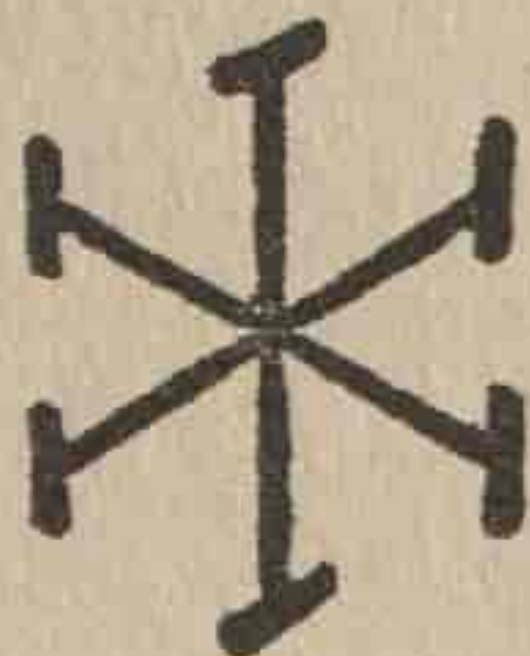


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CHRISTIANITY
AS CREATIVE MYTH

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CHRISTIANITY AS CREATIVE MYTH

The word myth in the title of this lecture is not used in any deprecatory sense. It is not suggested that Christianity is *only* a myth or fable in which more childish minds can believe, but not fully mature persons. On the contrary myth is the means by which certain profound truths can be most fully expressed. This is one reason for calling Christianity not just myth or mythology, but creative myth. It is also meant to affirm that Christianity is not a static religion but a developing one. The fundamental truths or principles which Christianity expresses do not change, but the understanding of them changes as human consciousness develops. So also does the nature of the Christian message change as the whole human situation changes.

A total reappraisal of Christianity is necessary if it is to be a living religion and not to degenerate into superstition or into the mere outward performance of traditional rituals. What is meant by a living religion? Indeed we may ask what function religion has to perform in modern life altogether. Religion should be that aspect of human life which establishes ends and life-values. And only if the ends and values which it proclaims are generally accepted as guides for the whole conduct of life can it be called a living religion. At present this cannot truly be said of Christianity. The Churches do command a following, and the Roman Catholic Church in particular has considerable power in temporal affairs, but the Churches generally do not establish the values by which ordinary life is lived. Economic factors and political doctrines are more influential, for the 'real' world in which we spend our daily lives is the world in which political power and money rule—but



most of all money. In this world decisions are continually being made which have ethical implications. But though religion is more properly the arbiter of ethical values than either politics or economics, priests and clergymen are told to get on with their job of individual spiritual salvation and not to meddle in social or international affairs. To those who oppose the politics of aggressive confrontation which culminates in a balance of nuclear terror and in economics which impose poverty on hundreds of millions all over the world the Churches do not offer a vision of Man and of the future of humanity which is convincingly truer and more magnificent than that which now rules.

This state of affairs has come about because Christianity, the religion on which European and Western civilisation has been built, has not been able to cope with those very forces of individuation of which it was itself the origin. That affirmation of 'I' over against the whole world which followed from the self-affirmation of Jesus Christ and which is the foundation of individuality has led to the domination of intellectual thinking and sense observation, and thus to our modern scientific materialism. It has also been the cause of economic individualism and of that power-seeking ambition which has brought about the worst excesses of nationalism. The technology to which it gave rise has brought mankind the possibility of immense blessings, but its invasion of the realm of human values has rendered those blessings inaccessible.

This supremacy of the intellect and of intellectual science has not only attacked Christianity from the outside by taking over the determination of human values. It has also infiltrated it with its own standards of verification. Belief is considered a primary requisite for Christianity. In the scientific sphere belief is appropriate for a hypothesis, which is accepted as true insofar as—and only insofar as—experiments yield the result which the hypothesis would lead one to expect. Even then the truth of the hypothesis remains only provisional. But the belief which is demanded of Christian believers is not of that provisional or hypothetical nature. It is absolute. It appears to be of the nature of belief in a fact, to which standards of scientific verification would be appropriate. And yet the story of the gospels and the doctrines of Christianity cannot properly be subjected to any such test.

Apparently the whole edifice of Christianity depends on such foundations, and with the development of the modern critical mind these foundations are clearly very fragile.

