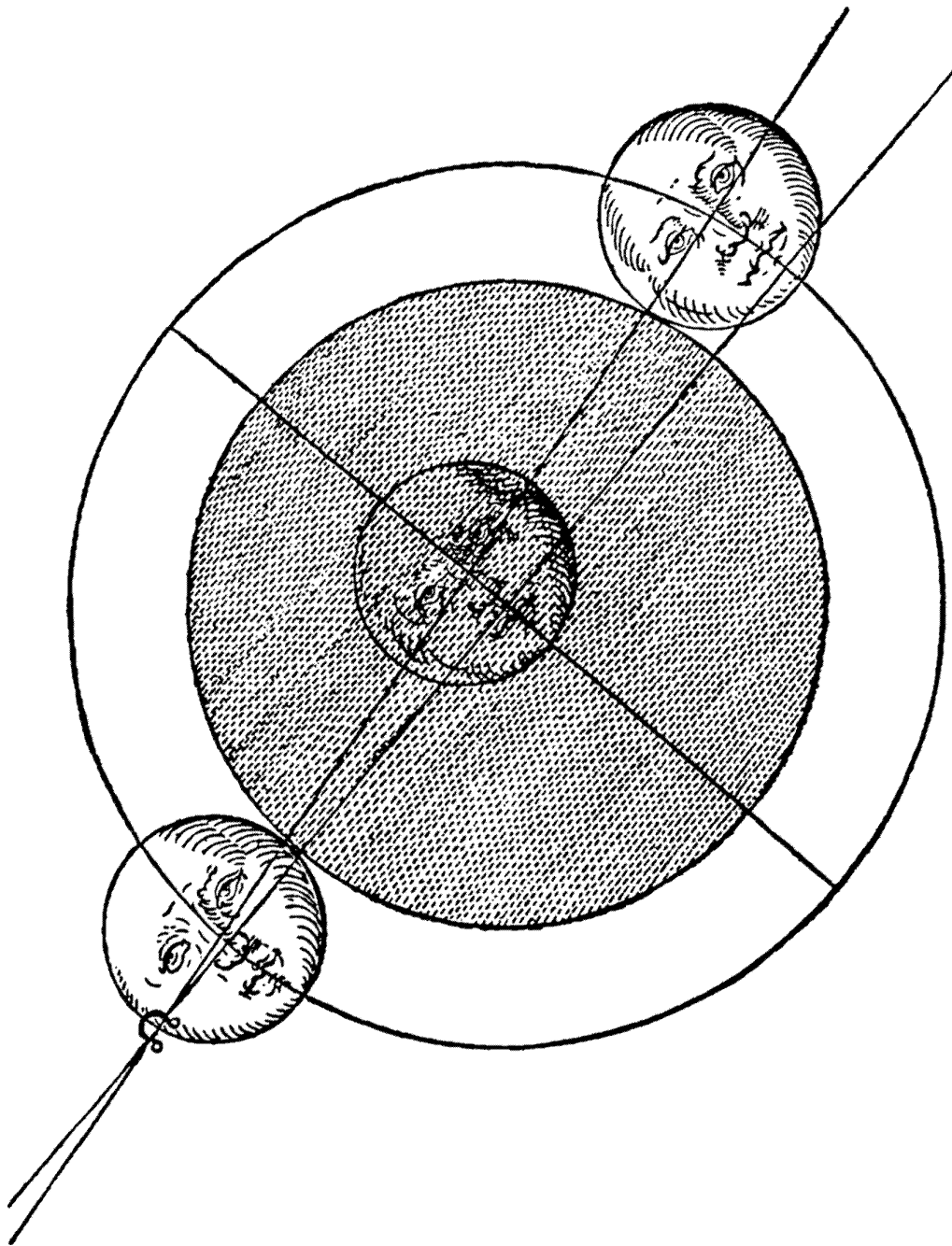


LESSONS IN RELIGION FOR
A SKEPTICAL WORLD

Rodney Collin



INTRODUCTION

HONESTY, sincerity and truth are the soap, water and towel of the soul.

It is the message of Christ washing the feet of the apostles.

Christ and His love are great; as great as the whole sphere. It is the message of Mary of Magdala, washing the feet of Christ.

What you are going to read is an explanation of this in many words. They are all directed to the heart: do not read them with the intellect.

There are too many words for a simple truth. Why are there so many? Because they were ground by a very coarse millstone. But the water which turned the millstone was very clear and fell with great force.

We want to tell you not to believe that the love of God is so small that it can only be measured out to those who hold a determinate faith. We tell you that Christ and His love are in every faith.

It is not important what religion you embrace. It is important to be religious and to practise an authentic religion.

It is not enough to say: "I am religious". It is not enough to consider yourself religious. You must be it. And to be it, you must do it, practise it.

Vanity makes us say: "/ am religious, but I do not practise any acknowledged religion". Then we feel different from the rest, from the common people, from the uncultured mobs that embrace recognized religions. We feel cultured and superior.

We believe that culture sets us apart from definite and recognized religion.

Another touch of vanity makes us say: "My religion is the only real one."

Every religion known as such is true, and only vanity and ignorance stand between us and that which we once professed.

Are there exceptions to this rule? Undoubtedly there are, but so few that as yet we have not found a single one.

What you are going to read teaches that every religious dogma is true. This is the reverse of that which was taught by the philosopher of Magdeburg (1). Even those dogmas that contain apparently contradictory affirmations, of religions that are apparently irreconcilable, contain truth.

