

RELIGION AND SPIRITUAL UNITY

Nothing can unify men like religion—and nothing can so divide them. It seems to share the ambiguity that characterizes our human condition.

Today, our whole world-culture seems to be moving toward some dimly sensed crossing point. A clear sensation of the oneness of man is ripening in our awareness. At the same time, forces of elemental discord are tearing at the fabric of planetary life. Those who are sensitive to the currents of consciousness will recognize that these developments are not random. They are profoundly patterned.

Today humanity is experiencing a rekindling of its deep-seated desire for unification. Men are seeking unity in many diverse activities, and one of the most significant is religion. All people of compassion long for an end to the kind of vicious religious conflict that has produced, as

just one example, the apparently endless war in the Middle East. Indeed, the spirit of the age seems to have breathed into our race a renewal of that ancient, passionate dream of a world at one with itself, in which the petty divisions that plague Mankind have been transcended in the universal knowledge of a Truth so great that none can doubt it.

Such a vision is by no means idle utopian dreaming. Whether the concept is "Millennium" or "Age of Aquarius," the most ancient traditions of our world agree in their expectation of just such a time of peace, brotherhood, and spiritual harmony.

Unity and Unification in the Bible

The Bible likewise speaks of the great Age of Truth that is to come. But it adds to that comforting prophecy one sobering

chapter that is universally ignored by other predictive efforts. *Before* that anticipated age arrives, the earth will pass through the darkest phase of its spiritual history; this much is a commonplace to many. The startling feature of Biblical prophecy is its flat declaration that this dark period is not to be one of religious conflict and division, as we would expect. Rather, it will be a time of spiritual unity and cooperation on an unprecedented, world-wide scale!

As always, the true character of reality evades the simplistic identification of evil with chaos and disruption. The kingdom of Antichrist mimics the kingdom of God in many external attributes, not the least of which is its cohesiveness. Almost 2,000 years ago, the final book of the Biblical New Testament (the Apostle John's Revelation of Jesus Christ) summarized and distilled over 1,500 years of Jewish prophecy in a far-reaching vision of an ultimate totalitarianism, in which political power, economic control, religious worship, occult *gnosis*, psychic power, and personal charisma would be combined in a single, unified system of oppression and delusion called "Mystery Babylon," which would encompass the earth.

The Bible gives us a clear, if unpleasant picture: in the last days of history as we know it, mankind will be brought together in a common expression of humanistic "spirituality." This coming great World-Religion will offer itself to us as the "Ancient Wisdom," the "Hidden Truth" underlying all the religious forms of history. In actual fact, however, it is not truth in any sense of the word, but a lie.

Missing the Point

The nature of this lie is also sharply depicted in the Bible. It is not just any stray untruth, but a particular kind of falsehood. It is the same deception that has beguiled man and opposed God from the beginning, the Lie that prompted the root-sin of all mankind.

The literal translation of the word *Chatha* (usually rendered "sin") from the Hebrew means to "miss the point" or "go wide of the mark"; the Scriptures also re-

fer to it as "pride" and "hardness of heart." But in its essence it is a consistent preference for the claims of self in opposition to those of God. When we spell Self with a capital S and pursue its spiritual qualities with reverential zeal, we see the emergence of self-exaltation in a specifically religious dimension. To choose such values and goals becomes in effect worship, whether ritualized or not.

The Natural History of Deceit

The Grand Lie has both a beginning and end. The Bible reveals these to us and also shows us its intermediate historical stages. In the third chapter of Genesis, its origins are uncovered. Here we see the Lie most clearly in all its stark simplicity. The deception is single in its nature, but it has six salient features (three of negation and three of affirmation). These may be analyzed as follows:

- (1) the denial of the reality of the curse of death;
- (2) the denial of the truthfulness of God;
- (3) the denial of the loving kindness of God;
- (4) the promise of wisdom;
- (5) the promise of divinity; and
- (6) the promise of power—in that order.

The thrust of this exposure is to upset all mere dualisms of good and evil. Evil is not the opposite of good. It is not even a self-existent reality, but a parasite of God's goodness. It is not evil in itself that tempts us, but always a good that we imagine, an even "better good" than whatever God proposes. Thus the archetypal pattern is struck: we cannot "do wrong" as the deceptive phrase leads us to believe, but we can "do wrongly" what we do with the gifts of God, including the supreme gift of our own being, which He created in His image. At its heart this Lie is seduction to an idolatry of the *image* of God, a worship of the autonomous self and its powers, disguised as "secret knowledge" and presented as "god-realization."

Adam's aptitude for "missing the point" has become a built-in factor of the

human condition. Like any universal disposition, it inevitably tends to organize itself into a system. The natural inclination of such a system is not only to perpetuate and perfect existing errors, but to produce new ones and to expand itself in extent.