This is the nature of the apparently insuperable deadlock which many people have reached today. They feel the need for a faith—for some vision of the future for mankind. And yet the most likely faith—that one which has been the traditional faith of European civilisation—appears to demand beliefs which are at best questionable and at worst untenable. The solution to this dilemma is the realisation that the realm of human values and meanings, of ends and purposes, is quite distinct from that of scientific observation and ought to be so. Belief in facts is a belief that something is true or exists; and because it is not knowledge it can by its very nature only be provisional and temporary. Belief in values is of a wholly different kind; so different indeed that the same word should not properly be used for both. Belief in a value means living as if it were absolutely true, with the conviction that it will thereby become true. It should more properly be called faith. Its truth depends not on any matter of fact, but on its being actively and continuously affirmed, and on its being in the positive direction of human development.

Dimitrije Mitrinović, who was the founder of the New Atlantis, maintained that spiritual affirmation is wholly compatible with mental scepticism; the former belongs to the realm of ends, values and meanings, while the latter applies in the realm of philosophical and scientific thinking. The first person to realise this distinction fully was Immanuel Kant, when he distinguished the spheres of pure reason and practical reason and gave practical reason—or ethics—a standing of its own independently of pure reason. In his *Critique of Pure Reason* he not only refuted the existence of God and the independent and objective existence of 'I', namely the subject of experience: he also demonstrated that the outer world of things cannot be credited with existence independently of the subject who perceives it. In other words, only our direct experience is real. Experience is not merely the reflection of some real existence beyond itself. It is itself the only reality.

Once it is accepted that the reality of human experience transcends the (so-called) 'reality' of scientific fact and theory, the

approach to Christianity becomes clearer, for it is thereby established that human feelings and desires are more real than intellectual thinking and scientific observation. There is in the Greek word *muthos*, from which myth is derived, a clue to the problem of religious belief. At first it meant in its widest sense word or speech, and thence a tale, story or narrative—but without any distinction of truth or falsehood. The meaning fable, as an invented story which is not really true, was a later development. The word myth should now be re-instated in its most reputable sense as imaginative conception which speaks to the whole human being. It both can and should have an ethical content, which relates to the will, a rational content, which relates to thought, and an artistic content, which relates to feeling. The ancient myths, and also many of the older fairy tales, were the means by which mankind first expressed the truths of their spiritual and psychic life, as Ellen Mayne pointed out in her Foundation Lecture on Otto Weininger. But myths differ from fairy tales in that in fairy tales it is not supposed that the persons ever existed. In myths there is often a large element of historical truth which later research has uncovered. So to call a person or a story mythical does not exclude its also being historical. It implies, however, that the persons or events which have been recorded had, or have been given, a spiritual or psychological significance which goes beyond simple historical actuality.

Since mythology speaks directly to the human emotions it can be significant to children and primitive people, and yet at the same time it has a rational content which they may not yet understand. 'When I was a child' wrote St. Paul (I Cor. 13.11), 'I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.' This expresses what many people think about religious myths, but they are looking at only half the truth. With the development of reason the naive belief in myths is dissolved, but it is possible to return to myth in full consciousness: not with the naive belief that children and primitive persons have, but at the same time without the superior disdain of raw youths in the first flush of discovering their rational faculties. It was the psycho-analytical school of psychologists—and among these particularly C. G. Jung—who were largely responsible for showing the relevance of much old

mythology to our daily life and experience. Such a return to myth is made in full awareness that it is myth, but also with the intuition that it expresses truths which cannot be expressed in ordinary discursive language.

But though mythology can express truths or realities which cannot be adequately expressed in intellectual or philosophical language, it is not devoid of rational content. On the contrary, it represents an advance from intellectual thinking, as it is usually employed in our daily life, to imaginative thinking. It is the addition of another dimension to thought which makes it possible to express a wider range of human experience than can be expressed by metaphysical doctrines and mental beliefs. Through mythology it is possible to portray inner realities of soul and spirit, of human development and aspirations, and the workings of spiritual and psychological cause and effect.

Our conceptual thinking is continually advancing and, as it were, pushing back the frontiers of mythology. But mythology can help us to express qualities and notions for which conceptual language has either not yet been developed or is not yet widely enough appreciated and understood. Many people find it hard to visualise the meaning of abstract and conceptual words because they cannot relate them to their personal experience, and for them mythology can be a means of conveying such meanings. This is particularly obvious in scientific thinking, in which the mythologies which are employed are changing all the time. Notions like matter, force, energy, waves and particles all succeed one another and then become out of date. To the ordinary layman who has not been through the active thinking and experimentation which has resulted in these ideas imaginative visual aids are necessary. But it is very important that these visual aids are understood as such and never taken as actual realities. Still more in religious thinking, which is concerned with the inner realities of human consciousness, is it vitally necessary to be constantly aware that the 'beings' and 'images' of mythology do not represent actual existences; they are not 'things' but general notions. It is the failure to be continuously aware of this that leads to superstition, both in religion and in science.

