the human will and desire”. For Neo-paganism it is imperative to restore the plurality of paganism against the reductionist and simplifying monotheism of Christianity.

A devastating critic of Monotheism, Manuel de Dieguez attempts to prove in his “*The Monotheist Idol*”, the absurdity, for instance, of any sacrificial religious thinking, especially one particular to Christianity. (He has in mind the Roman Catholic Mass of Transubstantiation.) Yet the thrust of his attack points at the absurdity of Monotheism in itself. The first part of the book exhibits arguments of a formal logic, debating for instance the christological article according to which Christ who, in his present state of exaltation, is near the Father, can also be present everywhere, especially at Mass. This thinking is in certain ways reminiscent of much medieval theological quarrels on the same subject. Yet, one will be stunned by the total incomprehension by the author of biblical thinking and of theological developments, notwithstanding the numerous quotations he makes from Christian sources. The second part of the book is simpler. According to Manuel de Dieguez a generalized “religious” sacrifice will provoke the sacrifice of man! The monotheistic Idol implies a State which is all powerful, totalitarian, and idolatrous. Since monotheism demands sacrifice, the State being its image and likeness, it becomes clear as the sunshine, that the State will in its turn demand sacrifices. Judeo-Christian religion is *the origin* and *provides the model* of the totalitarian state, of Hitlerism, of concentration camps, of total nuclear war, etc. As soon as there is a demand for sacrifice a nuclear destruction follows inescapably. Such pages are astonishing, and make me wonder if the fervent advocate of anti-monotheism has ever read the Scriptures, at least, if not other serious pieces of theology! Manuel de Dieguez curiously forgets how pagan religions were practicing human sacrifices while the Biblical Revelation forbids precisely that.

For Alain de Benoist, Christianity is a deviation of the spirituality and of the sacred. In cutting the Europeans from their traditions and by severing ties with pagan religions, Christian monotheism exiled the gods from the world. Nations have always offered themselves gods who are in conformity with their deepest aspirations and this is rendered obvious by the witnessing of current revival of spirituality. Two centuries of frenzied

atheism did not change such an ineradicable necessity. Christian monotheism is not simply an insult to reason. Rather it has become a deviation of the *spirituality of the sacred*. The French theoretician of Neo-paganism offers an invitation, with a surprising note of poetry and eloquence, to a true re-beginning, to a starting over. Alain de Benoist speaks of the urgent necessity of resacralizing the world with a strong apology for a natural spirituality, hindered and choked in the past by the doctrine of a unique revealed God and a unique salvation offered in Jesus Christ. *Christianity is a deviation of genuine natural spirituality* (!) The Christian God is far from men, a stranger to the world (naturally the doctrine of Incarnation, and everything it implies is—deliberately—omitted, from such polemics). The author discovers and uses advantageously classical weaponry, according to which the Beautiful is of pagan origin; the discourses on peace in the Bible point only to that which can be found in cemeteries. Christianity has reduced spirituality to sheer moralism, the biblical God being elusively a god of interdiction. Judeo-Christian civilization is a killer of myths, therefore it has deprived humanity of its roots and offered a bewildering orientation to humankind. One may suspect the Neo-pagan of suffering an acute kind of deliberate amnesia, by forgetting that it is impossible to re-instate myth in a highly, (to say nothing of crazily) organized industrial society, the *technocosm* which essentially is a-logic, deprived of the Logos (Jan Marejko: *La Cité des Morts*). Yet, for Alain de Benoist, Judeo-Christian monotheism is a negative religion. The image of an immutable Judeo-Christianity during twenty or forty centuries, is that of Jahve, a God of the desert of Arabia, a solitary, exclusive, and cruel God who extols intolerance and favors hatred. Several quotations from the Psalms, the Books of Deuteronomy, Lamentations and Matthew's Gospel, are made to furnish proofs of this kind of highly and fanatically biased interpretation of the biblical God. The belief in an arrogant and vindictive God has, says de Benoist, contaminated the entire thinking and action of the Christian Church through primitive Christians who decided to abandon the Synagogue. It has permeated the Church irrevocably. Monotheism in its germ, carries the fundamental principle of all spiritual absolutism. The exclusivity of a God in relation to others supposes the existence of a truth which rejects all other opinions as being absolute errors. On the other hand, every polytheistic religion is by nature tolerant because it postulates the existence of a great number of gods, and therefore admits the possibility of diverse types of worships. In other terms, monotheism accustoms the mind to conceive only one single truth while polytheism helps him to admit several ones. A Christian naturally will draw to the attention of A. de B. that if intolerance there has been, it stemmed from pagan Romans, and the violence brought by barbarian tribes invading Western Europe at the time when the Empire was collapsing has to be incriminated for it, not Christian pacifism!