Therefore, somewhat later in history, we see this fundamental Lie in a more developed form. In this case its contaminating influence has been consolidated to provide the spiritual basis for a brilliant but corrupt civilization with ambitions of world-domination: Babylon. In our own era, at the "end of the age" (as Peter, Paul, John, and Jesus all consistently forewarned us), this basic Lie progresses to its ultimate state of development. It is brought to its completed form in this great one-world system of idolatrous worship. It is no longer a matter of individual deception; it has reached the stage of an encompassing, systematic delusion.

Mystery Babylon: The Secret

The Book of Revelation (chapter 17) refers to this false religious system in its final configuration as "Mystery Babylon." This title in itself tell us much about its origins and teachings. In the first place, the term *mystery* in Biblical usage has a dual and somewhat unusual significance. On the one hand, it carries the usual associations attached to our use of the word *mysterious*; that is, "puzzling" or "difficult to understand." On the other hand, it is more frequently used in what may be called a technical sense, with an extended but well-defined meaning: it applies to the "present revelation of a previously unrevealed truth." With this meaning in mind, Paul speaks of the manifestation of Christ as "the mystery of godliness" (1 Timothy 3:16), and of the good news (gospel) as "the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested" (Romans 16:25). In Biblical terms, therefore, a mystery refers specifically to something that has been previously hidden but at a definite point in time breaks open to the world at large and becomes common property. At the outset,

then, we perceive that Mystery Babylon is a spiritual system which is founded upon the widespread and public disclosure of a previously concealed knowledge. The disclosure normally occurs at the time that the term "mystery" is applied. However, since the text of Revelation in which Mystery Babylon is named is a prophecy of the future, the public proclamation of its secret knowledge occurs only when the prophecy begins to be fulfilled.

Mystery Babylon: The Knowledge

The precise nature of this secret knowledge is indicated by the mention of Babylon. In the Old Testament, Babylon was the persistent enemy of God and of God's people, both spiritually and politically. The city personified the continuous pressure of false religion against the redemptive designs of God. In chapter 47 of Isaiah we see God's scathing condemnation of Babylon's spiritual corruption and the perverted religious experiences that grew out of it.

The context is especially important. We should notice that the preceding four chapters are placed as a deliberate contrast to the unveiling of the Babylonian error. Through His prophet, the entire passage (beginning at Isaiah 42:5) is devoted to an overpowering revelation by God of Himself. The keynote of this tremendous Self-disclosure is the phrase, "I am." The pivotal assertion "I am the Lord . . ." is in fact repeated 21 times.

The climax of God's Self-description is reached in Isaiah 45:18, 19—"I am the Lord, and there is no other . . . I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, 'Seek Me in chaos' [or 'the formless,' 'the void']. I the Lord speak the truth, I declare what is right."

From the peak of that pure, clear divine statement, it is a downhill slide to chapter 47. There God evaluates the spiritual realities behind the facade of the Babylonian religion. He strips bare the shameful deceit of her "wisdom":

"Now therefore hear this, you lover of pleasures, who sit securely, who say in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one

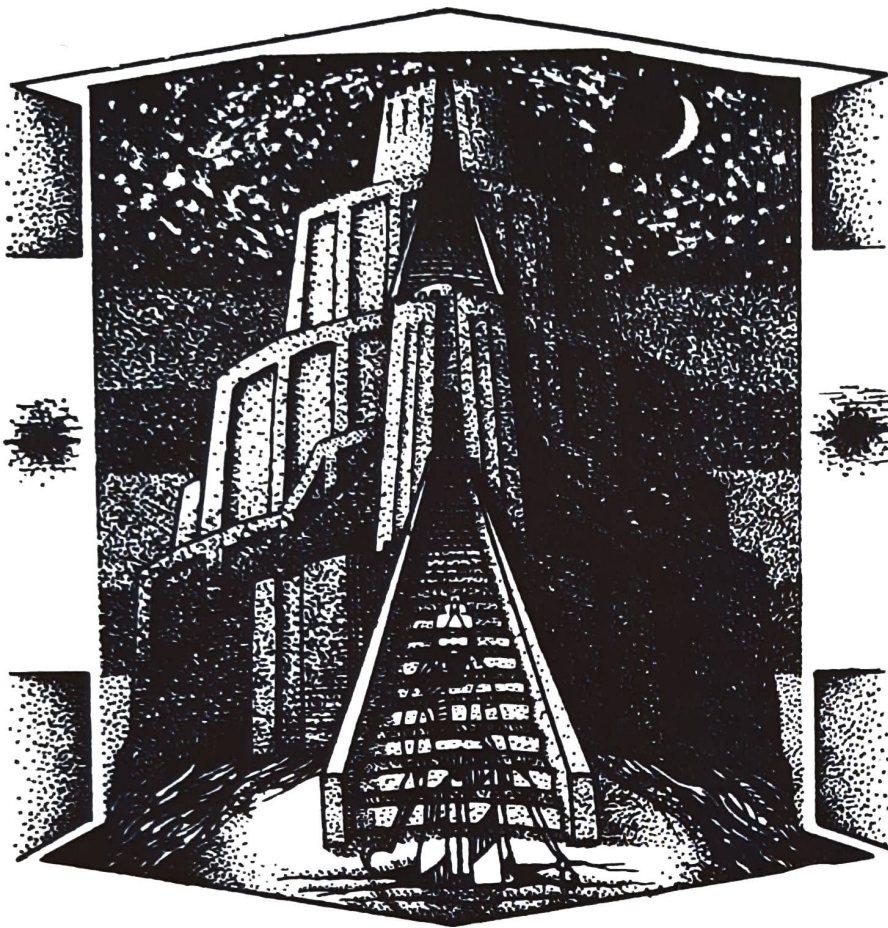
besides me'; [God's judgment] shall come to you in a moment . . . shall come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and the great power of your enchantments. You felt secure in your wickedness; you said 'No one sees me'; your wisdom and your knowledge led you astray, and you said in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one besides me'" (Isaiah 47:8-10).