What then is the attitude to be adopted towards myth? The notion 'belief' is not adequate to express it, because although it

can be used to mean faith, it is difficult for a modern person, with our overwhelmingly intellectual and materialistic background, not to confuse this with belief in a mental proposition or in the factual existence of something. The word faith is preferable, because it includes the notion will. William James tried to get round this in his essay 'The Will to Believe'. But this does not really solve the problem of how one can will oneself to believe something which one's mind cannot wholeheartedly accept. Faith presents no such problem. In ordinary life we have faith in fictions. We know that Euclidean points, lines and surfaces cannot in fact exist, but we continually treat them as if they were real. The whole of our modern technology, which undoubtedly works, is based on such fictions. Many of mankind's highest ideals like liberty and equality are fictions because being self-contradictory they are unrealisable in practice. So neither myth, nor faith in myth, present us with the mental problem which makes so many people either reject religious belief or have a very equivocal attitude towards it. Towards myth an attitude of mental scepticism is wholly compatible with strong spiritual affirmation.

We require of religion that it should provide us with a vision of humanity, with ends and values, which can relate equally well to the life of the individual and to the whole of mankind: that it should be relevant to every aspect of life; not just to our 'spiritual' life, but also to our 'practical' life in the world of matter; not just to eternity but also to time. And we require that it should not only tell us about events which happened in the past but also give guidance for the future. There cannot be constructive change in the world without imaginative visualisation of how human life should develop. Mythology can help the imagination creatively in a way that common sense thinking cannot. I hope to show that once the burden of mental belief is withdrawn from Christianity and the inspiration of myth and faith substituted for it, then Christianity can indeed fulfil all these demands right into the foreseeable future, even for the most mentally sceptical and sophisticated person.

Let us go straight to the centre of Christianity. As Vladimir Solovyov wrote in his *Lectures on Godmanhood*, 'Christianity has a content of its own, and that content is solely and exclusively Christ. In Christianity as such we find Christ, and only Christ—

this is a truth very often uttered but very little assimilated. There are many people in the Christian world who call themselves Christians, but believe that the essence of Christianity is Christ's teaching and not his person.¹ 'The only new doctrine' he wrote, 'specifically different from all other religions is the teaching of Christ about Himself, the reference to Himself as the living incarnate truth "I am the way, the truth and the life: he who believes on me shall have eternal life".'

The attempt to approach the reality of Christ as myth in the sense in which myth has been described above requires a particularly open mind, for there are several different interpretations which have been given to the gospel story, none of which are inherently impossible. We need a mythology which is not incompatible with any of these interpretations and is relevant both to our present human life and to the whole human future. Finally it must be such that it can find some support in our actual or possible experience. How then are we to assess the statements made by persons who may claim to know by experience things that do not and perhaps cannot enter our present experience? Provided we find them thinkable or imaginable, the critical attitude to such claims would be neither belief nor rejection, but acceptance that what has been claimed is to be regarded as a serious possibility, which may provide for many people a firm foundation for their faith. The mythological approach allows anyone both to hold this open mind about different interpretations and to affirm or intuitively to prefer one without wholly rejecting the others.

What is beyond all doubt concerning Christianity is that several different persons at different times wrote the story of Jesus, of his life and sayings, and that in particular one of them, St. John, had the most profound vision of a man who was both man and God, being the incarnation in time of an eternal divine principle, the Word (Logos). This in itself does not prove that Jesus was divine or even that he existed, but it does prove that someone—and more than one person—had the vision of such a man. There is also the whole of history since that time. The works of art, of music and poetry based on the gospel story, and the writings of philosophers and saints cannot be doubted. This does not mean that we must take them at face value, but we cannot deny that



they had a cause; and the whole of our knowledge of life and of human nature leads towards the conclusion that the cause of all these and of much subsequent history relates to some extremely critical turning point in the development of humanity. But concerning the precise nature of these events there are several different interpretations, none of which can be categorically rejected.

There is first the traditional interpretation of the Church—that is of the Roman Catholic Church, because the Church of England seems to be somewhat divided in its views. According to this interpretation the whole gospel story is historically true and tells us of events which really were supernatural. Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, was baptised in Jordan by John the Baptist, was crucified and on the third day rose from the dead and appeared to his disciples.