It is obvious that the theses thus developed do not suggest a simple return to past paganisms, but herald the coming, and inauguration, of a Neo-paganism (not unlike the one which showed its monstrous claws in Europe between 1933 and 1945, a NATIONAL PAGANISM). These ideas are not simply games for philosophers; they express a trend which will become increasingly stronger in our post-modern, meta-Christian society, if the Church is reluctant, or scared, to rediscover and to cling to its authentic origins.

Alain de Benoist's main thrust is that Christianity is to be blamed for the deplorable

present cultural, social, psychological, ecological, even religious barbarism, characterizing Western civilization. Having abandoned and destroyed the old Teutonic and Norse divinities, Europe, in the course of the last fifteen centuries, has been culturally impoverished and tragically plagued by innumerable evils. She has deprived herself of a deep mystery, forsaken the wealth of the classical Greek, Roman and Nordic religious *mythopoiesis*. Radical secularization was inevitable for Judeo-Christian religion is responsible for it. Go back to the old divinities, Zeus, Wotan and Thor, he suggests.

We have, however, reasons to be frightened at such a prospect; for we are almost certain that before Apollo appears on the scene, as a modern deus-ex-machina, with his refined lyre to rescue us from impending religio-cultural dooms, we may well first have to face the cataclysmic precipitation of Dionysus-Bacchus and submit ourselves to its degrading regime of debaucheries, submerging us into a post-modern ordeal, which cannot be different to the one of pre-post-modern times. My friend, Jean Brun, who recently passed away, was exceptionally lucid, and has warned prophetically against the devastating coming-back of this semi-god, in his brilliant "*Le Retour de Dionysos*". Though for Alain de Benoist, the gods of the past will bring an/the new Apocalypse of harmony and establish peace upon an earth re-dedicated to forsaken past divinities.

For as the history of religions and of ideas demonstrates, neopaganism primarily mixes phenomena, phenomena of syncretism and not completely realized concepts. The Sacred exists, even if it is through a multitude of representations. The religion of the Bible is the first cause of the disappearance of the Sacred. Max Weber had interpreted the *Entzauberung*—disenchantment—of the world as directly linked to the propagation of a Judeo-Christian religion, by dissociating being from the world and by the particular role attributed to Reason. The essential feature of biblical religion is not, as it has habitually been asserted, its monotheism but the association of the latter with the radical distinction between God and the world. The world is a mere instant, while God is beyond time. The author does not see in Nature, as does the Psalms, *inter alia*, the glorification of God by His works. According to him, Nature in the Bible remains completely silent about God. Therefore the essence of monotheism is its *constitutive dualism*. God and physis are not one. Wherever paganism in the past was building bridges, establishing links, biblical monotheism performed breaks, which man cannot fill. In the last resort in the Bible the concept of the sacred is absent. Alain de Benoist understands, though, that there is in the Bible something called sanctification, but the *sacred*, has been replaced by the *saint*, a totally different and antithetical concept to his interpretation of the manifestation of the "Religious". The sanctity required by Jahve is mere conformity to His law. As a result, western rationalism tolled the beginning of the end of Christianity. Reason became the most homicidal of monotheisms! It achieved the *extinction of the sacred by metaphysics, the death of metaphysics by the death of the sacred which it had provoked*. For, concludes A. de B. quoting the Gospel, (!) *Whoever draws the sword will perish by the sword*, thus summarizing two millennia of western history.

In *Critique De La Modernite*, Alain Touraine, well known French sociologist, offers another historical analysis of modern times, with a severe diagnosis, though a limited one, due to his humanistic methodology. The Western world has believed for a long time that

modernity was the triumph of reason, the destruction of traditions, of all allegiances, of beliefs, the calculated colonization of what was experienced. Today all the categories which had been submitted to the enlightened elite, workers and colonized, women and children, have revolted against, and refuse to call a world modern which recognizes neither their particular experience nor their will to access to that which is universal. In such a way, those who will identify themselves with reason, from now on, appear as the defenders of an arbitrary power. Must one shift from their hegemony to recognize a limitless diversity of experiences and traditions? But such an extreme differentiation carries in itself intolerance and racism, to mention only those two. The *fleeing towards* post-modernism betrays the exhaustion of the ideology which, in the past identified modernity with rationalization (sovereignty of reason). Nietzsche's judgment upon reason comes here to mind: "Reason is a serpent whose rationalism was only a temporary skin. Once he gets rid of it the serpent follows its biological path preparing himself to other avatars".