Are you surprised? Do you ask how this can be possible? Read without prejudice and you will find the answer.

Do you see? A dogma which seemed trivial, or even false and useless, has a profound meaning that you did not suspect. And another, apparently contradictory to the first, also has a profound and no less true meaning. You were blind and thought that you could see.

But you will remain blind until you put religion into practice.

And you must practise your religion, that which from time to time you call yours, because at one time it was yours.

With honesty, sincerity and truth; with soap, water and towel.

It will be useless only to say: "Certainly, that which I thought trivial and false is true and important." If you only say this, you will not have reached the truth. To reach it, you must live it, practise it and make it flesh.

Only when truth is made flesh, bones and cross, is it really truth.

"Take up your daily cross and follow Me". This is the call of Him Who is the truth, the way and the life.

You will ask if the truth of Christ can also be in Islam, in Buddhism and in Brahminism. We answer that the truth of the love of Christ is present everywhere.

We have been told: "Tell everyone that the love of God is everything". Now we communicate this to you.

We have learned that love is harmony.

Find it first within yourselves by the way of truthfulness, honesty and sincerity. Then communicate it to others.

What follows are words, but they are meant as rods.

With them we would break the jars in which you thought to hoard your learning.

If you are jealous of your learning prepare to protect yourselves.

But do you not feel an inner desire to be destroyed?

To be born it is necessary to die.

(1) Kant.

Are you not bored with idle and unprofitable learning? With a learning which demands nothing of you? Which only tells you: "Listen and enjoy. You are intelligent because you know"?

The rods of our words are meant to break your jars. Set them out and experience the enjoyment of having them broken.

And you will discover a truth you did not know before. A jealous and demanding truth which will require efforts and impose responsibilities.

You will discover the source of morality.

You will know why we demand of you a cross: to be balanced, and stable. To project harmony.

You who are timorous will be shaken by these words. You should know that the dogma is true which says that only in such a religion is truth. Calm yourselves: it is very true. But do you know in what sense? Be humble, submit, bow under the yoke of religious practice; and learn with the help of our Lord.

Lima — Peru, 1956.

I

I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER

Do you believe?
There is no need.

If you have will there is no need for *belief* in God the Father.

But do you know what is will? And do you really possess it?

Because if you knew what is will and fully possessed it, you would constantly *feel* the urges of your Divine Father. And he who *feels* has no need for belief.

We who speak to you do not believe in God except in our moments of blindness. When we are awake and vigilant we meet Him, we feel Him, we love Him and we see Him.

And when we *feel His guidance* we recognize Him as our Father.

They deny, or do not know God, who have never had will. They believe in Him who have felt His presence in an act of will in the past. Those who possess will neither deny nor believe; they recognize His divine power.

Those who take the statement "I believe in God the Father" as merely a literary affirmation are stupid.

Many sciolists are ignorant of the meaning of the expression "I believe in God the Father" and think that they are not answerable for it.

We say to you: You are answerable for everything that you do not understand in your religion.

If you do not understand the meaning of belief in God the Father it is only because you have no will and yours is the responsibility of acquiring it.

Is it your opinion that we all have will, or perhaps that no one possesses it?

Let us shake that unsound opinion.

No one has will unless he makes it for himself, and when he has

made it, recognizes that he has done so with the help of God and that without Him he could not possess it.

This is the first encounter with God.

We recognize the struggle between our body and our spirit. We glimpse the light of the spirit, and we feel the yearning of the body. We create the will that unites them and introduces balance and stability.

Then we discover, *by the will* and not by the intellect, that God is leading us by the hand and that our part consists only in allowing ourselves to be led with honour and dignity.

This is how we recognize God our Father.

But to approach the Divine Creator it is necessary to respond to the yearning, and to have will.

II

ALMIGHTY

*T*o return to the intuitive source of knowledge is indispensable. Religion is drowning in a sea of dialectics. For most men who consider themselves cultured it died a long time ago. Its only salvation lies in a return to the security of essential intellection, of contemplative reason, of love, and of honest and sincere action.

When by discursive reasoning we reduce the furniture on which we rest to particles separated by empty space, its reality and effectiveness disappear; in the same way God and the Spirit disappear—precisely because they are real and effective—when we try to seize them in the net of inductive conceptualism.

Reality cannot be demonstrated by means of discursive reasoning. Precisely only the *purely* ideal, in the sense of the abstract disconnected with reality—that is, the unreal, that which lacks effectiveness—is all that can be demonstrated by knowledge derived from inference and conclusion. For this reason it is possible to *demonstrate* the theorem of Pythagoras because the ideal triangles and angles of that theorem are pure abstractions of the mind and have no existence or reality for us. One paradoxical demonstration of the unreality of an entity is precisely its demonstrability.

To try to demonstrate the reality of God is to reduce Him to a mere intellectual possibility, that is, to non-existence. And if apart from this one tries to demonstrate His *existence*, it is as if one were trying to reduce Him to double non-existence. It is well to remember that God does not exist in the sense of an exterior object that establishes or maintains itself outwardly. God is the Being Who is inside the inside, and 'to be', refers to being "one, eternal and indivisible".

The murderers of God have been His false defenders. Let us rise against false intellectual pride.