Opposed to this is the interpretation of Professor Arthur Drews in his book *The Christ Myth* and of J. M. Robertson in *Christianity and Mythology*, who take the whole story as a construction based on the Solar myth. Of a similar kind, but drawing different conclusions, was the whole interpretation of Andrzej Niemojewski in his book which was translated into German with the title *Gott Jesus* (The God Jesus). He believed that the gospels were in no way historical, but were 'a superbly beautifully constructed work of art', based on ancient wisdom about the stars; that is to say it was an astronomically based myth. But he did not on that account consider it any less spiritually significant. On the contrary he regarded it as being of central significance and he personally remained a Christian.

There is also the interpretation of Rudolf Steiner who found in the gospels depths of meaning going far beyond the simple words in which they are written. He regarded the Christ as a cosmic Being of the highest order who at a critical time in the development of mankind entered into human evolution in the person of Jesus, who had been carefully prepared for that high calling. This was, according to him, an event of central significance not only in human history, but also in cosmic evolution.

These are three major interpretations of the gospels. It would be interesting to go into all these three in much greater detail, but in this short lecture there is no time to do so, and all three are

in the books for anyone to read. The aim of this lecture is to describe a mythology which is significant whichever of these three is adopted; a mythology that presents to mankind a vision of their significance and value which can appeal to human emotions and move the human will as no merely intellectual thinking or scientific knowledge can do, but as painting, music and poetry have done for many centuries.

The story of Jesus is that of a boy who was born in exceptional and somewhat mysterious circumstances and about whose boyhood very little has been written except in St. Luke's gospel that he 'grew big and strong. He was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was with him.' At the age of twelve, as he spoke with the elders in the Temple at Jerusalem, 'all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers', and he was already aware of a life mission which he called 'my Father's business'. At the age of thirty he was baptised in Jordan by John the Baptist who 'saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove' and a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased'. We may associate this with the words in the second psalm, which are repeated in the Acts of the Apostles (13.33) and in the Epistle to the Hebrews (1.5) as referring to Jesus, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee'. All four gospels describe how Jesus travelled throughout Israel for three years with his disciples, teaching, and performing miracles, until finally at the age of thirty-three the chief priests and elders had him crucified. And after three days he resurrected from the dead and ascended into heaven.

To anyone acquainted with the symbolism of the mysteries and of mythology much of this story may suggest strong analogies, as for example the numbers thirty and thirty-three as relating to the age of Jesus at Jordan and at Golgotha. It appears that the story is about an exceptional man who was preparing himself or being prepared for thirty years for a mission which it was his providential duty to fulfil, which he described as seeking the will of his Father who sent him (St. John 5.30). The nature of this mission was clearly the attainment of universal or divine consciousness, which we may call Christ-consciousness, and to live, work for three years, and die, continuously in the inspiration of this consciousness. Such was the intensity and universality of

this consciousness that he was in complete accord not only with his own unconscious but with the whole unconscious Power or Reality of the Universe, so that he could say, 'I and my Father are one' (St. John 10.30). As the Athanasian Creed expresses it, 'although he be God and Man, yet he is not two, but one Christ; One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh; but by taking of the Manhood into God'.

The Christian faith is that this man Jesus lived, and was or became the Christ. The power of this myth is the same whether it is affirmed that a man by his own self-discipline acquired Christ-consciousness or whether he prepared himself to receive a cosmic Spirit in the place of his own personality. It is so strong that even if Jesus never existed and the whole story is a constructed work of art based on the solar myth, it remains as a vision of what is attainable by mankind, for in that case the intensity and universality of consciousness of the person who conceived it could hardly have been much less than that of the central figure which it portrayed.

The supreme affirmation of Vedanta is that 'Atman'—the central principle of Man—'is Brahman'—the creative Power in the Universe; not that Atman is part of or partakes in Brahman, but that it is wholly identical with it. But this is only the expression of a universal principle. Jesus Christ affirmed personally for himself that, 'I and the Father are one'. And St. John tells us that this divine consciousness is at the centre of every human being, though it is not recognised. 'That was the true light which lights every man that comes into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him and the world knew him not.' But of those that recognise this divine consciousness he wrote that, 'to them he gave power to become the Sons of God, being born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God'. It is in this sense that at the moment of baptism in Jordan, when the Spirit descended upon Jesus, God the Father had begotten his Son in him.

The very notion that a man could have lived to whom the whole of reality was present in his consciousness for three whole years and who during this time spoke and acted in complete consonance with his own unconscious and with the unconscious power in the Universe, which we may mythically call Providence,

gives a vision of the possible future attainment of humanity which could be universally accepted and acted upon. Mitrinović expressed it thus in the *New Britain World Affairs*, 'The over-soul of Adam has become single and has attained personal existence in the Christ-Mystery; the highest dignity and the most central truth-attainment by our race was attained by it. Humanity has known its own truth and the truth of all existence, the world of nature included, the material world included.'²

If the gospels and the Christ-Mystery are understood in this way, it becomes necessary to give up the superstitious idea of a transcendent God as a Being, conceived anthropomorphically and yet beyond all human understanding. For if Jesus Christ could say, 'I am in the Father and the Father in me' (St. John 14.11), then God was wholly in his consciousness and was not a Being outside him. And this is made explicitly clear in Christ's conversation with the woman of Samaria (St. John 4.20-23), when he said to her, 'the time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. . . . God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.' The translators of the Bible have written, 'God is a Spirit', but this must be wrong, first because the Greek work *pneuma* (*πνεῦμα*) occurs twice in the same sentence and should have the same meaning on both occasions; secondly, because the contrast which Jesus is making is not between worship of a material idol and that of an immaterial Spirit. The God whom the Jews worshipped in Jerusalem was already an immaterial Being. The contrast is between worship of a Being outside Man and the spirit within Man.

Mitrinović expressed this in the *New Britain World Affairs*, 'Christ is the principle of humanity. Christ is the dignity and courage of knowing that God is Spirit; now Spirit altogether is immateriality and innerness; also human innerness; mere human innerness . . . God is in awareness. In human awareness the whole of existence is present. There is no transcendental existence.'³ It was for this reason that Mitrinović described Christianity as 'the principle and the oracle of ripeness and of the coming of age of the human race' because in it 'Divinity is cognised as spiritual, inward, immaterial; but also individuated'⁴—that is, within the consciousness of an individual person. And he applied this denial



of transcendence equally to matter, saying that we must 'renounce our infantile food of transcendentalist religion and materialistic science'.⁵

This denial of a transcendent God may be summed up in Mitrinović's words, 'God is spirit, and to the spirit there is nothing transcendental, except those values, those forms, that spirit reality which is not realised by the experiencing spirit. In depth-realisation, in the whole full-realisation, nothing is transcendental. Now in Jesus Christ dwelt the whole Fullness of Godhead bodily. His inwardness knew reality in the absolute sense of fullness, of perfection. His self-presence and self-beholding were the knowledge of Truth. He was Infinite and he knew it, leaving the Christian Revelation behind him as the proof of his divine cognisance.'⁶

Such is the mythology of the Christ-principle in depth, not depending on a belief in the actuality of some existence beyond human experience or in the historical occurrence of events which one may be unable to verify, but offering a living faith in the significance and future destiny of Humanity which is worthy of the best that mankind has conceived for itself.

The other major and closely related doctrine of Christianity provides a further reason for giving up the atavistic notion of a transcendent God. It is the doctrine of the Trinity. This doctrine affirms that God is not a unitary Being, but a triune reality, and this triunity is not only simultaneous but also successive. It is affirmed in the Athanasian Creed in these words, 'that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity: neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son: and another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one: the glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal. . . . So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. And yet they are not three Gods but one God.' This is the affirmation of triunity in simultaneity. The affirmation of succession is in these words, 'The Father is made of none, neither created, but begotten. The Son is of the Father alone, neither made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son, neither made nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. . . . And in this Trinity none is afore, or after the other; none is

greater or less than another: but the whole three Persons are co-eternal together and co-equal.'

That this is a mythological expression of a spiritual reality and not an actual description of a transcendent God is clear enough, for both within it, and between it and the gospel story there are paradoxes and contradictions which ordinary reason would not allow. The profundity of this whole mythology does not make it any less mythological. Vedanta has also a triunity Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being, Consciousness, Bliss). Sat, Chit and Ananda are a unity consisting of three principles, but they are three eternal principles. As principles they are the same in meaning as the three principles of the Christian Trinity, but there is one essential difference. The three principles of Vedanta are only in simultaneity, not in succession. They are in eternity but not in time. In the Christian Trinity the second Person who is from eternity the Word (Logos), as St. John's gospel tells us, and who corresponds to Chit in Vedanta, actually incarnated in time as a man, and lives to eternity as the risen Christ. These three principles are expressed philosophically in succession by Hegel, who showed how the thesis, as it were, begets the antithesis, and the synthesis proceeds from the thesis and the antithesis.

It is quite fair and reasonable to expect a religious doctrine to be shown to bear some relationship to experience, if it is to be accepted as relevant to one's personal life and to the future of Mankind. And so it is fair that the notion of the Trinity should be shown to relate to normal human experience and not to be just a lot of mystical mumbo-jumbo. The most direct reflection of the Trinity in our daily experience is in our recognition of three relationships. The first is that sensations and events are continuously impinging on us of which we are not aware of being the cause; it is even the case that thoughts, feelings and desires come into our consciousness and we perform actions without being fully aware of the cause of them. In other words, both from outside us and from inside us some cause appears to be working the ultimate origin of which is a mystery to us. The second, which is a relationship of identity, is that we are aware in ourselves of being self-conscious persons. The third is that we are aware of our fellow human beings whom we believe to be self-conscious persons like ourselves. And we are also aware of plant and animal

life around us, and even of mineral existence, with all of which we feel some kinship. This could be described as the triunity of God, Man and Nature.

A similar triunity can be clearly perceived in our direct experience of our willing, thinking and feeling. Thinking and feeling are both conscious. Willing is unconscious. My decision to raise my arm is a conscious thought in my mind, but the willing by which I actually achieve that act is beyond my consciousness. The whole of my subjectivity—all that I call 'I'—is in my willing, thinking and feeling. We have no grounds at all for affirming the existence of any other 'I' objectively transcending the unity of these three, as Immanuel Kant has shown and Buddhism affirms. I say 'I will', 'I think' and 'I feel'. What then is the relationship of 'I' to these three? My willing is I, my thinking is I, and my feeling is I; they are all three distinct, and yet there are not three 'I's but one 'I'. This is exactly the relationship described in the Athanasian Creed between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Willing in Man, which is essentially unconscious, corresponds to God the Father, to whose will Jesus assented. Thinking corresponds to the Son, as the Word or Logos. The correspondence between the emotions and the Holy Spirit is made clear by comparing the Christian Trinity with the triunity in Vedanta, Sat-Chit-Ananda or Being, Consciousness and Bliss. Being corresponds to God the Father, consciousness to the Son, and Bliss—which is clearly related to feeling—to the Holy Spirit.

This triunity is reflected also in our physical bodies, in which there are three main systems: the metabolic, by which nourishment is taken into the body and substantially transformed and waste matter excreted: the nervous system, which receives sensations from the outer world; and the respiratory and circulatory system, which breathes in air, extracts oxygen and sends nourishment to the whole body through the blood circulation. These three functions of taking nourishment, receiving sensations from the outside world, and breathing are in some form or other inherent in every living cell. Thus the notion of triunity describes the essential morphology of organism and provides the model for organic thinking.

Finally the most complete example of triunity in our direct experience, both in simultaneity and in succession, is the human

family, mother, father and child. They come into being in succession, first by the marriage of the mother and father, and then by the birth of a child, who proceeds from the mother and father as the Holy Spirit does from the Father and Son. Simultaneously they all three together make up the family.

Having shown how the notion triunity applies in our daily life and experience, let us now turn to the significance of this mythology for human life generally and for the human future. We have considered the significance of the Christ-principle for human life. We must now consider the meaning and significance of the Holy Spirit. Vladimir Solovyov relates this to the mythology of Sophia, the Wisdom of God. This is fully described in his *Lectures on Godmanhood* and more briefly in Ellen Mayne's Foundation Lecture on Solovyov. He interprets Sophia as the principle of humanity, as the ideal or perfected humanity, existing from eternity but needing to be realised in time in the same way as the Word exists from eternity but had to be incarnated in time as the Christ.

The development of humanity can be described in terms of the succession of the Trinity. First there was humanity as a collective, governed by instinct and in harmony with the whole of nature. One might call this the tribal state in which there was indeed a feeling of togetherness, but not self-conscious and wholly non-individuated. This could be described as the era of God the Father. The second stage, that of individuality and self-consciousness, was properly ushered in by Jesus Christ and developed in Christendom and in the whole of European civilisation. This was the age of God the Son.

The third stage, that of the Holy Spirit, needs to proceed from the first and the second; not to supersede them but to realise them both fully as well as being itself a wholly new stage of development. In the first stage there was an unconscious unity both of mankind and between Man and Nature, portrayed in the myths of Paradise and the Golden Age. This does not have to mean that there was no fighting or killing, but that the organicity of the whole was not disrupted. In the second stage, after the so-called Fall of Man, came the beginning of individual consciousness which disrupted Man's perfect concordance with the wholeness of nature. It brought, however, the possibility of individual freewill.

The perfection of individuality was achieved archetypally in the Person of Jesus Christ. But this has now degenerated into mere individualism—individual greed and ambitious power-seeking, which has brought war and poverty in a way that never existed in the pre-individual stage. But we cannot go back to the pre-individual, even if we wished to. Individual consciousness, once it has been gained, can never be put aside.

So this third stage in human development has to proceed from the unconscious unity of the first stage and from the conscious individuality of the second. We need to recreate a new organic wholeness both within mankind and with the whole of nature. As Erich Gutkind wrote in *The World Conquest*, 'Today something is beginning, as if the seed were losing itself in the bud. And if we wish to survive and not to suffocate, then today we must mount to an entirely new level, taking a step which is greater than the step from animal to man.'⁷ This can be achieved only by the free will of individuals working together, and this is the meaning of the Holy Spirit. It does not imply the giving up of individuality, indeed, as Gutkind wrote, it 'cannot exist without the most strongly developed personality', but it does require the abandonment of individualism.

Mitrinović in *The New Age World Affairs*, which he wrote in 1920-21, developed the notion of Sophia as the incarnation of the Holy Spirit into Universal Humanity. For, he wrote, 'The appearance of Universal Man on the plane of history is only the anthropogenetic fulfilment of the centre and of the form of the Eternal Mystery. It is not the fulfilment of its periphery and content. Logos is the centre and the form. Sophia is the periphery and content. . . . Universal Humanity itself, the human ocean is the content of the Logos. Jesus is only the centre of the world. Humanity is his content.'⁸ And he affirmed that the passage of humanity from individual consciousness to universal consciousness requires the incarnation not only of the Son of God, but also of Sophia, of Man as a Kingdom.

He compared this incarnation with the ancient Indian notion of Loka Samgraha, which can be called the Unity of Mankind, and he conceived it as an Organic or functional Order which he called Universal Humanity. He wrote 'It is the very goal and meaning of human evolution that our race should become an individuated

Collective, a functional articulated organism of interiorised, individuated, illuminated, self-shining persons'⁹ and 'To the Holy Spirit, to Humanity Universal, all humanities, all empires, all races, all classes, must be subordinated—or rather co-ordinated—all sexes of humanity, all ages, every spirit'.¹⁰ He envisaged that this would come about by the free and responsible initiative of individuals and alliances of individuals all over the world, though he did not expect it to come until 'the society of the Race passes everywhere and entirely through the furnace of trial, of infernal suffering, of crisis and of struggle. The Synthesis is reached through the crisis of Antithesis.'¹¹ He called it the Coming of Age of the Race, the dawn of responsibility and awakening of Mankind as a whole, and the entrance of Universal Socialism of Humanity into both the history of Mankind and into its evolution.

Let us dwell for a moment on this word socialism, for what Mitrinović meant by it bears little relationship to the political meaning of the word as it is now commonly used. It has nothing to do with proletarianism or class struggle, nor with any theories about the economy and the means of production. Erich Gutkind expressed it most forcibly when he wrote, 'Socialism, super-personality is the next logical step which we have to take in a world which is going to dissolution . . . Socialism is the new spontaneity which ensues when the zero-point of pure isolated individuality has been passed'. It is the realisation that, 'The *I* must perish, but *we* must put forth life', which means essentially the same as the words of Jesus Christ when he said, 'if *I* go not away, the Comforter (the Holy Spirit) will not come to you'. (St. John 16.7.)

Mitrinović wrote in the *New Britain World Affairs* of the coming era, 'We are reaching the age of super-individual thought and of that common consciousness which is not darkly and unconsciously common, instinctive, tribal, but common in light, common in conscious sharing of the Over-soul. The era of super-individual and super-intellectual experience is coming upon us; and it will be the task of Intuition, of spiritual cognisance, to liberate human culture from the savage and plebeian imperialism of intellectualism and save humanity from the mirage of scientific dictatorship.'¹²

Those who talk superficially about socialism as a political

structure seldom think for a moment about the radical change in human consciousness which would be necessary to bring it about. If socialism is to be the real Organic or functional Order of Humanity, then we have to imagine the change in human behaviour which would be necessary for every race, nation, profession and occupation, and also every religion both to agree with all the others about their own particular significance and function within the world whole, and to accept the validity and valuation of every other one. This would involve not merely tolerance, but active appreciation of the values and cultures of other races, nations, religions and individuals. It is not just avoidance of conflict, for each one must maintain its own values. It means maintaining the tension of opposing values without resorting to violence. Only in this way can there be agreement about how the world is to be economically and politically ordered.

It is written in St. John's first Epistle (4.8) that God is Love. This is often quoted, but too often taken in a sentimental sense, especially by clergymen who are not quite sure about their belief in God. The injunction to love your enemies and to make peace with your adversary is not at all a sentimental exhortation to virtue. Love in this sense is not just a feeling, for it is impossible to command a feeling; it is an act of will as a result of which a feeling may follow by grace. Vladimir Solovyov wrote in his book *The Meaning of Love*, 'The evil and falsity of egoism certainly do not consist in the fact that man prizes himself too highly or ascribes absolute significance and infinite dignity to himself, but in the fact that while he rightly ascribes such significance to himself he wrongly denies it to others'.¹³ This is the force of the commandment to love one's neighbour as oneself. Love for one's enemies should be understood in this sense. It does not just mean being kind to them; it does not even mean avoiding conflict with them, but it does mean sincerely trying to understand the absolute significance which should be ascribed to them, admitting that it may be as valid as one's own, and acting towards them in that realisation. Similarly the adversary is those aspects of one's own nature which are rejected and relegated to the unconscious, but which one nevertheless meets, and often dislikes, in other people. The acceptance of these is a matter of one's own personal health, for if one does not accept them, one will not be released

from the bondage of them until one has, as Jesus said (St. Matthew 5.26), 'paid the uttermost farthing'.

Love then, properly understood, is not just morally good; it is the most profound practical wisdom. So long as races, nations, religions and individuals believe that only they and those who agree with them are right and all others are wrong, and that the 'truth' which they 'know' is the only truth, and so long as it is believed that economic competition and political confrontation are the right way to carry on, there can never be any world ordering. Those who are to be the new guidance of mankind, which Mitrinović called Senate, will have to be 'wise as serpents and harmless as doves' (St. Matthew 10.16). They will have to understand, and be able to act upon the knowledge that there can be no true socialism or Organic World Order without the reconciliation of all different individual and functional meanings and points of view. And they will also have to understand that this does not require agreement between them, but mutual recognition of their respective validity and significance. It is only through love that a pan-human organism would be able to co-function, that is by the mutual acceptance of all that they are 'members one of another' and by everyone acting with that conviction.

This demands a vision of humanity and of its mission and destiny which goes far beyond what the Churches now purvey as Christianity. It demands the active realisation that the whole of Mankind is really One. As Mitrinović wrote, 'Christ-essence, Christ-principle, is the experience, the truth, the knowledge, that all souls are contained in all souls, and that in the centre of each of all the souls, the same, the very same universal is living and present'.¹⁴ Manly Hall called it the Gospel of Identity, 'The thing in you that says "I am" is identical with the thing in me that says "I am"'. So there are no longer two who can be friends, but rather one that cannot be divided.'

In the *New Britain World Affairs* Mitrinović asked the question, 'Is that Western saying true—that all things are different from one another, and they all are what they are and therefore things and values exist for themselves and for their own sake? Is that man wise who said in his heart that Divinity is nil and that there is no God.' And he answered his own question, 'All things

and beings are for the sake of one another and through one another. Divinity is the glory and perfection of their unity and co-functioning. . . . Glory persists and Divinity is that abysmal glory.' He concludes, 'Mankind is in the Divine, and the Divine is in Mankind; so much is infinitely clear. Why do we not believe this livingly? Do we not know it? Is it not true? If it be impossible and not logical, then it is of no consequence whether any world fails or succeeds.'¹⁵



¹*A Solovyov Anthology* arr. S. L. Frank (S.C.M. Press 1950), p. 35.

²*New Britain World Affairs* (21.6.33).

³*New Britain World Affairs* (5.7.33 and 12.7.33).

⁴*New Britain World Affairs* (21.6.33).

⁵*New Britain World Affairs* (5.7.33).

⁶*New Britain World Affairs* (28.6.33).

⁷*The World Conquest* (Nova Atlantis private circulation), p. 4.

⁸*The New Age World Affairs* (26.5.21).

⁹*New Britain World Affairs* (31.6.33).

¹⁰*The New Age World Affairs* (3.2.21).

¹¹*The New Age World Affairs* (17.3.21).

¹²*New Britain World Affairs* (31.5.33).

¹³*A Solovyov Anthology*, p. 158.

¹⁴*New Britain World Affairs* (5.7.33).

¹⁵*New Britain World Affairs* (7.6.33).

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