Tourraine is considering going back to the origins in order to reconstruct modernity. From the very beginning, since the breaking of Renaissance with Reformation, it disrupted the unity of the old world, both rational and sacred. It—modernity—assigned to reason the task of discovering—unveiling—the laws of the world and making appear a subject which was no more divine but human. This dualism of modernity, present in Descartes as well as in The Declaration of the Rights of Man, was destroyed by the pride of the philosophy of the Aufklärung and Philosophers of History. Now that the dominion of the conquering reason has come to an end, overthrown by Nietzsche and Freud, and concurrently by mass consummation and nationalisms, we need to listen to the voice of the subject, which is not necessarily introspection, but struggle to gain freedom against the logic of merchandise and power, the will of the individual and the group to be and remain active and responsible actors of their lives, and "Memory" (of the past) and "Belonging" (for the present). The liberation of the subject and the rooting in a body and in a culture."

James Hillman (*Le Polythéisme de l'Âme*, french translation of *Psychology: Monotheistic or Polytheistic*; Mercure de France, Le Mail), parts with the quarrel developed in France between defenders of Monotheism (from which paradoxically God has been withdrawn) and the attempt to rehabilitate Polytheism (which according to the American author has been caricatured in neo-paganism, which in its extreme forms appears as its own negation). He suggests applying the discoveries of depth psychology. When we speak of polytheism, we first speak of the appearance of gods in our own psyche, and polytheism has no other value than on a metaphysical level, which has to be recognized as the multiplicity of those divine appearances. From this point of view polytheism is of the soul. Conceived in this way, polytheism wants to be a symphony of the aspirations of man as an answer to the calls he receives unceasingly and to the signs of gods whom we learned not to read (*desappris à lire*). Polytheism is the liberation and the liberty which recognizes that everyone has his or her own way in spiritual inquiry.

The neopagans base this desire for a new civilization on a very particular interpretation of history, writes Th. Molnar. Parallel to Christian history, which they see as false,

distorting, and inhibiting, they believe a true history has been running, which defied, whenever possible the course of the Dark Ages.

The Neopagans reject the model of Christ who exemplifies the Suffering Servant. Alain de Benoist prescribes the Bible and the works of Marx as books to be placed in on a new index. He also believes that the egalitarianism of the liberal Western consumer society stems from the Church's teaching. For all these reasons, many believe that the time for the liquidation of Christianity and the rescue of civilization from its grasp has come.

Neopagans welcome the rehabilitation of non-Western and non-Christian religions, art forms, social structures, architecture, poetry, and legend whether Greek, ancient Peruvian, Celtic, Viking, or Siberian shamanistic. The plurality of civilization, and in a sense its immortality since each can be rehabilitated and recaptured in form and meaning, permits an new awareness, a positive reevaluation, of one's own roots (cf. Th. Molnar).

Neopaganism capitalizes on the difficulty human beings have of conceiving of a God simultaneously external to the universe and yet personal and present. It finds it easier to see God, humanity, and the nature as a continuum. Paganism assumes that Nature is alive. It is a divine being and this world soul is the sole true being -there is no other.

Imperishable, uncreated, without beginning or end, this god, or world-soul accomplishes itself in and through the world; the creature is consubstantial with the creator.

Surprisingly the latent monotheism of Druidism, neopagans will say, facilitated the conversion of the believers to Christianity!

"Europe is never more pagan than now when she looks for her roots which are not Judeo-Christian. The dictatorship of Christian ideology did not choke old values. It only pushed them back to the darkness of the unconscious. Once the dictatorship is banished, it is normal that all these old values reappear stronger than ever. We are at the dawn of a new civilization and without being able to say what it will be one may be certain that it will be the new religion which it will generate that will be impregnated by all the pagan elements which were there before the introduction of Christianity. That is the law of circles" writes Jean Markale, in *L'Europe Paienne*.

