

## PANTHEISM AND CHRISTIANITY

IN this note I want to try to bring face to face two great religious powers: the only two powers, truth to say, that today share between them the world of human thought. They are Christianity and pantheism.

Generally speaking (when it is a Christian who is responsible for the confrontation) the chief concern is to emphasize the opposition between the two doctrines and to widen still further the gulf that divides them.

My approach in this essay will be the exact reverse. What I am proposing to do is to narrow that gap between pantheism and Christianity by bringing out what one might call the Christian soul of pantheism or the pantheist aspect of Christianity. My personal conviction is that it is with pantheism as it is with all the other isms (evolutionism, socialism, feminism, internationalism, modernism . . .). The designation of these words is, quite unwarrantably, restricted to certain particular, infelicitous and unacceptable, expressions of tendencies which, taken in their whole content, are legitimate; some day, there can be no doubt, they must be put in terms whose truth will be universally recognized. Pantheism has become synonymous with Spinozism, Hegelianism, theosophy, monism . . . I believe that this identification is false, unjustified and dangerous. Beneath the heterodox forms of the pantheist impulse just mentioned, there lie a psychological reality and an intellectual need which are much vaster and more enduring than any system of Hindu, Greek or German thought.

To put it briefly, my precise aim is as follows: I would like to make it clear that pantheism (in the current, restricted meaning of the word) is only the defective form in which is expressed

## PANTHEISM AND CHRISTIANITY

a well-justified (and, moreover, ineradicable) tendency in the human soul, a tendency which can be fully satisfied only in Christianity.

This tendency is to recognize the *importance, in one's religious calculations, of the Whole*. In Part One I shall give a summary of its historical development, before considering, in Part Two, in what way it may be Christianized.

### I. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE PANTHEIST TENDENCY

a. This feeling of the importance of the Whole has its roots in the furthest and most secret depths of our being. As a matter of intellectual necessity – as an affective need – and, maybe, by the direct impact made on us by the universe, we are constantly and essentially brought back to a consideration of the world, apprehended in its totality.

Initially, our intelligence is baffled by the multiple, by the plural. We are unable, in reality, to understand the multiple. We can comprehend beings only in so far as they can so escape from plurality as to be capable of action or reaction, of harmonization or association. For thought, the multiple (matter) is something without legitimate existence. The intelligible world, the true world, can only be a unified world. In consequence, the elements, the parts, the atoms, the monads, have no real and permanent value. Ultimately, the only thing that has any importance is the Whole, in which alone unity can be effected.

Parallel with (and in a sense identical with) our intellectual need of unity, we experience, deep within us, an affective and spontaneous need for union. Man is not drawn towards the One (that is, the Whole) by his reason alone, but by the full force of his whole being (is not our thought the act of our whole being?). On earth we are essentially separate, incomplete

— a point made, you may remember, in Plato's *Phaedrus*. We are seeking desperately for our completion; and we cannot find it by wedding ourselves to any element of the world taken in isolation. What we reach out to grasp in our aspirations is something which is diffused throughout, which permeates, everything. Fundamentally, we have but one passion: to become one with the world which envelops us without our ever being able to distinguish either its face or its heart. Would man worship woman if he did not believe that he saw the universe mirrored in her eyes? And does man continue to love woman when (by his own fault) he has reduced her to no more than one poor closed individual, opening the road for him to no further extension either of his race or of his ideal?

Ultimately, our thought cannot comprehend anything but the Whole, nor, when it really comes to the point, can our dreams entertain anything but the Whole. Should we go further and say that there are times when the Whole makes itself directly manifest to us — when it almost intuitively forces itself upon us? It may well be so. When we read the evidence of certain Christian or pagan mystics, or even simply what many perfectly ordinary people may tell us in confidence, we cannot but quite seriously question whether there may not be a sort of cosmic consciousness in our soul, more diffuse than our personal consciousness, more intermittent, but perfectly well-defined — a sort of feeling of the presence of all beings at the same time, so that they are not perceived as multiple and separate but as forming part of one and the same unit, at least in the future . . . Whether this consciousness of the universal is a reality, or whether it is the materialization of a wish, of an expectation — that is a question for the psychologists to answer, if they can. The least one may say is that many people have believed that they have experienced 'cosmic consciousness', so that, even if it is not an independent source through which we are introduced to a consideration of the Whole, at least it shows

— since we tend to objectivize our dream — how immensely strong is our feeling of the importance of the Whole.

b. If it is true that our concern for the Whole is as deeply rooted in the human as I have just maintained, we should not be surprised to find the pantheist current (in the wide sense of the word) incorporated in the first historical manifestations of human thought.

