

The Dialogue between Hellenists and Christians

by

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This essay first appeared in the French journal Études Traditionnelles (novembre-décembre, 1962), then in translation in the journal Tomorrow (Winter, 1965). It appeared as a chapter in the book Light on the Ancient Worlds (World Wisdom, 1965, 1984, and 2006) and The Fullness of God (World Wisdom, 2004). The version below is a new translation of the chapter, along with the editor's explanatory notes, from The Fullness of God. © World Wisdom, Inc.

Like most inter-traditional polemics, the dialogue which opposed Hellenism to Christianity was to a great extent unreal. The fact that each was right on a certain plane—or in a particular “spiritual dimension”—resulted in each emerging as victor in its own way: Christianity by imposing itself on the whole Western world, and Hellenism by surviving in the very heart of Christianity and conferring on Christian intellectuality an indelible imprint.

The misunderstandings were nonetheless profound, and it is not difficult to see why this was so if divergences of perspective are taken into account. From the point of view of the Hellenists, the divine Principle is at the same time one and multiple; the gods personify the divine qualities and functions and, at the same time, the angelic prolongations of these qualities and functions; the idea of immanence prevails over that of transcendence, at least in exoterism. The universe is an order that is so to speak architectural, deployed from the Supreme Principle by way of intermediaries, or of hierarchies of intermediaries, down to earthly creatures; all the cosmic principles and their rays are divine, or semi-divine, which amounts to saying that they are envisaged in relation to their essential and functional divinity. If God gives us life, warmth, and light, He does so by way of Helios or inasmuch as He is Helios; the sun is like the hand of God, and is thus divine; and since it is so in principle, why should it not be so in its sensible manifestation? This way of looking at things is based on the essential continuity between the Cause and the effect, and not on an existential discontinuity or accidentality; the world being the necessary and strictly ordered manifestation of Divinity, it is, like Divinity, eternal; it is, for God, a way of deploying Himself “outside Himself”. This eternity does not imply that the world cannot undergo eclipses, but if it inevitably does so, as all mythologies teach, it is so that it may

rise again in accordance with an eternal rhythm; it therefore cannot not be. The very absoluteness of the Absolute necessitates relativity; *Mâyâ* is “without origin”, say the Vedantists. There is no “gratuitous creation” nor any creation *ex nihilo*; there is a necessary manifestation *ex divino*, and this manifestation is free within the framework of its necessity, and necessary within the framework of its liberty. The world is divine through its character as a divine manifestation, or by way of the metaphysical marvel of its existence.

There is no need to describe here, on account of a concern for symmetry, the Christian outlook, which is that of Semitic monotheism and is for that reason familiar to everyone. On the other hand, it seems indispensable before proceeding further to clarify the fact that the Hellenistic conception of the “divinity of the world” has nothing to do with the error of pantheism, for the cosmic manifestation of God in no way detracts from the absolute transcendence appertaining to the Principle in itself, and in no way contradicts what is metaphysically acceptable in the Semitic and Christian conception of a *creatio ex nihilo*. To believe that the world is a “part” of God and that God, by His Selfhood or by His very essence, spreads Himself into the forms of the world, would be a truly “pagan” conception—such as has no doubt existed here and there, even among the men of old—and in order to keep clear of it, one must possess a knowledge that is intrinsically what would be represented on the plane of ideas by a combination between the Hellenistic “cosmosophy” and the Judeo-Christian theology, the reciprocal relationship of these two outlooks playing the part of a touchstone with respect to total truth. Metaphysically speaking, the Semitic and monotheistic “creationism”, as soon as it presents itself as an absolute and exclusive truth, is nearly as false as pantheism; it is so “metaphysically”, because total knowledge is in question and not the opportuneness of salvation alone, and “nearly” because a half-truth which tends to safeguard the transcendence of God at the expense of the metaphysical intelligibility of the world is less erroneous than a half-truth which tends to safeguard the divine nature of the world at the expense of the intelligibility of God.