Reality and effectiveness are degrees of endeavour and not of understanding ⁽¹⁾. The presence of a wall is not demonstrated by the mind but by the calamity overtaking him who tries to deny it.

The sculptor knows of the presence of his marble because of the help it gives him and the resistance it offers to his desire to realize the idea of the statue.

Man knows of the presence of his Divine Maker because of the help He bestows on him when he searches for good, and because of the resistance with which he is opposed when he wanders in search of evil.

And do you know how we know that God is almighty?

By simply recognizing, once we have acquired control of will, that we have never been forsaken by Him; not even in those moments when we most resembled mineral stone. The factual —not dialectic— proof is that we were able to find the way back.

Even when asleep and inert we were guided by God.

Only thus were we able to awaken longing,

Gather our strength,

And create will.

Because God is almighty

And governs all.

And leaves us no more freedom than to be honest or dishonest, sincere or insincere, true or false.

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Everything is predetermined.

Even our steps?

Yes. ⁽²⁾

Only the direction of the light of our consciousness is not predetermined.

With our consciousness we can look either upwards or downwards.

Because God is almighty.

(1) Max Scheller.

(2) Except when the 'miracle' described later occurs.

And good and evil depend only on the direction in which our consciousness is focussed.

If we act with bad intention we are acting in view of the bad, and are dishonest; if we act with good intention we are acting in virtue of the good and are honest.

We are sincere when we express our intentions openly; insincere when we conceal them.

We are truthful when we say only what we know; false when we claim to know what we do not know.

Do you really understand what this means?

Do you know, for instance, that you can lie by silence?

Do you know that alone, in the desert, you are able to lie?

Do you know what it means to have your steps predetermined and to have nevertheless the possibility of choosing between good and evil?

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Who told us?

Where did we find it?

How did we see it?

O God, give it to us that we may give!

Our mind is weak and we have forgotten it.

Smite us with Your justice.

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It is good to pursue that which is real. It is bad to pursue that which is false, does not exist, is empty and is dead.

Let the dead bury their dead.

This is the rule of the living.

Stern rule; rule of wood in cross; rule for those who must salt the earth. Rule for the preachers of harmony.

And for the others?

Love and understanding.

Thank You, Almighty.

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We are surrounded by falseness; we live among corpses.
We search for truth, we stumble over lies.
It is good to stumble over lies searching for truth,
It is bad to encounter truth and not feel it because we are searching
for lies,

It is bad for the wise to pursue justice, for justice is a dead idea.
But if the ignorant pursue it, believing in it, they may encounter kindness
on their way.

And meantime it is useless to preach the distinction between the
living and the dead to those who are in agony.

It is useless, cruel and much more.

It is useful to teach love, because with love, even looking for falseness,
truth can be found.

Do you understand now how it is that we are free in spite of our
chains?

Only the dead and the false are bound by chains. Nothing can
prevent one death from following another. No one can prevent a leaf
from falling from a tree when it is dry, and another leaf from budding
in due time,

The blind man to whom we gave some coins was destined to receive
them, and we were destined to give them.

But the light of kindness that was kindled in the blind man's soul
on receiving the love with which we gave them is not written in any
book of destiny. Our will is completely free to grant this light according
to its own choice.

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Now we will tell you what more we have learned about the riddle
of the moral sphinx.

All our steps are predetermined, except when love is allowed to
perform miracles.

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Normally every day is the same as the preceding one. Today we
do the same as we did yesterday, with very few variations. At least the

moral quality of our actions today is the same as of yesterday. What we do today is determined by what we did yesterday. Many things are already predetermined by what we did some years ago.

Yesterday we wronged without noticing it; today we wrong again without noticing it. Yesterday we stinted some coins to a beggar; today we stint them to someone else. And from today it is determined that next year we will continue to do the same. The fundamental theme of the tune of our conduct is always the same, day after day.

While the miracle does not occur.

Not many occur; they are not lavished on us, but they do occur.

Miracles on a minor scale transform to a greater or less degree the fundamental theme of every man's conduct, at certain stages of his life— for instance, in the transition periods between childhood and puberty, between puberty and youth, between the latter and maturity, and between maturity and old age. We are not aware of them, sometimes because these transformations are very slight, or more or less gradual, or because they happen to all men.

But eventually greater miracles may also happen to us that fundamentally alter the moral essence of our behaviour.

These are the miracles of love. They do not happen every day. It is not in our power to alter the course of destiny at every step. If someone is selfish and all his acts bear the stamp of selfishness we cannot expect that two or three times a month he should act with real generosity and disinterestedness, in manifest contrast to the fundamental nature of his other actions. But if the same man is awake, and while his conscience is vigilant he receives a gift of love, this gift may perform the miracle of changing decisively the future course of *all* his acts.

Such is the immense importance of love.

If we receive it with good will, it may cleanse our hearts of all their impurity and turn us into other springs of harmony.

The childish boast that we are free to do, or not do, whatever we like, is not true. Those who assert this do not know the omnipotence of God. Power over destiny does not belong to man, but to God.

Our conduct always follows the same channel. We always move along the circumference of a circle, and we cannot diverge from it. We are slaves bound to the wheel of destiny. In this the Moslems are right. But from time to time, at certain moments of life —limited, but of great value— God offers us the opportunity of changing the position

of the wheel's axis. We shall never leave the wheel, but sometimes we are able to transform it and make it different.

We are not gods, and we cannot change our fate at every step, but it is so arranged that two or three times in our lives we have the *possibility* of changing its course fundamentally.