In its vaguest, but most innate and persistent form, we see the feeling of the Whole as the fertilizer of poetic genius. Whether their theme be the great cosmogonic myths, great wars, great passions, or the grandeurs of nature, poets have never been truly poets (nor will they ever be) except in so far as they have responded to some flash of the absolute, of the universal making itself apparent to them in one or other of the manifestations, infra- or super-human, of the universal generative force: of Demeter. We may say, I believe, that there is no profound poetry, no true lyricism, no sublimity in words, in art or in music, that does not rest upon evocation of the Whole, presentiment of, nostalgia for, the Whole. And yet there have always been poets: there must, then, always have been naturally pantheist souls.

Philosophers, too, of all times have tried to record the exact characteristics of, and to systematize, what poets of all times have experienced and celebrated when this universal vibration reverberated in their souls — either because the philosophers also had this world-feeling, or simply because they wanted to understand what the poets meant. There is no need for me to labour the point — you can see it in the powerful ventures into monism of the earliest Greek philosophers, and in the Alexandrians' subtle attempts to establish the existence of the Logos, and in the Stoics' contemplation of the soul of the world.

This may be remarkable, but it is in no way surprising. Whether expressed in poetic impulse or in philosophical constructions, pantheism in the wide sense in which I am now

discussing it, as referring, that is, to a concern for the Whole, is seen to be religious, fundamentally religious. From beneath the most secular experience of love (provided it be deep), from beneath the most coldly reasoned construction of the universe (provided it seek to embrace the whole of the real) there always shines through some divine emotion, and over it there passes a breath of worship. How, indeed, could it be otherwise? With its attributes of (at least relative) universality, unity, and infallibility, the Whole cannot reveal itself to us without our recognizing in it God, or the shadow of God. And on his side, how can God make himself manifest to us otherwise than by passing through the Whole, by assuming the features or at least the outward integument of the Whole?

Poet, philosopher, mystic – it is hardly possible to be one without being the others. In the great stream of past mankind, poets, philosophers, and mystics – the long procession of those who have been initiated into the vision and cult of the Whole – have left behind them a central wake which we can follow unmistakably from our own days right back to the most distant horizons of history. In one sense, therefore, we may say that a concern for the Whole is extremely ancient. It belongs to all ages. From another angle, however (and this is a point that must be fully understood), it seems in our day to be going through a real crisis of awakening. It is highly peculiar to our own time. As I shall briefly demonstrate, we may say, in fact, that the essentially modern work of philosophic criticism and scientific research which has been carried out for the last two or three centuries in every field of terrestrial knowledge, is all leading in the same direction: by an astonishing convergence of all its findings, we can see that it is directly contributing to a magnification and solidification of the universe as one bloc.

In philosophy, in the first place, rigorously pursued analysis of the conditions of knowledge has brought out with increased

force what medieval thought, both Arab and Christian, had already seen – that each centre of consciousness in the world could not know the world as it is in fact capable of knowing it, except by being co-extensive with it. If the consciousness of each monad is to be explicable, that monad must be conceived not as an atom juxtaposed with other atoms, but as a partial centre of the Whole, a particular outlook on the Whole, a particular actualizing of the Whole.<sup>1</sup> We must, however, go still further in the ontological consolidation of the universe. The most extraordinary thing about the phenomenon of knowledge is not that each one of us can understand the world. The really amazing thing is that the countless points of view represented by our individual thoughts should have a point of coincidence; that, intellectually, we should all appreciate one and the same pattern in the universe; that we should understand one another. The reason for the existence of this mutual understanding, of this intellectual concurrence in our collective penetration of the real, can be found only in the existence of a principle which controls and unifies individual perceptions. If, therefore, we are to explain the effective operation of human thought, something more is needed than the fact that each consciousness is co-extensive with the whole of the knowable. We must go further and admit that all consciousnesses, taken as one whole, are dominated, influenced and guided by a sort of higher consciousness; and that it is this which animates, governs and synthesizes all the different apprehensions of the universe effected by each monad in isolation. Not only is each one of us partially Whole – we are all together included in, given cohesion in, a unifying association. There is a centre which is the centre of all the centres, and without which the entire edifice of thought would disintegrate into dust.