The meaning could not be plainer. Babylon was condemned because its religion was based upon an illegitimate usurpation of divinity, an idolatrous identification of the human self with God.

Historical Babylon

We should not mistakenly assume that this unsparring denunciation is directed merely against the self-glorification of man's limited ego, the "social self" or "biographical identity" of the individual. A much more radical presumption is in view here. Secular history confirms for us that the distinguishing mark of the Babylonians was their "cosmic" view of man's nature. Historically speaking, the entire Chaldean culture, Babylon included, is known to have been deeply rooted in the esoteric science of astrology. Every aspect of this ancient civilization, its rule as well as its ritual, was charged with the power of its occult symbology and the secret wisdom of its priestly initiates.

The most significant religious edifice in Babylon was the Ziggurat, which in addition to serving as an astrological observatory was an astral temple symbolically representing the structure of reality. The Ziggurat as the "cosmic mountain" tied together heaven and earth. It was the all-inclusive image of the totality of the universe. In the ritual act of ascending the astral altar, the priests acted out the stages of "god-realization" and the inner meaning of man's oneness with the cosmos. The Babylonian monarch himself was the focus of the occult power channeled through the activities of the priesthood. He was regarded as a divine being, a god-man. And it was he who contained and maintained the cosmic order on behalf of those he ruled. The monarch's distinctive royal function was to integrate in



his own being the powers that govern the universe, to coordinate them with the life of society, and to maintain that relationship in harmony.

In all respects the esoteric core of the Babylonian *gnosis* was substantially identical to what we now encounter through the proliferating forms of eastern and occult mysticism. The chief distinction is that in those days it was more strictly distributed. In our own times, the seal of secrecy has been broken, and "Mystery Babylon" is spread abroad.

Secret Knowledge: The Reality

In the highest moment of serene ecstasy the initiate, properly speaking, does not find God. Rather, the mystery of his own being supremely asserts itself. At the end, the only thing that appears to exist in the mirage of existence is the human self-consciousness moving in sovereign solitude over the void abyss of void existence.

Thus occult illumination is precisely the opposite of a God-centered orienta-

tion to reality. It is radically man-centered, and thus it becomes the perfected expression of the Great Lie through the logical necessity of its own false presuppositions.

In these Biblical passages God has plainly shown us that there *are* knowledge, wisdom, and power in all this. But they are not from Him. They do not lead to Him. They are centered in the deceiving experience of the so-called "Divine Within," but they are not Divine. They lead to the outer limit of falsehood, rebellion, and spiritual pride: "your heart is proud, and you have said, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of the gods . . . ' yet you are but a man, and no god" (Ezekiel 28:2).

Such wisdom is the "ancient wisdom" of the serpent, of Satan. It is the *Samadhi* of Yoga, it is the "Illumination" of occultism, it is the "Perfect Knowledge" of Guru Maharaj Ji, it is the "Divine Principle" of Sun Myung Moon, it is the cornerstone of "Mystery Babylon," it is the coming World-Religion. And it is "what's happening" now, *today*.

The End—And a Beginning

God bluntly calls this religious deceiver a "whore" and declares that its end will be in accord with its character: ". . . her plagues shall come in a single day, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she shall be burned with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who judges her" (Revelation 18:8).

But God has better things in store for those who will choose Him by faith in the sacrifice of Christ, His Son (read Revelation chapters 19-22). To those who want to know Him—and to those who already do—His warning is clear: "Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues" (Revelation 18:4).



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