Finally to quote a "Christian", the German Roman-Catholic priest and psychoanalyst, Eugen Drewermann, who is not very far from the kingdom of Neo-paganism, "Christianity is a kind of modern Pharaonism"!

The late Visser t'Hooft, first General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, in an illuminating article offered an accurate portrait of neo-paganism, which also describes the secularized westerner.

- Neo-paganism presents itself in general as a monism in which the relation between man and the divine are not those between I and Thou (Martin Buber), but between I and "it". The question to be raised, writes Visser t'Hooft, is the following: Is God the sum total, or the foundation of all existence and a mere subject, or an object of meditation, or is He the Creator with whom we can communicate through prayer?
- The neo-pagan believes that God reveals himself in various modes and manners but will not accept a particular historical event as a/the, decisive and unquestioned revelation of God.

- Neo-paganism identifies God with nature. We are invited to come back to a type of communion with nature such as the one which characterized primitive religions. (Notice the ramifications of this into modern ecological philosophy.)
- Neo-paganism is a deeply rooted and aggressive vitalism seeking the intensification of life rather than its transformation. But we question the pretention that life is an end in itself to such an extent that the aim of life is to live (Aldous Huxley). To the worship of brutal force the Gospel opposes the Prince of Life.
- Neopaganism rehabilitates and emancipates Eros, which supposedly the Judeo-Christian tradition has suppressed. Thus the Church is discredited for having ignored or despised Eros.
- Finally, Neopaganism is a religion without any precisely defined and firmly anchored Hope. Wherever the concept of the infinite is lacking and there is no encounter with God, where an abstract or vague omnipotence lacks the omnipotence and the qualities of the unique God, naturally there remains no center for time, neither beginning nor end, but only a mere possibility of an unlimited freedom, without a definite orientation, in an incommensurable loneliness.”

## Part III

### Conclusions

The following concluding remarks are not intended to serve as a comprehensive apology for Christianity, attempting to defend and illustrate the Revealed Truth. Neither will I venture in formulating a new missionary strategy for the re-evangelization of the West. More simply I will share a few remarks on the present situation of the Western Church, all ecclesiastical Confessions, confounded, and finally, state some basic convictions which can still be relevant in the present religious situation and address them to the indifferent, secularized, or neo-paganized post-modern westerner.

Here is then the picture in which Europe appears in her religious plight. Europe had built the City of Man in which God is absent, though so-called religious elements under the clothing of neo-paganism or forms of spiritual sub-culture are pervading every inch of the Old Continent. Before the development of modern democracy, westerners were subject to a law, that of the ancestors, or of God. In principle, they knew that they were submitted to something external and superior to them. Today's Western society seeks to organize itself according to the rights, or with the help of the law of man. In the new society, *he wishes to meet with himself*. (The old figures of Greek mythology are not portraits to keep in an album of past memories; they represent quite accurately the modern and post-modern physiognomy, and "modern physicians", concerned with the state of health of their patient, do not need to dissect their psyche. Greek mythology had accomplished it already in a remarkable way, if only we were able to listen to and benefit from some of their realistic insights. Narcissus in love with himself, Prometheus in permanent revolt against

Olympian divinities, gigantic Atlas striving to bear the world on his shoulders, Dedalus, builder-architect of artificial devices trying to escape his tragic destiny of imprisonment, the tragic Sisyphus attempting to climb over and over again the hillside from where he was cast down, are not old faces, but also our contemporaries. The Man of the classical era believed in theogony, or theogonies, the birth of gods. Moderns in a demential theurgia (*their* creation of gods), imagine that they will become the genitor of gods, made according to their own likeness and resemblance. They qualify themselves as Modern Man, therefore as different from the one of the past, striving to remain mere man and nothing more than man. In so doing, they have generated a conflicting duality, an irresolvable one, into which modernity is hopelessly caught up, the duality between the City and the Church, paganism and Christian faith, nature and grace. The Modern European rejects pagan virtues in the name of Christian virtues, yet will also challenge Christian virtues in the name of pagan ones. He refutes Athens by Jerusalem, and refutes Jerusalem by Athens, endlessly desiring to build a third City, The City of Man, which, for the moment, like in the past, glides away from his fingers, escapes his control. Here comes to mind F. Kafka's description of the Modern Tower of Babel built into the ground! The tragic illusion of Modern Man, an illusion for the future, is to take this double negation to be a positive one. It is our urgent task to dissipate it and save modern humans from their deadly errands. Stubbornly and with a heartbreaking perseverance, he is attempting to achieve his salvation by means of his philosophy of *his* history, technology, frantic involvement into political arenas which replace the old cathedrals (Jean Brun). Did not the ancients say that *perseverare diabolicum est*? Yet the tragical failure of the earthly false messianism, (remember Marxist ideology), can be considered as a Tchernobyl for the soul, an anthropological catastrophe. Huge walls of religious memories have fallen to the ground, crumbled into pieces and remain in our sight as a miserable heap of dust. Both the theoretical and practical atheism precipitated the ruin of the world. *The worship of Man is nothing less than the prelude of his own entombment.*