In recent times physics (by which I mean all the natural

1. Here Teilhard is expressing concretely in terms of the 'Whole' what traditional philosophy expresses abstractly in terms of 'Being'.

sciences) has gradually made its way, by humbler and more roundabout roads than metaphysics, towards equally grand horizons. All the progress we have made, since the Renaissance, in penetrating nature derives, indeed, from what may be expressed in just these few words: The discovery of the universe's infinite extension and infinite cohesion in space and time.

First, in space, we have witnessed the gradual and astonishing emergence and analysis of the twofold infinity of vastness and minuteness. At the present moment (pending, that is, further discoveries) we stand between two extreme terms of material elements, the electron and the nebula. And within this wide spectrum of corpuscular magnitudes, to whose lines there would appear to be no limit either in length or number, there prevails an unimaginable solidarity; operating through the mysterious zones of the ether and of gravity, this knits everything that exists into an extraordinary continuum of energy. The greater the world grows as we explore it, the more advanced the interpenetration of its elements. In the order of measurable energy, everything holds together; and the same is equally true in the more fugitive, more complex, but no less physically real domain of the soul's organic developments and experiential manifestations. In truth, the world, as seen by science, stretches out immeasurably and at the same time forms one solid block in space.

In time, we find the same phenomenon of growth and fusion – but with an even more shattering impact! Without any doubt, the great advance made by human thought in modern times has been its reaching an awareness of time, of the perspectives opened up by time, of the way beings form a chain-series in time. Not so very long ago one could be confronted by a mountain, a living creature, a spoken language, a social type, a form of religion, without bothering about where they came from, or at any rate without doubting but that they had always existed just as we see them now. Today we have learnt

to adjust our vision in a completely different way. No longer do we see every reality in the world as a product interpolated instantaneously, at a given time *T*, into all the other realities of the world; the beginning of everything is hidden from us. No object is scientifically intelligible to us except as the culmination of a limitless series of prior states. History is invading and tending to absorb the whole of science. After first making its way into living things, which are more open to its attacks, we now find it doing the same to inorganic bodies. We now realize that there is not an atom which, if it were to be fully understood, would not have to be followed ever further and further into its past, through the endless series of its earlier states. Not only does the whole of the present world reverberate in every fragment of the world, but, in some way, the whole of the past world reaches its term in it.

Thus, from the patient, prosaic, but cumulative work of scientists of all types, there has spontaneously emerged the most impressive revelation of the Whole that could possibly be conceived. What the ancient poets, philosophers and mystics had glimpsed or discovered (primarily by intuition), what modern philosophy demands, more rigorously, in the order of metaphysics, science of today has brought within our grasp even in its lower, sensibly apprehensible, zones. Today the universe, in its totality and unity, forces itself inexorably on our attention. Whatever the avenue opened up by our thought and our activity, there it stands, whole and entire, to be a burden to us, to fascinate us, or to exalt us.

In the moral sphere the effects of a like 'epiphany' cannot but be enormous. However positivist the intentions with which we embark on a study of the Whole, the mode of its reaction on those who contemplate it is, as I was saying, inevitably religious. And we find the same inevitable consequence, again, following the more direct and more magnificent revelation of the universe which belongs peculiarly to our own century: it

has operated on the mystical tendencies to unity and union which are common to mankind of all ages, and has thereby directed a great surge of worship towards the world.

Explicit or in a disguised form, we can see the worship of the world in every quarter, wherever we look. It would be no exaggeration to say that it dominates modern religious history. It is that worship which seeks for expression in the present proliferation of neo-Buddhisms, of theosophies, of spiritualistic doctrines. It is that, basically, which in an ill-defined way is driving the masses towards some sort of progress, some sort of super-mankind. Were one able to make one's way to the bottom of men's souls, one would find that worship sustaining the most unbelieving of scientists in his researches. On almost every occasion it is that which provides a refuge for the best minds that abandon the various Christian forms of belief. And finally, as we can recognize by countless symptoms, it is that worship which is seeking to make its way into the formulation of the most orthodox faith.