If the Christian polemicists did not understand that the outlook of the Greek sages was no more than the esoteric complement of the Biblical notion of creation, the Greek polemicists did not understand the compatibility between the two outlooks any better. It is true that one incomprehension sometimes begets another, for it is difficult to penetrate the profound intention of a strange concept when that intention remains implicit, and when in addition it is presented as destined to replace truths which are perhaps partial, but which are in any case evident to those who accept them traditionally. A partial truth may be insufficient from one point of view or another; it is nonetheless a truth.

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In order properly to understand the significance of this dialogue, which in some respects was but a confrontation between two monologues, one must take account of the following: as far as the Christians were concerned there was no knowledge possible without love; that is to say that in their eyes *gnosis* was valid only on condition that it was included within a unifying

experience; by itself, and apart from the living experience of spiritual reality, an intellectual knowledge of the Universe had no meaning to them; but eventually the Christians had to recognize the rights of a knowledge that was theoretical, and thus conceptual and proleptic, which they did by borrowing from the Greeks certain elements of their science, not without sometimes heaping abuse on Hellenism as such, with as much ingratitude as inconsistency. If a simple and rather summary formulation be permissible, one could say that for the Greeks truth is that which is in conformity with the nature of things; for the Christians truth is that which leads to God. This Christian attitude, to the extent that it tended to be exclusive, was bound to appear to the Greeks as “foolishness”; in the eyes of the Christians the attitude of the Greeks consisted in taking thought for an end in itself, outside of any personal relation to God; consequently it was a “wisdom according to the flesh”, since it cannot by itself regenerate the fallen and impotent will, but on the contrary by its self-sufficiency draws men away from the thirst for God and for salvation. From the Greek point of view, things are what they are whatever we may make of them; from the Christian—to speak schematically and *a priori*—only our relationship to God makes sense. The Christians could be reproached for an outlook that was too much concerned with the will and too self-interested, and the Greeks on the one hand for too much liveliness of thought and on the other for too rational and too human a perfectionism; it was in some respects a dispute between a love-song and a mathematical theorem. It could also be said that the Hellenists were predominantly right in principle and the Christians in fact, at least in a particular sense that can be discerned without difficulty.

As for the Christian gnostics, they necessarily admitted the doctrinal anticipations of the divine mysteries, but on condition—it cannot be too strongly emphasized—that they remained in a quasi-organic connection with the spiritual experience of *gnosis*-love; to know God is to love Him, or rather, since the Scriptural point of departure is love: to love God perfectly is to know Him. To know was indeed *a priori* to conceive of supernatural truths, but to do so while making our whole being participate in this understanding; it was thus to love the divine quintessence of all *gnosis*, that quintessence which is “love” because it is at once union and beatitude. The school of Alexandria was as fully Christian as that of Antioch, in the sense that it saw in the acceptance of Christ the *sine qua non* of salvation; its foundations were perfectly Pauline. In Saint Paul’s view a conceptual and expressible *gnosis* is a knowing “in part” (*ex parte*), and it shall be “done away” when “that which is perfect is come”,¹ namely, the totality of *gnosis*, which, through the very fact of its totality, is “love” (*caritas*, ἀγάπη), the divine prototype of human *gnosis*. In the case of man there is a distinction—or a complementarism—between love and knowledge, but in God their polarity is surpassed and unified. In the Christian perspective this supreme degree is called “love”, but in another perspective—notably in the Vedantic—one can equally well call it “knowledge”, while maintaining, not that knowledge finds its totalization or its exaltation in love, but on the contrary that love (*bhakti*), being individual, finds its sublimation in pure

¹ 1 Corinthians 13:10.

knowledge (*jnâna*), which is universal; this second mode of expression is directly in conformity with the sapiential perspective.

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The Christian protest is unquestionably justified insofar as it is directed to the “humanist” side of “classical” Hellenism and to the mystical ineffectuality of philosophy as such. On the other hand, it is in no way logical to reproach the Greeks with a divinization of the cosmos on the pretext that there can be no “entry” of God into the world, while admitting that Christ, and he alone, brings about just such an entry; indeed, if Christ can bring it about, it is precisely because it is possible and because it is realized *a priori* by the cosmos itself; the “avatic” marvel of Christ retraces, or humanizes, the cosmic marvel of creation or of “emanation”.

From the point of view of the Platonists—in the widest sense—the return to God is inherent in the fact of existence: our being itself offers the way of return, for that being is divine in its nature, otherwise it would be nothing; that is why we must return, passing through the strata of our ontological reality, all the way to pure Substance, which is one; it is thus that we become perfectly “ourselves”. Man realizes what he knows: a full comprehension—in the light of the Absolute—of relativity dissolves it and leads back to the Absolute. Here again there is no irreducible antagonism between Greeks and Christians: if the intervention of Christ can become necessary, it is not because deliverance is something other than a return, through the strata of our own being, to our true Self, but because the function of Christ is to render such a return possible. It is made possible on two planes, the one existential and exoteric and the other intellectual and esoteric; the second plane is hidden in the first, which alone appears in the full light of day, and that is the reason why for the common run of mortals the Christian perspective is only existential and separative, not intellectual and unitive. This gives rise to another misunderstanding between Christians and Platonists: while the Platonists propound liberation by Knowledge because man is an intelligence,² the Christians envisage in their general doctrine a salvation by Grace because man is an existence—as such separated from God—and a fallen and impotent will. Once again, the Greeks can be reproached for having at their command but a single way, inaccessible in fact to the majority, and for giving the impression that it is philosophy that saves, just as one can reproach the Christians for ignoring liberation by Knowledge and for assigning an absolute character to our existential and volitive reality alone and to the means appropriate to that aspect of our being, or for taking into consideration our existential relativity alone and not our “intellectual absoluteness”; nevertheless the reproach to the Greeks cannot concern their sages,

² Islam, in conformity with its “paraetic” character, reflects this point of view—which is also that of the *Vedânta* and of all other forms of *gnosis*—in a Semitic and religious mode, and realizes it all the more readily in its esoterism; like the Hellenist, the Muslim asks first of all: “What must I know or admit, seeing that I have an intelligence capable of objectivity and of totality?” and not *a priori*: “What must I want, since I have a will that is free, but fallen?”

any more than the reproach to the Christians can impugn their *gnosis*, nor in a general way their sanctity.

The possibility of our return to God—wherein are different degrees—is universal and timeless: it is inscribed in the very nature of our existence and of our intelligence; our powerlessness can only be accidental, not essential. That which is principally indispensable is an intervention of the *Logos*, but not in every case the intervention of a particular manifestation of the *Logos*, unless we belong to it by reason of our situation and, by virtue of that fact, it chooses us; as soon as it chooses us, it holds the place of the Absolute as far as we are concerned, and then it “is” the Absolute. It could even be said that the imperative character that Christ assumes for Christians—or for men providentially destined for Christianity—retraces the imperative character inherent in the *Logos* in every spiritual way, whether of the West or of the East.

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One must react against the evolutionist prejudice which would have it that the thought of the Greeks “attained” to a certain level or a certain result, that is to say, that the triad Socrates-Plato-Aristotle represents the summit of an entirely “natural” thought, a summit reached after long periods of effort and groping. The reverse is the truth, in the sense that all the said triad did was to crystallize rather imperfectly a primordial and intrinsically timeless wisdom, actually of Aryan origin and typologically close to the Celtic, Germanic, Mazdean, and Brahmanic esoterisms. There is in Aristotelian rationality and even in the Socratic dialectic a sort of “humanism” more or less connected with artistic naturalism and scientific curiosity, and thus with empiricism. But this already too contingent dialectic—though we must bear in mind that the Socratic dialogues belong to spiritual “pedagogy” and have something of the provisional in them—must not lead us into attributing a “natural” character to intellections that are “supernatural” by definition, or “naturally supernatural”. On the whole, Plato expressed sacred truths in a language that had already become profane—profane because more rational and discursive than intuitive and symbolist, or because it followed too closely the contingencies and humors of the mirror that is the mind—whereas Aristotle placed truth itself, and not merely its expression, on a profane and “humanistic” plane. The originality of Aristotle and his school resides no doubt in giving to truth a maximum of rational bases, but this cannot be done without diminishing that truth, and it has no purpose save where there is a regression of intellectual intuition; it is a “two-edged sword” precisely because truth seems henceforth to be at the mercy of syllogisms. The question of knowing whether this constitutes a betrayal or a providential re-adaptation is of small importance here, and could no doubt be answered in either sense.³ What is certain is that Aristotle’s

³ With Pythagoras one is still in the Aryan East; with Socrates-Plato one is no longer wholly in that East—which in reality is neither “Eastern” nor “Western”, that distinction having no meaning for an archaic Europe—but neither is one wholly in the West; whereas with Aristotle Europe begins to become specifically “Western” in the current and cultural sense of the word. The East—or a particular East—

teaching, so far as its essential content is concerned, is still much too true to be understood and appreciated by the protagonists of the “dynamic” and relativist or “existentialist” thought of our epoch. This last half-plebeian, half-demonic kind of thought is in contradiction with itself from its very point of departure, since to say that everything is relative or “dynamic”, and therefore “in motion”, is to say that there exists no point of view from which that fact can be established; Aristotle had in any case fully foreseen this absurdity.

The moderns have reproached the pre-Socratic philosophers—and all the sages of the East as well—with trying to construct a picture of the universe without asking themselves whether our faculties of knowledge are equal to such an enterprise; the reproach is perfectly vain, for the very fact that we can put such a question proves that our intelligence is in principle adequate to the needs of the case. It is not the “dogmatists” who are naive, but the skeptics, who have not the least idea in the world of what is implicit in the “dogmatism” they oppose. In our day some people go so far as to claim that the goal of philosophy can only be the search for a “type of rationality” adapted to the comprehension of “human reality”; the error is the same, but a coarser and meaner version of it, and more insolent as well. How is it that they cannot see that the very idea of inventing an intelligence capable of resolving such problems proves, in the first place, that this intelligence exists already—for it alone could conceive of any such idea—and shows in the second place that the goal aimed at is of an unfathomable absurdity? But our present purpose is not to prolong this subject; it is simply to call attention to the parallelism between the pre-Socratic—or more precisely the Ionian—wisdom and oriental doctrines such as the *Vaishêshika* and the *Sânkhya*, and to underline, on the one hand, that in all these ancient visions of the Universe the implicit postulate is the innateness of the nature of things in the Intellect⁴ and not a supposition or other logical operation, and on the other hand, that this notion of innateness furnishes the very definition of that which the skeptics and empiricists think they must disdainfully characterize as “dogmatism”; in this way they demonstrate that they are ignorant, not only of the nature of intellection, but also of the nature of dogmas in the proper sense of the

forced an entry with Christianity, but the Aristotelian and Caesarean West finally prevailed, only to escape in the end from both Aristotle and Caesar, but by the downward path. It is opportune to observe here that all modern theological attempts to “surpass” the teaching of Aristotle can follow only the same downward path, in view of the falsity of their motives, whether implicit or explicit. What is really being sought is a graceful capitulation before evolutionist scientism, before the machine, before an activist and demagogic socialism, a destructive psychologism, abstract art and surrealism, in short before modernism in all its forms—that modernism which is less and less a “humanism” since it de-humanizes, or that individualism which is ever more infra-individual. The moderns, who are neither Pythagoreans nor Vedantists, are surely the last to have any right to complain of Aristotle.

⁴ In the terminology of the ancient cosmologists one must allow for symbolism: when Thales saw in “water” the origin of all things, we have every reason to believe that it is the Universal Substance—the *Prakriti* of the Hindus—that is in question and not the sensible element. It is the same with the “air” of Anaximenes of Miletus or of Diogenes of Apollonia, or with the “fire” of Heraclitus.

word. The admirable thing about the Platonists is not, to be sure, their “thought”; it is the content of their thought, whether called “dogmatic” or otherwise.

The Sophists inaugurate the era of individualistic rationalism and unlimited pretensions; thus they open the door to all arbitrary totalitarianisms. It is true that profane philosophy also begins with Aristotle, but in a rather different sense, since the rationality of the Stagirite tends upwards and not downwards, as does that of Protagoras and his like; in other words, if a dissipating individualism originates with the Sophists—not forgetting allied spirits such as Democritus and Epicurus—Aristotle on the other hand opens the era of a rationalism still anchored in metaphysical certitude, but nonetheless fragile and ambiguous in its very principle, as there has more than once been occasion to point out.

However that may be, if one wants to understand the Christian reaction, one must take account of all these aspects of the spirit of Greece, and at the same time of the Biblical, mystical, and “realizational” character of Christianity. Greek thought appeared in the main as a promethean attempt to appropriate to itself the light of Heaven, rashly breaking through the stages on the way to Truth; but at the same time it was largely irresistible because of the self-evidence of its content: that being so, one must not lose sight of the fact that in the East sapiential doctrines were never presented in the form of a “literature” open to all, but that on the contrary their assimilation required a corresponding spiritual method, and this is the very thing that had disappeared and could no longer be found among the Greeks of the classical epoch.

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It has been said and said again that the Hellenists and the Orientals—“Platonic” spirits in the widest sense—have been blameworthy in “arrogantly” rejecting Christ, or that they are trying to escape from their “responsibilities”—once again and always!—as creatures toward the Creator in withdrawing into their own center where they claim to find, in their own pure being, the essence of things and the divine Reality; they thus dilute, it is alleged, the quality of creature and at the same time that of Creator with a sort of pantheistic impersonalism, which amounts to saying that they destroy the relationship of “obligation” between the Creator and the creature. In reality “responsibilities” are relative as we ourselves are relative in our existential particularity; they cannot be less relative—or “more absolute”—than the subject to which they are related. One who, by the grace of Heaven, succeeds in escaping from the tyranny of the ego is by that very circumstance discharged from the responsibilities that the ego entails. God shows Himself as creative Person insofar as—or in relation to the fact that—we are “creature” and individual, but that particular reciprocal relationship is far from exhausting all our ontological and intellectual nature; that is to say, our nature cannot be exhaustively defined by notions of “duty”, of “rights”, nor by other fixations of the kind. It has been said that the “rejection” of the Christic gift on the part of the “Platonic” spirit constitutes the subtlest and most luciferian perversity of the intelligence; this argument, born of a misguided instinct of self-preservation, though understandable on its own plane, can easily and far more pertinently be turned against those who

make use of it: for if we are obliged at all costs to find some mental perversion somewhere, we shall find it with those who want to substitute for the Absolute a personal and therefore relative God, and temporal phenomena for metaphysical principles, not in connection with a childlike faith making no demands of anyone, but within the framework of the most exacting erudition and the most totalitarian intellectual pretension. If there is such a thing as abuse of the intelligence, it is to be found in the substitution of the relative for the Absolute, or the accident for the Substance, on the pretext of putting the “concrete” above the “abstract”;⁵ it is not to be found in the rejection—in the name of transcendent and immutable principles—of a relativity presented as absoluteness.

The misunderstanding between Christians and Hellenists can in large part be condensed to a false alternative: in effect, the fact that God resides in our deepest “being”—or in the transpersonal depth of our consciousness—and that we can in principle realize Him with the help of the pure and theomorphic Intellect, in no way excludes the equal and simultaneous affirmation of this immanent and impersonal Divinity as objective and personal, nor the fact that we can do nothing without His grace, despite the essentially “divine” character of the Intellect in which we participate naturally and supernaturally.

It is perfectly true that the human individual is a concrete and definite person, and responsible before a Creator, a personal and omniscient Legislator; but it is quite as true—to say the least of it—that man is but a modality, so to speak external and coagulated, of a Divinity at once impersonal and personal, and that human intelligence is such that it can in principle be conscious of this fact and thus realize its true identity. In one sense it is evidently the fallen and sinful individuality that is “ourselves”; in another sense it is the transcendent and unalterable Self: the planes are different; there is no common measure between them.

When the religious dogmatist claims for some terrestrial fact an absolute import—and the “relatively absolute” character of the same fact is not here in question—the Platonist or the Oriental appeals to principial and timeless certitudes; in other words, when the dogmatist asserts that “this is”, the gnostic immediately asks: “By virtue of what possibility?” According to the gnostic, “everything has already been”; he admits the “new” only insofar as it retraces or manifests the “ancient”, or rather the timeless, uncreated “idea”. The function of celestial messages is in practice and humanly absolute, but they are not for that reason the Absolute, and as far as their form is concerned they do not pass beyond relativity. It is the same with the intellect at once “created” and “uncreated”: the “uncreated” element penetrates it as light penetrates air or ether; this element is not the light, but is its vehicle, and in practice one cannot dissociate them.

There are two sources of certitude: on the one hand the innateness of the Absolute in pure intelligence, and on the other the supernatural phenomenon of grace. It is amply evident—and

⁵ It is really an abuse of language to qualify as “abstract” everything that is above the phenomenal order.

cannot be too often repeated—that these two sources can be, and consequently must be, combined to a certain extent, but in fact the exoterists have an interest in setting them against each other, and they do so by denying to intelligence its supernatural essence and by denying the innateness of the Absolute, as well as by denying grace to those who think differently from themselves. An irreducible opposition between intellection and grace is as artificial as it could be, for intellection is also a grace, but it is a static and innate grace; there can be absolutely no reason why this kind of grace should not be a possibility and should never be manifested, seeing that by its very nature it cannot not be. If anyone objects that in such matters it is not a matter of “grace” but something else, the answer must be that in that case grace is not necessary, since there are only two alternatives: either grace is indispensable, and if so intellection is a grace, or intellection is not a grace, and if so grace is not indispensable.

If theologians admit, with the Scriptures, that one cannot enunciate an essential truth about Christ “but by the Holy Spirit”, they must also admit that one cannot enunciate an essential truth about God without the intervention of that same Spirit; the truths of the wisdom of Greece, like the metaphysical truths of all peoples, are therefore not to be robbed of their “supernatural” and in principle salvific character.

From a certain point of view, the Christian argument is the historicity of the Christ-Savior, whereas the Platonic or “Aryan” argument is the nature of things or the Immutable. If, to speak symbolically, all men are in danger of drowning as a consequence of the fall of Adam, the Christian saves himself by grasping the pole held out to him by Christ, which no one else can hold out, whereas the Platonist saves himself by swimming; but neither course weakens or neutralizes the effectiveness of the other. On the one hand there are certainly men who do not know how to swim or who are prevented from doing so, but on the other hand swimming is undeniably among the possibilities open to man; the whole thing is to know what counts most in a situation whether individual or collective.⁶ We have seen that Hellenism, like all directly or indirectly sapiential doctrines, is founded on the axiom man-intelligence rather than man-will, and that is one of the reasons why it had to appear as inoperative in the eyes of a majority of Christians; but only “of a majority” because the Christian gnostics could not apply such a reproach to the Pythagoreans and Platonists; the gnostics could not do otherwise than admit the primacy of the Intellect, and for that reason the idea of divine redemption meant to them something very different from and more far-reaching than a mysticism derived from history and a sacramental dogmatism. It is necessary to repeat once more—as others have said before and better—that sacred facts are true because they retrace on their own plane the nature of things, and not the other way round: the nature of things is not real or normative because it evokes certain sacred facts. The principles, essentially accessible to pure intelligence—if they were not

⁶ In other words: if one party cannot logically deny that there are men who save themselves by swimming, no more can the other party deny that there are men who are saved only because a pole is held out to them.

so man would not be man, and it is almost blasphemy to deny that human intelligence considered in relation to animal intelligence has a supernatural side—the universal principles confirm the sacred facts, which in their turn reflect those principles and derive their efficacy from them; it is not history, whatever it may contain, that confirms the principles. This relationship is expressed by the Buddhists when they say that spiritual truth is situated beyond the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity, and that it derives its evidence from the depths of Being itself, or from the innateness of Truth in all that is.

In the sapiential perspective divine redemption is always present; it pre-exists all terrestrial alchemy and is its celestial model, so that it is always thanks to this eternal redemption—whatever may be its vehicle on earth—that man is freed from the weight of his vagaries and even, *Deo volente*, from that of his separative existence; if “my words shall not pass away” it is because they have always been. The Christ of the gnostics is he who is “before Abraham was” and from whom arise all the ancient wisdoms; a consciousness of this, far from diminishing a participation in the treasures of the historical Redemption, confers on them a scope that touches the very roots of Existence.

Explanatory Notes by Editor James S. Cutsinger

From Page 3 above:

- Regarding the *inconsistency* involved in Christian *borrowing from the Greeks*, the author writes elsewhere: “Christianity being a *bhakti*, it would in principle have been consistent and wise to renounce integral metaphysics and to hold fast to a fideism inspired solely by the Scriptures: thus, to record piously what they say of God, of the Father, of the Son, of the Holy Ghost, without seeking to build a system, and to remain humbly and lovingly content with mystery; theology, necessary *de facto*, could have done without certain speculations inspired by Aristotle. But in fact such total faithfulness to itself—or more precisely to the genius of *bhakti*—was scarcely possible for a state religion. Furthermore, it was not possible because speculation is in the nature of man, and because the proximity of philosophers was a temptation to imitate them, all the more so since man is reluctant to acknowledge in others qualities which he does not himself possess—and this, without euphemism, is called jealousy; then, because a number of converts were themselves Greeks or Hellenists, acquainted with philosophy; and finally, because the pagan environment required vigilant apologetics, without forgetting the Christian heresies which needed to be neutralized. But here a new difficulty arises: the heresy did not always consist in something that was contrary to the truth; too often it was simply something that was contrary to *bhakti*; theology therefore developed in response to a twofold necessity or a twofold temptation: to take over the dialectic—even if foreign to the Christian genius—of real or apparent adversaries and, with the help of this dialectic, to attack its very essence; in a word, to lay claim to all the rights of *gnosis* or pure intellection, while having recourse to mystery when

this claim comes up against a limit, as is inevitable since it is a question here of *bhakti* and dogmatism” (*Christianity/Islam: Essays on Esoteric Ecumenicism* [Bloomington, Indiana: World Wisdom, 1985], pp. 142-43).

- “We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks *foolishness*” (1 Cor. 1:23).
- *Wisdom according to the flesh*: “In simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world” (2 Cor. 1:12).
- The *school of Alexandria*, whose teachers included Clement (c. 150-c. 215) and Origen (c. 185-c. 254), was marked by a strong Platonic tendency and by a mystical and allegorical interpretation of Scripture, while that of *Antioch* was noted for its Aristotelian and historical emphasis.

From Page 5 above:

- *Socrates* (c. 470-399 B.C.) was the teacher of *Plato* (c. 427-c. 347 B.C.), and Plato was the teacher of *Aristotle* (384-322 B.C.).
- *Aryan* refers to the teachings and traditions of ancient Indo-Iranian culture; *Mazdean* is the same as Zoroastrian; *Brahmanic* signifies the doctrine of Hindu Brahmins or priests.
- Note 3: *Pythagoras* (fl. 540 B.C.) taught a metaphysics that was based upon the qualitative essence of numbers.

From Page 6 above:

- The earliest of the *pre-Socratic* philosophers, the *Ionians* or Milesians, included Thales and Anaximenes (see note 4 below), as well as Anaximander (c. 611-c. 547 B.C.), who taught that all things are composed of *apeiron*, the “indefinite”.
- Note 4: *Thales* (c. 636-c. 546), *Anaximenes* (fl. 550 B.C.), *Diogenes* (c. 412-c. 323 B.C.), *Heraclitus* (fl. 500 B.C.).

From Page 7 above:

- The ancient Greek *Sophists* were teachers of rhetoric, much criticized by Socrates for their specious arguments and seeming indifference to truth.
- Aristotle is known as the *Stagirite* because he was born in the Ionian city of Stagira in Chalcidice.
- *Protagoras* of Abdera (c. 481-c. 411 B.C.) was a leading Sophist, known for his maxim that “man is the measure of all things”.
- *Democritus* (c. 460-c. 370 B.C.) believed that everything can be reduced to atoms moving in the void.

- *Epicurus* (c. 341-271 B.C.) propounded an empiricist theory of knowledge and a hedonistic, or “epicurean”, ethics, based on the conviction that the gods have no influence on human life.

From Page 9 above:

- “No man can say that Jesus is Lord, *but by the Holy Spirit*” (1 Cor. 12:3).

From Page 10 above:

- “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but *my words shall not pass away*” (Matt. 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33).
- “*Before Abraham was, I am*” (John 8:58).