“The 21st century will be *religious* or it will not” said André Malraux, the existentialist thinker, meaning by that that life and history are inconceivable without Religion, though he did not specify which Religion! It is evident that the old secularization which so much troubled the Church some thirty years ago, can no longer be considered as the main opponent. Religion, neo-pagan or infra-religious as in the past, is the main opponent. The *etsi deus non daretur* (even if the Hypothesis God were not proven), can no longer function with absolute power in the present "religious" climate in the West. Remember that according to the Gospel parable, when a demon leaves a house, he returns and finds it cleaned, and then goes and brings with him seven more deadly companions. As in Nature, the human soul hates the void!

In a certain sense several of the criticisms and violent attacks launched lately against the Christian Church could be easily substantiated. On the bizarre bazaar of the churchy marketing we meet with both the caricature and the fraud of liberalism but not less of evangelical protestants (not concerning ourselves with what is happening at neighbor Churches). To deny it would be practicing the strategy of an ostrich ideology. The hoax of much of modern protestantism's sales is both a disgrace to the gospel truth inherited from the Reformation, and a blasphemy dishonoring the Almighty God of our salvation.

Yet it is not merely that type of swindling we have in mind here. In an interview with the French daily *Le Figaro*, Paul Ricoeur, whose third volume of "Lectures" contains most of his religious writings, seems to concur. Ricoeur's evaluation of present day churches is severe. He recognizes the intellectual impoverishment. The conceptual structure of the religious is constantly diminishing, he says. Believers, even highly intellectual ones, are satisfied with an elementary, almost childish, religious culture, which will never go beyond catechism class, or knowledge acquired at primary school. The religious milieu *thinks* very little. For some reason which I am not able to analyze, the protestant thinker continues, Churchmen content themselves with sacramental practices, which rely upon a very thin credo. Those who go to church prefer to be comforted, tranquilized, but not concerned. This indeed is a harsh judgement, yet a necessary, even salutary one. As the French saying goes: We need a remedy for horses!

In the face of aggressive religious attacks such as those described above, we deplore the infantilization of the Christian proclamation. Evangelical protestantism, via its pietistic branches and subjectivistic soteriology is feverishly selling an easy Gospel, the "cheap grace" exposed 60 years ago by Bonhoeffer. For what is the use of showing faces of decrepitude in the TV screen via satellite relays to more than one billion viewers, if it is not the golden faith, but a despicable plastic evangelical *charabia*? Evangelicals have shamelessly infantilized the gospel with handy, superficial, and misleading formulas, even when they hide themselves behind the symbolic writings of the past, or claim to belong to (a *orthostatic*) Orthodoxy. This infantilization will alienate those who would best like to understand. This infantilization of the preaching, and its corollary, a narrow moralism, insist on the value of some "duties" and a few "ethical imperatives" which do not reflect the Spirit, even not the letter, of the commandment. If the Church is to speak to modern secularization, she must become aware that her spirituality - the marketing churchianity and the proliferation of gimmicks of "How-to-do-it" religious *aerobics*—are the most threatening secularization she first has to avoid, for they are far more threatening than the ones from the outside world. The modern irrational dancing, prancing and trembling type of spirituality is totally devoid of the transcendent, i.e. the real Presence of the Spirit.