Nobody, I think, can fail to see that the vital question for Christianity today is to decide what attitude believers will adopt towards this recognition of the value of the Whole, this 'preoccupation with the Whole'. Will they open their hearts to it, or will they reject it as an evil spirit?

It is obviously a very difficult question to answer. In the first place, for many historical and psychological reasons, the religion of the Whole has hitherto been expressed primarily in terms of paganism and anti-Christianity. Whether because the Christian God seemed useless and distant, or even maleficent, in comparison with the powerful evolution immanent in things – or whether because philosophic thought believed that it found its perfect expression in a monism which united beings to a degree at which all distinction was lost – the fact remains that the great mass of those who follow the religion of the Whole have abandoned Christianity. And now it might well

appear that all is over for ever between them and us, the followers of Jesus Christ: '*Chaos firmatum est*', the reign of Chaos is established.

There can be no immediate truce, therefore, with such opponents. On the other hand, however, how can we condemn and repudiate them unreservedly, '*simpliciter*', without severe damage to ourselves? If we have nothing but reproach for them and banish them indiscriminately from our communion, the pantheists will certainly take with them the most vital part of this world which it is our professed aim to save and lead back to God. Passion for the Whole, we must remember, is neither a free decision nor an artificial product; it represents the most active part (maybe, indeed, all) of this natural mysticism of which Christian mysticism can only be the sublimation and crowning peak. Moreover, science and philosophy's revelation of the Whole is an undeniable fact. For the believer, as for every man who can see and think, the universe stands out with an organic unity, a coherence, a compelling emphasis, a brilliance, that dazzle us, no matter how tightly we screw up our eyes. How could the Christian live, cut off from the vital source which feeds mankind's fundamental religious feeling? How could he calmly worship his Father in heaven, so long as he was surrounded, as though by an ubiquitous temptation, by the influence, the shadow, of the universal and moving reality of the cosmos?

Truth to say, there is only one attitude Christianity may adopt towards the persistent, and to some degree legitimate, rise of the religion of the Whole: it must directly confront the spellbinding grandeur that is revealing itself – overcome it, take possession of it, and assimilate it. The present religious crisis derives from the antagonism between the God of supernatural revelation on one side and the great mysterious figure of the universe on the other; in consequence there will be no permanent peace for our faith unless we succeed in understanding

that God and the cosmos are not real enemies – that there is no opposition between them – but that what *is* possible is a conjunction between the two stars whose pull in opposite directions may well tear apart our souls. If we are to convert the earth and give it peace, today, we must see and make our fellow-men see that it is God himself who is pulling them and making his influence felt on them through the unifying process of the universe.

Is such an enterprise possible? Of course it is; but on one condition, that we understand with all the necessary realism the mystery of the Incarnation.

## II. CHRISTIAN TRANSPOSITION OF THE FUNDAMENTAL PANTHEIST TENDENCY

Nothing in our progressive world is truly intelligible until it has reached its end. It is only at the end of our lives, when you come to think of it, that each one of us understands himself with anything like correctness. If, then, we are to obtain a true idea of the Incarnation we must not go back to its beginnings (the Annunciation, the Nativity, even the Passion); our standpoint, so far as possible, must be its final term. We cannot, of course, anticipate the vast expanse of duration which still separates us from the establishment of the kingdom of God; for a long time still, the consummation of that kingdom outruns any distinct imaginative effort. At the same time, however, we have Scripture (St Paul, in particular) to tell us what, in a general way, will be the final appearance of the world restored in Jesus Christ. Let us, then, see whether, in examining the features of this new earth, we may not find a way of arriving at a new interpretation that will fit in with both the expectations of the pantheist and the hopes of the Christian.

St Paul gives us to understand that the happiness of the elect should not be understood as a solitary, self-centred enjoy-

ment of God. On the contrary, heaven will consist in the close association of all the elect, gathered into one single body under the influence of their head, Jesus Christ. However individual our salvation may be from many points of view, it is in consequence accomplished only in a collective fulfilment. The heavenly Jerusalem, the Apocalypse tells us, knows but one medium of knowledge and action: the illuminating and unifying radiance emanating from the God-man. 'In those days there will be no need of sun to shine, for its light is the Lamb.'<sup>2</sup> We shall be saved, and we shall see God only in so far as we are one in Christ Jesus. The Incarnation ends in the building up of a living church, of a mystical body, of a consummated totality, of a pleroma (to use St Paul's word that defies translation); that is a fact – a dogma – which all believers concur in accepting. Up to that point there is universal agreement about the nature of the Incarnation.