It is enough that we be vigilant and awake for love to strengthen our will.

"Ask and it shall be given unto you."

The omnipotence of God is infinite for all those who ask with their whole heart.

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"*The Kiss of Love*" is the title of the story that tells of the creation of our will.

Everything was different after that kiss.

That which formerly compelled us began to pass us by, leaving us in a surprising immobility.

Only the kiss was burning in our hands.

The little lights that formerly dazzled us continued to shine, but we no longer seemed to see them.

The warmth of the kiss burned us.

And since then we live only by its virtue.

Before, our arms were the sails of a windmill and had no longing to *fly*.

Our legs were limbs that only jerked to the beat of a metronome.

Our senses were in constant contention, because their desires were belligerent.

Today we only feel the breath, the music and the call of that kiss.

And our life includes only two stages: the darkness of what was before and the splendour which is after.

Often we fall asleep and seem to lose the feeling of that which sustains us.

Then we are distressed. Again we see the former brilliancy. Again we hear the old 'tic-toc' Once more we perceive the conflicting calls of our senses. But everything that formerly gave the false warmth of

feverish movement, today only produces the coldness of anguish and helplessness.

When we do not feel the kiss, all that formerly was pleasant fills us with dismay.

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Such is the virtue of the kiss of love that we once received in our hands.

Since that moment we also know how to kiss.

And we learned that love transforms all who are awake.

And that all who once have felt the kiss of love have the duty to give it to those who have not yet received it.

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We had no will.

Our soul was in agony.

Then we were told very simply: "Yes, you have will." And we were kissed with the kiss of love on our hands.

Since then we have will.

And our soul is invigorated.

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Now do you know how the will that leads us to God is created?

III

CREATOR

HE who is able to pray to God the Creator cries like this with all his being:

"O my Father, all that is in me is of Your making; I long to offer You all my deeds. But how can a creature dare to offer something of his own to his Creator Who is Lord of everything? Smite me, O Lord, lest I blaspheme."

He who prays thus, with all the torrent of his blood, speaks not of creation, but of emanation:

"O my Father, my human sight is weak, and delights in the scintillation of Your rays, but is incapable of contemplating Your true light. Lord, You sent forth Your light and created the scintillation. Blind my mortal sight that sees only the scintillation, for I long to see light."

The creationist is drunk with the act of offering to God all that he most values. The emanationist is drunk with contemplation; he renounces everything in exchange for the possibility of contemplating God.

They are two different religious experiences, that give rise to different doctrines.

The creationist maintains that all creation is the work of God. The emanationist maintains that the creation which we know is only a coarse and grotesque parody which germinates in our own mind, and that nothing is important in that creation because when the created is compared with the divine idea from which everything proceeds, only the idea of God has importance.

The ignorant suppose that the doctrine of creation is incompatible with that of emanation, but now you see that this is not so. In each is an aspect of the full truth. But to find it, it is necessary that the doctrine be not only formulated with the head, but also with the heart and bowels.

When only the head works, truth is lost and only the false, which is empty, non-existent, inert, nothing, is seen. Those who philosophise only with the mind stumble onto nothingness.

Every voice has hollow echoes which chill and crystalize; they *are* echoes from severed heads that speak without the support of the whole body.

One voice says: "Everything is created by God. The world is His great theatre. He who listens is only an actor, and beside him move many other actors. God created the scenery, the decor and the costumes, and even the actors and the drama are His work."

That voice is silent and another is heard: "Nothing is created, but the actors and the drama exist. Everything else, the scenery, decor and costumes, are illusory figments of the actors. Men and their destiny are emanations of the divine mind. But nothing has ever been created, and if illusions appear as creations this is only in the measure in which we re-create ourselves with them."

The two voices cease, and their echo is heard in the head of *a* corpse: "There is no creation; there is no manifestation. Everything is black around him who listens. The darkness is unfathomable. Nothing exists around him. Nothing except him who listens and his destiny. Only to believe in oneself is to believe in God, because God is oneself."

To allow wisdom to be heard, all the voices of the mind must be silenced and the voice of the heart, which is silence, must speak.

And the great silence speaks thus: "All doctrines are true when they also come from the heart and from the bowels. This is why the doctrines of the saint are always true and those of common man false. There cannot be more truth in the common man than in the service of the saint."

Pilate was common because all his truth consisted in washing his hands, when it is the bowels that must be washed.

All who philosophise for the masses are common men- Only the philosophers of the workshop and the gymnasium know the truth.

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Creationism, the doctrine which finds God in our inner selves, and emanationism, which does not see the high in that which is low, are all truths, when supported by genuine vital experiences.

For each person only one religion is true, because for each person there is only one authentic time and vital experience. For him who has the heart and bowels of a Christian, it is false to embrace Hinduism, and vice versa.

Only a determinate religion is true.

Our voice sounds weak when it tries to say that which should come from acyclops.

Only one religion is true for you.

Only others are true for others.

But neither they nor you nor anyone is ever free from the obligation of embracing a given, recognized and positive religion, here and now.

Nobody is free to create his own religion, just as nobody can create his own science.

A wise man can delight in physics, another in medicine, and a third in astronomy, but no one can create his own physics, medicine or astronomy.

Only God can create, and all religions and all sciences are creations of God.

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These are mistakes of intellectual pride:

One: to judge narrowmindedly that only one's own religion is the uniquely true one.