On the other hand, some segments of Christianity, having jumped into the band-wagon of post-modern *ideosophies*, are trying to catch the train already on the move, running the risk of betraying traditional Christology. A modern "*consensus fidei*" strongly emphasizes the *humanity* of Jesus at the expense of his divinity. In it Christianity is mere *jesusology*, tainted with a thin layer of anthropological varnish. With the positivist mind established as a dominant and surprisingly popular superstition in western society, some modern Christians are reluctant to be classified among the "idiots" subscribing to the classical orthodox christological dogma. Therefore, theologians have demystified mystery, and priests and pastors have discovered a Messiah in the figure of the revolutionary Leader. Jesus for them is a mere symbol of the liberation of captives, even the prototype of all deviants (the exceptionally *avored ones being naturally the sexually deviants*). Marginal Christians feel themselves closer to this Jesus than to the Christ of the Creeds and Confessions, to say nothing of the Gospels. Therefore, to persevere at the end of this century as a confessing-witnessing Christian, requires a sustained effort of conscience, for

the Lordship of Christ over history calls for an uncompromising involvement in all personal and social choices. The Christian will not lose sight of the perspective of the Kingdom of God. Even if he were a rationalist, he could not logically do away with the idea of Eternity. Segments of the Modern Church are ignoring a perspective *sub specie aeternitatis*. Modern Christians seem to have reduced man to the mere superficiality of appearance (Jan Marejko forges in French the neologism *surficialité*) by means of the all-powerful human-sciences, forbidding the access to the depth of man. Such a dominant ideology is so insidious that modern Christians have deliberately restrained the borderline of the Kingdom of God to this present earth; resurrection is a mere image of internal renewal. The Liberation Theology, by its *exegesis* has created a *par-exegesis*, (a term we borrow from modern Greek). If I may attempt another word play, as I did when I first introduced the German theologian in France, in his otherwise brilliant thesis Jürgen Moltmann in *Theology of Hope*, his Theology of *Anastasis (Resurrection)* has been transformed into a Theology of Ep-Anastasis (Revolution)!

The Church in Western Europe gives evidence of decrepitude: lack of vocation, weakness of spiritual authority, personal crises among the clergy, decreasing number of the faithful, and last, but not least, a dramatic *material* impoverishment. The Church seems nearly out of breath, soon choked by its voluntary involvement in the deleterious atmosphere it has chosen to live and witness in, out of the sanctified Ecclesia, away from the normal dwelling place into which it is called to live, listen and serve.

Among many convincing defenses of the dynamic and transforming character of Christianity in the reality of Europe is one by Denis de Rougement who in his "Letter to Europeans" has reminded post-modern, pseudo-progressive Europeans that three of the essential conquests of western mind, the concept of Person, of Liberty, of History are essentially the results of biblical revelation. Roussas John Rushdoony, in his *The Foundations of Social Order* reminds us that the Chalcedonian christological definition grounded political freedom in the West.

The following personal proposal in five points for a Christian witness combines theological motivation and cultural concern in addressing "The Old Man" who is our contemporary and will remain so, notwithstanding all his skills to renew old tricks to get rid of The Way, Truth, Life. Naturally it needs a serious elaboration. Yet to Seek : The Glory of God—The Meaning of Human Life—The calling to take care of creation in all its areas—The involvement in the social and political arena—The abiding into the necessary sacramental communion, the fellowship of the saints, the belonging to the visible Church.

Following Jean Brun, we also have to make clear—

*The essential distinction between man's Condition and his Situation;* they are not equivalent nor interchangeable. The former one is of vertical dimension. Revealed by God to man, in His light. It belongs to the religious essence. The latter one is of horizontal dimension, and pertains to his existential plight only.

*We must distinguish also between Revelation and Unveiling;* the first one comes from above, is God given, a Grace. The second is the human effort vaulting, inordinate pride to

attain Truth and Meaning—through the instrumentality of History, Politics, and Technology—that attempts to summarize all breeds of pagan man, from Prometheus to Nietzsche, from Sisyphus to Marx, from Freud to Robert Schuller!

In consequence we may go to Man of all eras and make him aware that the *fragmentary rescues* he is after are not the same as *the Divine Redemption* he may get for free. The strenuous efforts *to secure emancipation* will never achieve that which the *Freedom in Divine Truth* can grant, completely and permanently. *The temporary truces, or cease-fires*, he is seeking will fall short of *the Peace which surpasseth all understanding*. *The shaky shelters* he is building to protect himself will never resist life's tempests as does *the Eternal Refuge found in God*. Let him know that all the barns of the world will never appease his hunger if he does not partake in the Bread of Life; all the fountains of the earth will never contain enough water to quench the thirst of his soul; all the glittering lights will never be able to guide his path and liberate him from his tragic destiny, if he does not see his light in the Light which, in every age, shines in the darkness, to illuminate the heart and the spirit of the bewildered and desperate sinner.

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