Where we find a serious divergence of opinion (whether instinctive or rational) among theologians and the faithful is when it comes to specifying what sort of bonds hold together the members of Christ's mystical body, the elements of the pleroma. How are we to understand the consistence of this mysterious organism? By analogy with the strong physical associations we see effected in our own environment, in the domain of natural beings? Or should we understand it by analogy only with the moral, artificial groupings which it is a daily occurrence for us to form or dissolve in the juridical domain of social relationships? Depending on how they answer this question – on which side of the fence they come down – orthodox Christians are divided into two categories; and the irreconcilable opposition between the two is curiously apparent in a wide range of different fields (dogmatic, moral, and mystical), but nowhere more forcibly than in the question

2. After Rev. 21:23: 'And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.'

with which we are now concerned – in that of the relationship between Christianity and the pantheist tendencies of the human soul.

There can be no hiding the fact: in the present teaching of theology and ascetics, the most prominent tendency is to give the word 'mystical' (in mystical body, mystical union) a minimum of organic or physical meaning. It may be due to the influence of the language of the Gospels, which are so inclined to announce and describe the kingdom of God in terms of the family or of society; or it may be because to build up a theology it is much simpler and safer to deal with juridical relationships and moral attachments (whose content and limits can be defined as closely as one wishes) than with physical relationships and organic connexions (which to a large extent refuse to be contained in our intellectual constructions); but, whatever the reason, the official Church normally shrinks from emphasizing the concrete, realistic, character of the terms in which the Scripture defines the state of unification attained by the consummated universe. Many experts in the theory of Catholicism, it is true, maintain against the Protestants that sanctifying grace, the life-blood which pours out from Christ to vivify the Church, is not a mere qualification or characteristic, external to the soul, but an undoubted physical reality, a new and higher life, which super-animates our rational life. At the same time, even so, they speak of heaven as though the bond established by justification between Christ and the Christian were of a sort of infra-physical nature. Without realizing it, they make the very common mistake of regarding the spiritual as an attenuation of the material, whereas it is in fact the material carried beyond itself: it is super-material. Thus what they make of the mystical body – of the *pleroma* – is primarily a vast association, a family on a very large scale, in which the individuals are held together principally by bonds of common agreement and affection. If Christian hopes could

find true expression only in words of this order (which, it must be admitted, are pretty colourless) then we should have to give up any idea of Christianizing the recognition of the importance of the Whole, the religion of the Whole. For the Christians whose intellectual position we have just outlined, all that exists, in fact, on earth as in heaven, is an aggregation, based on agreement, of parts which are arbitrarily creatable and interchangeable; neither in the present universe, nor in the restored world, can any Whole be said truly to exist.

Fortunately, the man who is true to Christ's teaching can entertain more powerful (and more modern) views; and he has good grounds for attributing to the supernatural organism to which he believes himself to be linked a structure at least as consistent as that which we see in the tangible realities of the natural cosmos. Without any doubt, we Christians can (and, indeed, what is much more, we must) understand the mystical union of the elect in Christ as combining the warm flexibility of social relationships with the imperative rigour and irreversibility of the physical and biological laws or attractive forces operating in the present universe. That is just the point which I wished to lead up to in this lecture.

When we try to understand and express in physical terms the way in which the mystical body (the *pleroma*) is held together, there is, of course, one extreme we must avoid if we are not to 'founder in our faith'. We should not do what could be read into the language censured in some mystics (Eckhart, for example) and try to make of the consummated Christ a being so unique that his subsistence, his person, his 'I', takes the place of the subsistence, the personality, of all the elements incorporated in his mystical body. This concept of a hypostatic union extended to the whole universe (which, incidentally, is simply Spinoza's pantheism) is not in itself either contradictory or absurd; but it conflicts with the whole Christian view of individual freedom and personal salvation. There is, however, no

difficulty in avoiding the exaggerated 'physicism' introduced by this attempt to express the unification of the world in Jesus Christ. Without having to fall back on monism, there are, in fact, plenty of ways of conceiving a 'graduated' type of union for the pleroma (modified by the very excess of its physical perfection), such that, without losing anything of their subsistence or personality, the elect would be *physically* incorporated in the organic and 'natural' whole of the consummated Christ. Take, for example, the stones in a vault or the cells in a living body such as our own. Each stone has its own particular shape, and each cell has its own activity, and often its own movement; and yet without the vault no stone can be completely understood in its shape or maintain its equilibrium in space; nor can any cell be explained or live in the full sense of the word outside the complete body. Each stone is itself plus the vault – each cell is itself plus ourselves. These comparisons are faulty because of the imperfection of the control exercised, mechanically by the whole of the vault and biologically by the human soul – the result of that imperfection being that the individuality of the elements of stone or protoplasm is hardly allowed to emerge or is partially suppressed by the dominating 'form'. But imagine a unifying influence so powerful and so perfect that the further its assimilation of the elements was carried (a function which would seem to be eminently characteristic of true unification), the more it would accentuate their differentiation. Thinking along those lines we can arrive at an idea of the mystical body of Christ which indeed appears both to satisfy the legitimate 'pantheist' aspirations of our minds and hearts, and to allow Christian dogma and mysticism the only environment in which they can develop freely.

In the first place, if in his interpretation of the process of the Incarnation a Christian adopts the eminently justifiable point of view which rests on organic and physical analogies, then nothing in the world any longer subsists permanently for

him apart from the unifying influence of Christ. Throughout the whole range of things Christ is the principle of universal consistence: '*In eo omnia constant.*'<sup>3</sup> For such a Christian, exactly as for the modern philosopher, the universe has no complete reality except in the movement which causes all its elements to converge upon a number of higher centres of cohesion (in other words, which spiritualizes them); nothing holds together absolutely except through the Whole; and the Whole itself holds together only through its future fulfilment. On the other hand, unlike the free-thinking philosopher, the Christian can say that he already stands in a personal relationship with the centre of the world; for him, in fact, that centre is Christ – it is Christ who in a real and unmetaphorical sense of the word holds up the universe. So incredible a cosmic function may well be too much for our imagination, but I do not see how we could possibly avoid attributing it to the Son of Mary. The Incarnate Word could not be the supernatural (hyper-physical) centre of the universe if he did not function *first* as its physical, natural, centre. Christ cannot sublimate creation in God without progressively raising it up by his influence through the successive circles of matter and spirit. That is why, in order to bring all things back to his Father, he had to make himself one with all – he had to enter into contact with every one of the zones of the created, from the lowest and most earthly to the zone that is closest to heaven. '*Quid est quod ascendit in coelum, nisi prius quod descendit in ima terrae ut repleret omnia.*'<sup>4</sup> Even, therefore, in that aspect of its evolution which

3. 'In him all things hold together' (Col. 1:17).

4. 'What is he who rose up to heaven but that which first came down to the lowest depths of earth that it might fill all things?' – a quotation based on St Paul's words in Ephesians 4:9-10: '*Quod autem ascendit, quid est, nisi quia et descendit primum in inferiores partes terrae? Qui descendit, ipse est et qui ascendit super omnes coelos, ut impleteret omnia.*' 'In saying, "He ascended", what does it mean but that he also descended into the lower parts of the

is regarded as the most 'natural', it is towards Christ that the universe, since all time, has been moving as one integral whole. '*Omnis creatura usque adhuc ingemiscit et parturit.*'<sup>5</sup> Has any evolutionist pantheism, in fact, ever spoken more magnificently of the Whole than St Paul did in the words he addressed to the first Christians? This might, perhaps, seem a dangerous view – as though such a boundless prospect might prove so absorbing as to make the man who entertains it forget his humble practical duties and the solid virtues of the Gospels. Its effect is, in fact, the exact opposite: when one understands how physical and immediate is the omni-influence of Christ, the vigour assumed by every detail of the Christian life is quite astonishing; it gains an emphasis never dreamt of by those who are frightened of the realistic view of the mystery of the Incarnation.

Take charity, for example, that complete change of attitude so insistently taught by Christ. It has nothing in common with our colourless philanthropy, but represents the essential affinity which brings men closer together, not in the superficial sphere of sensible affections or earthly interests, but in building up the pleroma.

The possibility, and even the obligation of doing everything for God ('*Quidquid facitis, in nomine Domini nostri Jesu Christi facite*')<sup>6</sup> are no longer based solely on the virtue of obedience, or solely on the moral value of intention; they can be explained, in short, only by the marvellous grace, instilled into every human effort, no matter how material, of effectively co-

---

earth? He who descended is he also who ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.'

5. After Romans 8:22: 'The whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now.'

6. 'Whatever you do . . . do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus' (Col. 3:17).

operating, through its physical result, in the fulfilment of the body of Christ.

Salvation and damnation, again, are no longer simply the blessing or curse that falls arbitrarily on the being, from outside. Those two words now mean something much more formidable. They affect the whole relationship of the element to the centre of universal cohesion, that is of universal beatification: either incorporation in it, which brings fulfilment, or severance from it, which brings loss of organic structure.

It is the same with imitation of Christ; this is something quite different from the Christian's conforming outwardly to a humble, arduous life of simple faith. To 'conform' to Christ is to share through a partial identity, in the unique, fundamental act constituted by the Whole. There is, in reality, *only one* humility in the world, *one* loving-kindness, *one* sacrifice, *one* passion, *one* laying in the tomb, *one* resurrection – and it is Christ's. It is all one in him, multiple in us – begun and perfected by him, and yet completed by us.

The greatest change, however, comes with mass and communion, when we realize the full depth and universality of their mystery. We now understand that when Christ descends sacramentally into each one of his faithful it is not simply in order to commune with him; it is in order to join him, physically, a little more closely to himself and to all the rest of the faithful in the growing unity of the world. When, through the priest, Christ says, '*Hoc est corpus meum*', 'This is my body', the words reach out infinitely far beyond the morsel of bread over which they are pronounced: they bring the entire mystical body into being. The priestly act extends beyond the transubstantiated Host to the cosmos itself, which, century after century, is gradually being transformed by the Incarnation, itself never complete. From age to age, there is but one single mass in the world: the true Host, the total Host, is the universe which is continually being more intimately pene-

trated and vivified by Christ. From the most distant origin of things until their unforeseeable consummation, through the countless convulsions of boundless space, the whole of nature is slowly and irresistibly undergoing the supreme consecration. Fundamentally – since all time and for ever – but one single thing is being made in creation: the body of Christ.

If I wished fully to express the mysteries and the practical application of our faith, translating them into terms of organic and physical realities, I should have endlessly to multiply such considerations. And yet, I believe, the phrase I have used says everything that is needed: 'One single thing is being made.'

'One single thing is being made.' Whose is the phrase – the Christian's? Or the pantheist's?

The Christian's, without a shadow of doubt, since the believer who uses it as I have just done knows that in the powerful embrace of the omnipresent Christ, souls do not lose their personality, but win it. It is, indeed, a Christian who has thus stolen the pantheist's fire, the fire with which he threatened to set the earth ablaze with an incandescence that would not have been Christ's.

The Christian who has understood the universal function exercised by the incarnate God is more successful in his 'unitarian' attempt than the pantheist. The latter, while claiming to unify beings, merges them in an undifferentiated whole; which means, in fact, that his monism annihilates the mystery and joy of union. The Christian, on the other hand, has really arrived at the central and impregnable position from which, looking down from the security of his possession of the world, he can radiate his faith and his hope.

There is now solid confirmation for his hope. When it is borne in upon his consciousness that the dimensions of the universe are still increasing immeasurably (as they have been for the last three centuries) he will no longer fear that the countenance and brilliance of the revealed God he worships

may be eclipsed by the new star. How could either of these two majestic grandeurs dim the radiance of the other? The one is but the peak – the soul, we might say – of the other. Christ is clothed in the earth: let this earth, then, grow ever greater, that Christ's raiment may be ever more magnificent! Christ guides from within the universal progress of the world: may our consciousness, then, of the bond that runs through all things, of their constant movement in being, grow ever more keen, and so make the impact of Christ upon us ever greater.

Already, at this very moment, by everything we do, we all share in all, through and in him whom we might think distant from us, but in whom, quite literally, '*vivimus, movemur et sumus*'.<sup>7</sup> A little while yet – what hope could be grander? – creation, totally dominated by Christ, will be lost in him and through him within the final and permanent unity, where (in St Paul's very words, the most clear-cut assertion we have of Christian 'pantheism') '*ἔσται ὁ Θεὸς πάντα ἐν πᾶσι*'.<sup>8</sup>

Unpublished lecture, Paris, 1923.

7. 'We live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28).

8. 'God will be all in all', after 1 Cor. 15:28.