No religion is unique in truth.

Two: to look for errors in a religion in order to attack them.

"What we must do —says the voice of a vigilant angel— is not to preach a new religion or correct the church, let us correct ourselves. We would not find so many defects in our religion if we practised it punctiliously. The truth is that our religion has only one defect: ourselves". (1)

The sole truth is not in the outward form of doctrines, but in the inner flame of love and in the radiant light of spiritual contemplation.

Do not confuse absolute sole truth with the relative truths of the intellect. Every doctrine contains truth and falsehood. There is no doctrine that is not wholly truthful and wholly false. Falsehood lies

(1) Lanza del Vasto. Comentary on the Gospel. South. Buenos Aires. 1955.

in mistaken interpretation, in vanity, in petulance and in the selfishness of those who listen and interpret.

The sole truth is only in Christianity, but Christianity is present in all religions under its purest form of love, submission to that which is high, subjugation to God and harmony.

Truth and relative falsehood are also present in all religions under the exterior guise of dogmatic formulation and interpretation. All dogma is true. But there is no dogma that is well formulated or interpreted.

Language is limited; so is intellect. Love has no limits. The spirit "bloweth where it listeth". God is everywhere.

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How dangerous is evil, for in its extreme forms it resembles good! We must beware of all our virtues. Evil hides behind them. I was taught this by him who had made pilgrimage to the fountains (1). It was shown me by evil.

Great temptations come from pseudo-virtues.

Our learning, our knowledge; here we have pseudo-virtue.

We have no more knowledge than that which is given to us.

We should never dare to give more than we have received from God. What does not come from God, comes from the devil.

Let us beware of the devil who is beside us and as near as God.

But it must not be forgotten that the devil is a chained dog that can only bite us if we go near him.

He who judges like stone, stones; he who judges like water, washes; he who judges like wine, renews.

To judge like stone is to judge with narrow-mindedness, condemning and excluding.

To judge like water is to wash away the bad and let the good appear.

To judge like wine is to vivify everything, with the help of goodness.

Judging in the widest sense, it can be said that our religion is the only true one.

(1) An allusion to "A Pilgrimage to the Fountains" by Lanza del Vasto.

It is well that you should know now that those who write this are practising Catholics.

And our religion tells us that it is the only true one, which should be sustained by the judgement of water and wine.

The Catholic religion is the only true one in the sense that it is the only one within which man can re-bind himself to God *with exact knowledge of the knot which acts as union* and of the agent which forms this knot. There are many ways of re-binding oneself to God and also there are many religions, but Catholicism is the only religion which allows us clearly to recognize the nature of the ways which lead us to this end.

This is the interpretation of water; the interpretation of wine is not within our capacity, because we have not received it. But he who has received water hopes for wine.

IV

OF HEAVEN

FOR some the highest is truth and for others, goodness. The former do not recognize heaven, the latter know of its existence.

Heaven is the experience of those who take goodness as the object or purpose of knowledge and the culmination of truth. It is denied only by those who think that knowledge has nothing to do with goodness.

Those who are healthy and have eyes to see and ears to hear, know of heaven. The others, those who do not know, are like the sick, the lame, the withered and the blind, who only lean on the crutches of truth and cannot even see that knowledge has no meaning whatsoever unless it leads to goodness.

Therefore to know of heaven, it is necessary to feel that goodness is above truth; that knowledge is something interminable and absurd unless it leads to goodness; and that doctrinary knowledge is only one way of approaching goodness.

It is in accordance with our nature to be on that way. For this we all need a doctrine and a truth. But we must not lose sight of the fact that our aim is goodness produced by truth, the goodness of truth, where the significance and inner meaning of everything is discovered, and where all conflict and doctrinary discrepancy disappear.

When we lose sight of goodness our truth is changed into a weapon of intellectual warfare; once we reach the final stage of truth, which is goodness, we find that what we believed to be material for dispute is in reality a message of harmony, concord, stability and balance.

Jesus Christ said: "Blessed are the peaceful, for they shall be called sons of God". (Matthew 5:9).

What is needed is to be really peaceful. Not with the unreality of an outward decoration or medal, but with the inner quality of internal harmony.

Foolish is he who, without having harmony in himself, denies the celestial world because he cannot see it. He is like someone who denies the beauty of a high peak because he cannot reach it.

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We presume that you have already discovered that truth has no value whatsoever if it is not supported by vital experience and does not lead to goodness.

In practice, the fact that truth actually comes out of life is already a guarantee that it *can* reach the goal of goodness.

A half-truth, a truth without sincerity, honesty or veracity, is nothing but a 'false-truth', nonsense, a dead idea.

To understand the authentic function of truth, we must consider its relation to life and to goodness.

Life makes things true or false, authentic or fictitious.

Life creates the truth and the lie.

Things are what life disposes that they should be.

Our intellectual truths of today are as true as were those of yesterday and those of tomorrow will be.

But in fact there are degrees of quality.

The truth of the stomach is even more relative than that of the intellect. Only in the fire of the heart and the radiation of the spirit can absolute truth be found.

The quality of truth rests ultimately on the nobility, dignity and spiritual level of him who lives it. If the life-experience on which it is based has been purified by honesty, sincerity and veracity, its truth is of the highest quality.

Men have earnestly looked for an absolute and permanent truth in their senses and intellect. It does not exist.

In the world of the senses and of reflexive thought, only the connection between life and truth is permanent.

Life and the truth of the senses and intellect are variable. Only their relation is permanent.

Everything that is not in accordance with this relation is false.

For medieval man it was false to think that the earth moved, for this principle was not in accordance with his experience of life. For us it is false to think that it does not move, for this principle is not in accordance with our experience.

Those who still believe that intellectual truth is absolute may ask themselves: Does the earth move or is it fixed?

The earth has absolutely nothing to do with this discussion.

In reality there is neither movement nor stillness. There is only life.

Life makes movement appear where vital experience discovers it.

We travel in a vehicle. The vehicle moves for us.

If all men were to move in space at the same speed, our experience would tell us that we were all still, and in effect we should be so.

We owe the disclosure of these ideas to the man who in life was called Albert Einstein.

Without life there is no manifestation, and without manifestation there is neither sensorial nor intellectual truth.

For the old Peruvians, Cuzco was the centre of the world; for the old Chinese, the centre of the world was in their country. Our experience of life today is not like that of the Peruvians nor of the Chinese of yesterday, and to us any part of the earth's surface can be its centre, although we prefer to say that it has no centre.

Life has many facets, and each facet has many shades of colour.

Each facet and each shade of life experience has its own dignity or indignity. On this depends the *quality* of truth.

The life experience of those who consider all men in all latitudes to be their brothers and fellow-creatures has most dignity and nobility, most loftiness and sanctity. For this reason and for no other, the statement that the earth has no centre is more true.

But as it is not always easy to decide what type of life is best, so it is not easy to decide whether sensible or intellectual truth is more correct.

In any case sensible truths, or truths of the stomach, are based on the life of the appetites. They consist in the differentiation between that

which stimulates the senses and that which does not. The former are considered authentic, the latter false. They are the coarse truths of the passionate and common man. They bind to earth and draw away from heaven whoever attempts to mix them with supreme truths.

Intellectual truth is known as logical or noseological truth, and consists in equating thought with itself and with exterior things. It is used by the scientist, and some philosophers entertain themselves with it. The riches of the spirit draw us away from heaven when we become attached to them.

The truth of the heart has more dignity than the others, and consists of love. It recognizes goodness as its aim.

The life of the man of heart is a constant struggle to realize the truth of love.

The death of the man of heart is the consecration of his truth.

But even in love there are errors when it is expressed in words. When love turns into phrases, and the phrases become dogmas, its truth becomes relative.

The truth of love is absolute only as long as it is not expressed with a yes or a no.

He who searches for absolute truth must therefore divest himself of the defences of affirmation and negation, and deliver himself without reserve to the revivifying fire of love.

But on this path there are many dangers, and the greatest consists in mistaking dogma for love. Then dogma assumes the external semblance of the absolute, turns against love and lulls it.

Yet doctrines are necessary, and dogmas too, because man cannot dispense with thought.

The great secret is always to consider doctrine and dogma as imperfect expressions of a truth which can be perfectly discerned only with love.

And as a first precaution, doctrinarians and doctrinised should be ready to fling away, as though it were a red hot coal, all dogmatic interpretation that is contrary to love, no matter under what guise it may appear.

Doctrine and dogma are justified only if they are ways leading in the direction of love. They are unstable bridges spanning the abyss that separates us from love, and nothing more. We must look for them and follow them, but be quick to cross over them.

Another danger of love lies in believing that it is already attained when it is still far away. To abandon the bridge of doctrine is as dangerous as to linger on it too long.

In reality, doctrines should never be abandoned, for surpassing them is not the same as putting them aside.

Only he who has genuinely and truly conquered the kingdom of love knows in actual truth what is the legitimate function of doctrine.

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But supreme truth is the truth of the spirit and of real man, and consists in the realization of himself.

Veracity is truth par excellance.

He fulfils himself who is truthful in the highest possible degree in fitting his words to his thoughts, harmonizing his thoughts with his conduct, and conforming his conduct with his inner reality.

To make ourselves what we really are is the supreme way to truth. He who has succeeded in this has attained goodness. He has discovered heaven, and has no more need of truth.

Truthfulness is to say only that which we know and live, and not to pretend to know what we do not know,

It is to live what we feel;

It is to have will;

It is to feel God the Father with the will;

The way to truthfulness is sincerity and honesty.

Sincerity is to think of goodness;

To say what we think, and match the word with the thought;

To express our intention clearly.

Honesty is to love and feel what we think;

To receive the Holy Spirit with love;

To say only what we feel.

Heaven discovered, we live in the truth of goodness, which is the full realization of truthfulness.

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Heaven surrounds us. It is before us, beside us and within us.

No, it is not far away in the sky. We have it near us, but it is hidden by the world of illusion.

Our dead ideas and our weak will prevent us from seeing it clearly.

Many people do not know that their own spirit lives eternally in heaven, because they keep it in lethargy. In order to awaken it they need only to build an adequate celestial habitation for it. This is the soul. The souls of all men are not alike. In the majority there is only a miserable rudiment. Their spirit is deeply lethargic.

In others the soul *is* as solid and luminous as a marble palace. Their spirit is awake and conscious that it dwells in heaven.

To develop the soul and awaken the spirit, it is enough to acquire a firm will with the help of love.

The way is the one shown by Him "Who did not come to destroy the law but to fulfil it.

Everyone can verify the presence of heaven within himself and in the world that surrounds him without having to wait for what is called the death of the body. For this it is necessary first to love God with all the fulness of our nature, and our neighbour as ourself. With this love our will is born, and with will we overcome dead ideas. As soon as this has been achieved, the spirit finds itself living in the heaven of the saved.

Many have thought that it is not possible to know anything about heaven, because it cannot be entered except through the door of physical death.

There are many mistakes in this supposition.

That which we call death can lead to heaven, but this is not the only way nor the most certain.

Birth and death are nothing but the two sides of the narrow window through which the lethargic spirit looks at the world. And while we do not build ourselves a healthy and vigorous soul, we are not certain of passing freely to the other side of the opening.

Only the soul can save us from dead ideas.

There are degrees of falsehood. A dead idea is absolutely false. "The State of Justice", "The Ideal of Justice based on this State", "The Progress of Civilization" are dead ideas over which we stumble at every step.

Those who dedicate their lives only and exclusively to the realization of a dead idea, destroy their souls and move further away from heaven.

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AND EARTH

EARTH is the world of dead ideas. We are tied to it by negative thoughts, emotions and impulses.

Everything negative comes from barriers, divisions and separation. Negative thought is that which comes from the mind only and has no roots in the heart or the bowels. Negative emotion is that which comes from feelings only, and belongs only to sensibility. Negative impulses demand satisfactions which conflict with emotions and thought.

Stay your judgement and pay attention.

The truth of utilitarian science is born of negative thoughts.

Occasionally the heart 'thinks' by itself, and from this are born useless thoughts that have not the consistency of truth. When our 'ground floor' thinks we already know that truth is being confused with that which gives satisfaction to the senses.

Negative emotion is born from feelings that are rejected by our semi-conscious understanding, and by the part of our nature represented by the word 'bowels' when in a state of disequilibrium and disharmony. It is bred in isolation in a hothouse of ignorance and nourished solely by fantasy. Suddenly it arises, and takes possession of all our being by overpowering and enslaving the mind and bowels that formerly rejected it.

A positive emotion is born with the concurrence of the whole of our nature, and belongs not so much to the sensibility which gives it its form, as to the will which impells it, creating the inner harmony from which it arises. All positive emotion is a form of that love of which it is said: "Thou shalt love with all thy heart, with all thy soul and with all thine understanding".

We can also experience negative emotions with the help of the intellect. They are created by the overflowing fantasy of those who do not control their imagination. Finally, there are negative emotions

of an impulsive origin, very frequent in those who have not perfectly regulated their motor, sexual and instinctive centres.

Negative impulses are those created by disharmony and lack of balance in the lower centres of the personality.

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Negative emotion is particularly dangerous because it attacks obliquely, and hides behind our most valued virtues. For this reason, he who seeks the benefit of truth must accustom himself to mistrust and suspect his own virtues.

Negative emotion distorts the whole universe, and sets us in the place of its governing centre.

Negative emotion is that feeling which reverses all values and measures them by their relation to ourselves.

The jealous love of him who loves himself in the being of the person he loves; the vanity which makes us proud of our knowledge and of our various abilities; the satisfaction of superiority which we feel when we overcome a vice or attain some moral standard, are all negative emotions.

And they overtake us at every moment.

O how vain we are, even in those moments when we believe ourselves to be most humble!

We obey, and want our superior to be aware of it Or we are complacent over the superiority given us by some or other trace of self-control.

Vanity is a negative emotion hidden behind our dearest virtues.

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Negative experiences darken the sky and make us see nothing but the earth. From them is born false personality.

If we measure our personality with the measure of our Brahamanic experience, we will find that falseness forms part of its nature. We always bear it with us, and it is false in the measure in which it darkens the spirit.

But our experience is different, and we think that we can redeem the exterior appearance, reconciling it with the truth, when we become aware that it is deceiving. And we reserve the name of false personality for that which exists without the cleansing effect of self-remembering its role.

The wall of false personality is not difficult to breach, but it is doubly deceptive.

Personality is an ambiguous concept liable to many misinterpretations.

On one hand, the philosophers inspired by Brahmanism and the Laws of Manu consider personality as the sum of the results of negative experiences, which in turn gives rise to further negative experiences in a kind of vicious circle from which we can only be freed by help from a higher level.

On the other hand, positive science maintains in more or less uniform terms, that it is in the aggregate of all the features resulting from *our* experiences that we are differentiated one from another. In personality we find as much of the positive as the negative, and it would be wrong to attribute to it an axiological character.

Historians and the interpreters of antiquity affirm that Christianity has restored the dignity of the human person. By this they mean that Christians have discovered in the person a value that neither the Hindus nor the positive scientists have found there.

Finally, the idealistic philosophers also speak of the person, maintaining that it is the basic value upon which everything else is established and sustained.

So much disagreement can only prove that all, or nearly all, are speaking of different phenomena while giving them the same name. To understand each other, it will be necessary to come to an agreement regarding language.

The idealistic philosophers call person that which we prefer to call spirit—that is, the source from which arises our experience of the valuable. Within each one of us exists this subterranean well, but its water is lost by seeping in many directions. In general, we only suppose the existence of our spirit on the basis of what others tell us. In most of us it is a well which is nearly dry and can be distinguished only with difficulty from our other possibilities. Serious and conscientious work is necessary to mend the cracks and restore our spiritual well. Hence many deny the existence of the person presented by the

idealistic philosopher, simply because he who has no spirit cannot find it. And practically speaking, an inert spirit is equivalent to a non-existent spirit.

Christianity gives the name of "person" to the human being who has not only spirit but soul. In each one of us are powers and possibilities. One of these is the spirit, a power that cannot express itself alone, without the help of another or others. Another power is the soul. No, do not be scandalized. We are speaking of power or force almost in the same sense as physical science. You do not need much philosophical culture to understand us, but on the other hand you will need good will and the desire to understand. Western philosophers have abandoned the concept of power and prefer also to abandon the idea of soul, because they are afraid of embarking on an interminable lexicological discussion. They do well. Because as long as one does not have a soul it is useless to talk about it. All scholastic discussion arises from a few non animated individuals who, lacking a soul, enjoy discoursing over that which they neither have nor understand.

We can lack soul in the same way that we can lack spirit. In actual fact, all who lack spirit lack soul, because the soul is the power that helps the manifestation of the spirit. This is the reason why the one is mistaken for the other. To continue with the simile of the well, we could say that the soul is something like the caulking of the well of the spirit. Without caulking, all the contents are wasted, the well becomes dry and in no way different to any other dark hole in the desert. A being without soul is something like a being with a cracked soul. Much heat is needed, much friction with the caulking-iron of disillusionment, to restore the caulking of his soul.

This is the opinion of Christianity on the human person. The person possesses dignity and is worthy of respect as long as he has soul. A being without a soul is not a person; it is as a patch of waste land, or straw, or at most a thinking bundle of rags.

According to the teaching of the gospels, most humans do not possess the dignity of persons. They are not like profitable wheat, but like the weeds that are destined to be burnt.

"... reapers: gather up the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burnt." (Matthew 13:30).

But each human being can make himself worthy of the dignity of person by building himself an immortal and imperishable soul. He who does not make such a soul, perishes. But he who succeeds makes himself an inheritor of eternal life.

"...but gather the wheat into my barn." (Matthew 13.30).

There was a man who came to the conclusion, based on this teaching, that humanity is divided into two: Christians with souls, and people and blackmen without them. It was necessary to respect the former, but the latter could be enslaved, mutilated and killed. Thus thought an unhappily famous priest called Sepulveda.

The mistake of this way of thinking is first, that only a minimum number of those who are called Christians are so in reality, and in consequence few have the soul that all of them claim to have. And second, that although only a few have the dignity of possessing a soul, every human, person or not, has a second dignity, which consists in being capable of making himself a soul. This is forgotten by the Sepulvedas, or let us say the agents of all tyrannies.

We are not speaking of person in this Christian sense, but of men with soul, whom we prefer to call full and complete men.

A third meaning of the word 'person' is that of the characterologist or psychologist, of positive science, for whom person is that which differentiates all human beings. For a characterologist, the person is the assemblage of traits which distinguishes one human being from another.

We accept the scientific opinion, but add that personality considered in this way is the result of a third kind of force or power, as distinct from the soul as from the spirit. This is the force of our three-dimensional body. In this, our familiar body of head, trunk and limbs, a remarkable activity is continually being produced without the active assistance of soul or spirit. The result of the harmonious activity of body, soul and spirit we call quite simply 'person' or 'personality'. If the result proceeds from the separated activities of the different centres of the body—that is, from the activity which deprives us of the help of the soul and the spirit—we call it 'false personality'.

We cannot separate ourselves from our 'person', and neither should we try to do so. Instead, we can and must rid ourselves of the false personality which binds us to the earth.

No one can liberate himself completely from the level of the earth, but we all can do it to a greater or lesser degree.

To be liberated from the earth means to transcend its influence. Our earth is the cellular material of our organism. That which we call living organism acts in relation to us like the earth in relation to the planetary order.

God is the Creator of heaven and earth in all their orders, cosmic and human.

In the human order, the earth of our organism continually performs an irresistible cosmic dance which drags and compels us. The power of those movements are as strong as are tectonic and geologic movements in relation to the living nature which covers the surface of the earth. To oppose them is vain, fatuous and childish.

"What we should do with our bodily earth is to recognize its influence and transcend it by seeking other forces that can overcome it, because *we* certainly are not capable of doing so. Living nature transcends the power of the earth by appealing to the energy of the sun, and to the mediating influence of the planets transmitted by their movements. In the same way, we can transcend the overmastering force of our biological organism by appealing to the energy of our spirit and the mediating influence of our soul.

The spirit is our sun; the soul, our planetary world.

The spirit is conscience, in the same way that the sun is light.

The spirit is will, as the sun is vivifying energy.

From that which is above comes the meaning of that which is below. The spirit and the sun give meaning to our earths.

That which is low continues its way although we have no consciousness of it; and when the spirit does not help us with its consciousness, we can be completely engulfed by that which is low.

The soul introduces the order, harmony and balance necessary for the spirit to act, in the same way that the planets introduce the order of the seasons on earth.

God creates spirit, soul and body, but we have freedom to choose between influences. He who chooses only the influence of the body remains attached to the earth, enclosed in the shell of false personality.

The dance continues, the soul awaits and the spirit enlightens.

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Creator of heaven and earth,
Creator of the wheels of destiny;
Creator of their points of binding or connection;
Creator of the energy that vivifies them;
Creator of the way that leads to the centre of energy;
Creator of the longing to jump;
Creator of the longing to walk;
Such is God the Father, Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth.