

CHRISTENDOM

VOLUME I

SUMMER, 1936

NUMBER 4

RELIGION AND ROMANTICISM

*A Study in the Origin of the Religious Revival in Europe
in the Nineteenth Century*

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ONE of the most striking features of the early nineteenth century was the revival of religion; this was not confined to any one country nor to any single church. It was common to the Latin and Germanic peoples and to Catholic and Protestant countries. Indeed, it made itself felt far beyond the limits of organized Christianity and imparted a religious tendency to social and intellectual movements of the most diverse kinds, even though they were apparently in revolt against everything orthodox and traditional whether in the sphere of religion or morals. Christianity which had been relegated by Voltaire to the stables and the scullery was brought back to the court and the salon, and even those who still rejected it no longer did so in the contemptuous and cocksure manner of the men of the Enlightenment. Perhaps the most remarkable instance of this attitude is Auguste Comte, whose denial of all metaphysical validity to religious belief does not prevent his wholesale acceptance of the moral and ritual tradition of Catholic Christianity as one of the essential elements in the spiritual life of humanity.

Thus, on the one hand we have a series of religious thinkers who represent the movement of revival within the limits of organized Christianity—men such as de Maistre, Maine de Biran, Ballanche, Lamennais and Lacordaire in France, Coleridge and Newman in England, Schleiermacher, Neander and Görres in Germany and Kierkegaard and Grundtvig in Denmark; while on the other hand there is a series of no less eminent men who stood outside the fron-

tiers of Christian orthodoxy and who attempted to build up a new religious edifice on humanitarian or idealist foundations, as, for example, St. Simon, P. Leroux, Comte, Bazard and Quinet in France, and Fichte, Schelling and Hegel in Germany.

I

This revival of belief in or of respect for religion is the more remarkable when we contrast it with the external losses that religion had suffered during the preceding period. In sheer material destruction of monasteries and churches, in confiscation of property and abrogation of privileges, the age of the Revolution far surpassed that of the Reformation: it was, in fact, a second reformation, but a frankly antireligious one. Throughout Europe the old regime had based itself on a union between church and state so close that any revolt against the political system involved a corresponding revolt against the established church. Moreover, the church was singularly ill prepared to stand a shock of this kind. For more than half a century—first in the Bourbon kingdoms and Portugal and then in Germany and the Austrian dominions—the super-Erastian policy of enlightened despotism had been at work reducing the church to complete dependence on the secular power. The princes and statesmen who carried out this policy, Choiseul in France, Pombal in Portugal, Florida Blanca in Spain and Joseph II and Leopold II in Austria, were themselves the disciples of the philosophers, and in some cases were animated by the same spirit that inspired Voltaire's campaign against Christianity. It was, however, not their intention to destroy the church but rather to make it a part of the machinery of the new bureaucratic state by limiting its function to that of an educational institution whose business it was to make men useful and obedient citizens.

This ideal was most completely realized by the Emperor Joseph II, who set himself to rationalize and socialize the church in his dominions with Teutonic thoroughness. No detail of ecclesiastical usage was too small to escape his meticulous regulation, and the parish priest was expected to supervise the rural economy as well as the morals of his parish. But while in Austria the church was thus reformed by an enlightened despotism inspired by the rational and

progressive ideas of eighteenth century Freemasonry, in the rest of Germany every kind of abuse continued to reign. Nothing could be darker than the picture which the Papal Nuncio, Cardinal Pacca, paints of the Catholic Rhineland at the close of the century. The prince bishops lived a thoroughly secular life and squandered the resources of their sees on their courts and their mistresses. Of the electors of Mainz, the primates of Germany, Ostein was the friend of Voltaire, and Erthal was the patron of the neo-pagan Heinse; and for the greater part of the eighteenth century things were no better in the archdiocese of Cologne, though the last elector, the Archduke Maximilian, was a well intentioned "enlightened despot" of the type of his brother, Joseph II.

But underneath this corruption in high places the faith of the masses remained as strong as ever. When Pacca travelled through the Rhineland, the peasants assembled in their thousands, old men and children alike, to receive the sacrament of confirmation which their own bishops had for decades neglected to administer. And when the power of the electors collapsed before the armies of the Revolution, the tension that existed in the German church between the traditional Catholicism of the masses and the innovations of the enlightened prelates was actually relieved, so that mass was once more said in Latin after six years of unwelcome change.

Nevertheless, the net result of the revolutionary wars and the wholesale secularization that followed the treaty of Lunéville was to leave the Catholic church in Germany weaker and more at the mercy of the secular power than ever before. The old order was destroyed, but there was as yet no new life to take its place, and the leaders of the clergy like Wessenburg and Dahlberg were still permeated with Josephite ideas.

In France at the close of the eighteenth century the situation seemed even more grave, since it was there that the rationalist propaganda of the Enlightenment had made most progress among the educated classes and it was there that the storm of the Revolution produced its most destructive effects. There it was not merely a question of the disendowment of the church and its subjection to the secular power, as in the Civil Constitution of the Clergy enacted in 1790; opposition rapidly reached such a pitch as to involve national

apostasy and wholesale persecution. Priests and nuns were executed in scores and deported and exiled in thousands. By 1795 even the constitutional clergy, which had accepted the new order and renounced all dependence on Rome, was reduced to a pitiable state: of the eighty-two bishops some twenty-four had apostatized, six had been executed, twenty-four had renounced their episcopal functions and only about fifteen were left to rally to Grégoire, the constitutional Bishop of Blois, when he attempted to restore the ruins of the Gallican church.

Yet the very violence of the storm revealed the strength of those religious forces which the eighteenth century had ignored; in fact, persecution did much to restore the prestige of religion and of the clergy by investing them with the halo of martyrdom. If it was difficult to take seriously the religion of the frivolous and well dressed abbés of the old regime, it was just the opposite with men like Mgr. Emery, or like the Abbé Pinot, who mounted the scaffold like a priest going to the altar in his ecclesiastical vestments with the words "*Introibo ad altare Dei*" on his lips. The effect of such things was, in fact, just the opposite of what the Jacobins intended. Fifty years earlier, when religious conformity was enforced by law and people were obliged to produce certificates of confession, the rising generation grew up as infidels; but now that the churches were closed and the refractory clergy said mass in secret at the peril of their lives, religion took on a new lease of life, and the new generation—the generation of Lamennais and the Curé d'Ars—turned to Christianity with an enthusiasm and a conviction which in the last century had been found only among Methodists and Moravians.

Thus the Revolution which was the child of the Enlightenment also proved to be its destroyer. The philosophic rationalism of the eighteenth century was the product of the highly civilized privileged society which was swept away by the catastrophe of the *ancien régime*. In the salons of Mme. de Pompadour, Mme. du Deffand or Mme. Geoffrin it was easy to believe that Christianity was an exploded superstition which no reasonable man could take seriously. But the same men and women felt very differently when the brilliant society that had worshiped at the shrine of Voltaire was decimated by the guillotine and scattered to the four winds. Many

of them, like Chateaubriand and Mme. Tour du Pin and Mme. de Montagu, recovered their faith in Christianity under the stress of personal suffering and bereavement, but even those who did not recover their faith in God lost that faith in man and in the law of progress that had been characteristic of the previous age. Rationalism flourishes best in a prosperous age and a sheltered society; it finds few adherents among the unfortunate and the defeated.

The course of the Revolution was equally fatal to the hopes of every party. It seemed as though fate had determined to explode the hollowness of any kind of idealism by the destruction of all that was best in France and by permitting only the basest elements—the Barras' and the Fouchés—to survive and prosper. There were some to whom this sense of the malignity of fate came with the force of a personal revelation, as to Chêndollé and Bremond d'Ars. There were others, however, who found in the disillusionings and tragedies of the Revolution the key to a new interpretation of history and a new philosophy of society dramatically opposed to those of the Enlightenment.

II

The chief representative of this tendency was Joseph de Maistre, one of the most original thinkers and brilliant writers of his age and one of the most important formative influences on French thought in the early nineteenth century. His style was the fit instrument of his thought. In striking contrast to the luxuriant and cloying sweetness of Chateaubriand and his followers, it suggests the clash of naked steel and has the strength and dexterity of the swordsman. Yet he was by no means insensible to the new romantic appeal, as we see in rare passages like the famous and lovely description of the northern summer night and the songs of the Russian boatmen on the Neva, which opens "*Les soirées de St. Petersbourg.*"

Although he belonged to the pre-romantic generation—the generation of Mirabeau and Goethe—owing to the circumstances of his life it was not until after the Restoration that his influence was fully felt. He had spent the whole of the period from the Revolution to the Restoration in exile, and the greater part of it in Russia, as the penniless ambassador of the exiled dynasty of Savoy, for de Maistre,

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though a man of French culture and speech, was never a French citizen. But the intellectual isolation and material failure which marked his whole career served only to strengthen the almost fanatical singleness of purpose and force of conviction that characterized his thought. Beneath the exterior of a diplomat and a man of the world he hid the spirit of a Hebrew prophet, and, in fact, the problems that preoccupied him were fundamentally the same as those that confronted Job and Jeremiah—the problem of suffering and evil and the justification of the obscure purposes of God in history. The men of the Enlightenment had lived on the surface of life. They had rejected the very idea of mystery and had done their best to eliminate and ignore everything that was irrational and obscure: they explained the problems of existence by denying that there was a problem to explain. De Maistre, on the other hand, concentrated his attention on the dark side of life and made the suffering and evil of the world the key to the understanding of it.

This insistence on the darker aspects of life earned de Maistre the reputation of a pessimist, a fatalist and an enemy of humanity, and it was undoubtedly shocking to men who had been brought up in the facile optimism of eighteenth century thought. But de Maistre would have replied that a philosophy which ignores these things ignores the substance of reality. War and revolution are not unfortunate accidents; they are the very texture of historic change. They are not the result of the free choice of individuals. The men who seem responsible, victors and victims alike, are but the instruments of impersonal forces which move to their appointed end by paths which none can foresee. Society is not a number of individuals who have consciously determined to combine for the greatest happiness of the greatest number; it is a living stream whose surface may be partially illuminated by the fitful light of reason but which springs from subterranean sources and flows toward an unknown sea.

In this unceasing flow, when all things pass and yet remain the same, in this whirlpool of forces in which one thing loses itself in a thousand and reappears in a thousand forms, how is it possible to distinguish cause from effect and means from end? And if this is the case throughout history, it is above all so in time of revolution, when

the current of change suddenly increases its momentum and sweeps away every obstacle in its path. Wise men and fools, heroes and criminals, all contributed to its success whether they willed to oppose it or to turn it to their own ends. The very men who seemed to lead and dominate it were passive tools in the hands of events, and they were broken and thrown aside when their hour had passed. But this spectacle of the impotence of man to change the course of history does not lead de Maistre to fatalism or despair. In the mysterious force which carries men with it like straws in a torrent he sees the power of God which destroys to create and erases to write anew.

The Revolution was not an event, he wrote as early as 1794, it was an epoch in the history of humanity, the birth pangs of a new age. And its real significance was not to be found in its conscious ideals, as expressed, for instance, in the Declaration of the Rights of Man; these ideals were nothing but hollow abstractions concealing the real trend of events by a sort of rationalizing mirage: the true significance was to be found on a much deeper plane in profound spiritual changes of which the contemporary mind was still unconscious. "What we are witnessing," he writes, "is a religious revolution; the rest, immense as it seems, is but an appendix." And again, "It seems to me that any true philosopher must choose between these two hypotheses: either that a new religion is in process of formation, or that Christianity will be renewed in some extraordinary way." "This conjecture will only be rejected contemptuously by those short-sighted men who believe that nothing is possible but what they see. What man in antiquity could have foreseen its success in its beginnings? How then do we know that a great moral revolution has not already begun?"

De Maistre regarded the Revolution as a cleansing fire in which the forces of evil were employed against their will and without their knowledge as agents of purification and regeneration, and as he believed that France and the French monarchy would emerge stronger than ever after the terror and the wars of the Revolution had accomplished their work, so, too, he believed that the destruction of the Gallican church and the ecclesiastical system of the old regime at the hands of the enemies of religion was a necessary step toward

the restoration of the unity of Christendom and the freedom and universality of the church.

This ideal was in fact the dominant preoccupation of de Maistre's mind from his young days, when he urged Ferdinand of Brunswick, in 1781 at the time of the famous Masonic congress of Wilhelmsbad, to transform the orders of Freemasons into a society for the reunion of the churches, down to his old age, when he was the intellectual leader of ultramontaniam. For however intransigent were his views and however inflexible his orthodoxy, de Maistre was always ready to recognize the signs of the times, whether in Freemasonry and Illuminism, or in the French Revolution, or in the Holy Alliance (whose weaknesses he fully realized). All of them were, in his eyes, phases of the great religious revolution which was inevitable and already far advanced. "It is their function to melt the metal, afterwards the statue will be cast." "All our plans," he wrote in 1809, "vanish like dreams. I have preserved, as much as I could, the hope that the faithful will be called to rebuild the edifice, but it seems to me that new workers advance in the profound obscurity of the future and that Her Majesty, Providence, says, 'Behold I make all things new.'"

III

De Maistre is an isolated figure standing between "two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born." He belongs neither to the eighteenth nor the nineteenth century, neither to the Enlightenment nor the romantic movement. But though this simple and austere gentleman of the old regime has little in common with the undisciplined, emotional, unstable spirit of romanticism, there is a curious parallelism between his thought and that of the leaders of the romantic movement. This parallelism is seen most clearly in the essay on "Europe or Christendom" composed by the young Novalis in 1798, only two years after de Maistre's "Considerations on France." In spite of his Protestant origins, Novalis exalts the religious ideal of the Middle Ages and condemns the Reformation for its sacrilegious attempt to divide the indivisible church and to imprison religion within political frontiers. Like de Maistre he regards the Reformation as the source of the movement of rationalism

and free thought, which found its culmination in the work of the Revolution. But at the same time he sees in the Revolution the dawn of a new era and shows de Maistre's belief that the signs of the times pointed to a great spiritual renewal which would bring Europe back to religious unity.

All the early romantics were inspired by the same consciousness of an imminent spiritual revolution, all of them were enemies of the Enlightenment and admirers of medieval Catholicism, and many of them, such as Friedrich and Dorothea Schlegel, Adam Muller, Zacharias Werner, Franz von Baader, Görres and Clemens Brentano, found their spiritual home in the Catholic church. It would, of course, be a mistake to ignore the existence of a Protestant element in the movement. Schleiermacher, perhaps the chief formative influence on Protestant religious thought in the nineteenth century, was a friend of the Schlegels and was closely associated with the origins of the movement, while at a later date the most original Protestant thinker of the nineteenth century, the Dane, Sören Kierkegaard, was a true romantic in spite of his isolation and his hostility to everything for which Schleiermacher stood. Nevertheless, contemporary opinion was not unjustified in regarding romanticism as a Catholicizing movement. The tendency is to be seen most clearly years before the conversion of the Schlegels in the writings of early romantics like Wackenroder and Novalis, who never themselves became Catholics and whose admiration was in no way inspired by propagandist motives.

I have already referred to Novalis' remarkable panegyric of medieval Catholicism and his criticism of the Reformation, and in the same way Wackenroder in 1797 initiated that return to the religion of the Middle Ages through the art of the Middle Ages which became so typical of the Catholic revival in the nineteenth century. This Catholicizing tendency, which was denounced by Heine and the young German school as mere reactionary sentimentalism, did much to render romanticism unpopular in the later nineteenth century, as we see, for example, in the well-known volumes of George Brandes, *The Romantic Movement in Germany (1873)*, which for all their ability are characterized by an almost sectarian bitterness. In reality, however, the religious element in romanticism, whether

Catholic or non-Catholic, goes much deeper than the superficial esthetic appeal. It has its root in the fundamental principles of the movement, which differed not merely esthetically but also metaphysically and psychologically from those of both seventeenth century classicism and eighteenth century rationalism. Behind the change in literary taste and esthetic appreciation there lies a profound change of spiritual attitude: an attempt to enlarge the kingdom of the human mind by transcending the limits of ordinary consciousness.

Human consciousness is a little circle of light in surrounding darkness. The classicist and the rationalist keep as close to the center of the circle as possible and order their life and their art as though this little sphere of light were the universe. But the romantic is not content with this narrow sphere. He longs to penetrate the secret of the great reality that is hidden behind the veil of darkness, and he prefers the twilight regions that fringe the verge of consciousness to the lighted house of reason. Thus the most profound expression of the romantic spirit is to be found, not in the Byronic cult of personality nor in the esthetic gospel of Keats's "Ode to a Grecian Urn," but in Novalis' "Hymns to the Night" with their mystical exaltation of death. There is in fact a definite connection between romanticism and mysticism, for religious mysticism tends to express itself in the form of romantic poetry, as in the poems of "St. John of the Cross," while literary romanticism at its highest aspires to the ideal of religious mysticism, as in the case of Novalis and Blake.

In the same way the victory of classicism at the end of the seventeenth century was intimately connected with the defeat of mysticism and was followed by what Henri Bremond, in his great work on the history of religious sentiment in France, calls "*la retraite des mystiques*." Throughout the eighteenth century mysticism was exiled from the world of higher culture and the religion of society became more and more arid and rationalistic. Mysticism took refuge among the sects—Quakers and Quietists, Moravians and Methodists, Swendenborgians and Illuminists—or in Catholic Europe among the common people, where it produced saints like Benedict Joseph Labre, who seem as out of place in the age of the En-

lightenment as an Indian fakir in a London club. This artificial separation of the higher culture from the deeper forms of religious experience has been described by Coleridge in the remarkable passage of the *Biographia Literaria* in which he acknowledges his own debt to the mystics.

The romantic movement had its roots deep in this religious underworld; M. Viatte in his learned work, *The Occult Sources of Romanticism*, has shown how manifold were the lines of communication which lead from Böhme and the seventeenth century mystics through Swedenborg and St. Martin and Lavater to the romantics of the early nineteenth century. On the one hand this stream flowed back to its original source in the Catholic church, while on the other it mingled with the stream of political and social change, and inspired the new movements—liberalism, socialism, positivism, anarchism and the like—with a spirit of religious enthusiasm and apocalyptic hope.

IV

But the most remarkable product of this subterranean current of religious influence is to be found in England in the person of William Blake, for here we see it, as it were, in its pure state, before it had been incorporated into the social and religious movements of the new age, and when it was still unaffected by contact with the outer world.

Blake was considerably senior to the rest of the romantics, not only in England but on the Continent also. He belonged to the generation of de Maistre rather than to that of Wordsworth and Coleridge and Novalis. Like de Maistre he was a lonely thinker, a spiritual exile, though his place of exile was not in distant Russia on the banks of the Neva, but by the waters of Thames in a Lambeth lodging house. Like de Maistre he was a prophet who saw historic events *sub specie eternitatis*, as in that strange picture of Pitt as the angel who rides on the wings of the storm, "ordering the Reaper to reap the Vine of the Earth and the Plowman to plow up the Cities and Towers."

But here the resemblance ends. In their principles and position the two men are antitheses. De Maistre, the devout Catholic and the

Blake

royalist noble, the apostle of moral order and social authority; Blake, a man of the people, a heretic of heretics and a revolutionary of revolutionaries, an apostle of anarchy and antinomianism. Moreover, while de Maistre is still faithful to the classical traditions in the clarity of his style and the firm logic of his thought, Blake surpasses all the romantics in formlessness and obscurity. He knows nothing of logic and cares nothing for consistency. He regards reason as the enemy of spiritual vision and science as the tree of death. He builds up vast, cloudy mythologies without troubling to explain their meaning or to reconcile their contradictions.

Yet whoever has the patience and the imagination to follow him through his strange visionary world will gain a more direct insight into the process of spiritual change that was taking place under the surface of European consciousness than is to be found in any other writer. For Blake, unlike the other romantics, emerges directly from the religious underworld and has little contact with the literary movements of his age. He was brought up as a Swedenborgian, and although he soon diverged from the narrow line of Swedenborgian orthodoxy, he continued to live his spiritual life in the world of sectarian theosophy, the world of Lavater and St. Martin and Willermoz. Yet at the same time his revolutionary sentiments brought him into contact with the freethinkers and political reformers of the London Corresponding Society and the Friends of Liberty, such as Paine and Godwin, and his earlier prophetic writings are directly inspired by his enthusiasm for the cause of the Revolution.

This earlier phase of Blake's thought seems at first sight to be not merely unorthodox but anti-Christian and antireligious. Religion is the "Web of Urizen," the evil God of the old Testament, who enslaves mankind under the iron laws of morality. The new Messiah is the spirit of revolution, Orc "the son of fire," who "stamps the stony law to dust" and "scatters Religion abroad to the four winds as a torn book." Thus the one evil is repression. "He who desires and acts not, breeds pestilence." "Energy is Eternal Delight." "For everything that lives is holy, life delights in life; because the soul of sweet delight can never be defiled."

This gospel of anarchy has much in common with the creed of the

romantic liberals and utopian socialists, such as Godwin, Shelley and the young Fourier, but it is already distinguished from the orthodox revolutionary creed by its hostility to rationalism and to the empirical philosophy of the eighteenth century. Blake would have agreed with de Maistre in his view that "the contempt of Locke is the beginning of wisdom," and both assailed the philosophy of Bacon with the same animosity, as in Blake's epitaph on Bacon,

O reader behold the Philosopher's grave
He was born quite a Fool and he died quite a Knave.

Moreover, the progress of the Revolution disillusioned Blake no less than the other romantics. The mood of the earlier prophetic books gradually changes from rapturous hope in the new dawn to an atmosphere of apocalyptic terror and gloom, culminating in the "Song of Los" with its grim frontispiece showing a headless figure brooding over a desolate landscape.

For Adam a mouldering skeleton
Lay bleached in the garden of Eden
And Noah as white as snow
On the mountain of Ararat.

During the period of his stay at Felpham, 1800-1803, at about the same time that German romanticism was turning toward Christianity, Blake went through a great spiritual crisis, which transformed his religious attitude. In "Milton" he describes how Los the Eternal Prophet, "took me in his fiery whirlwind, from Lambeth's shades. He set me down in Felpham's Vale and prepared a beautiful cottage for me, that in three years I might write all these Visions: "To display Nature's cruel holiness, the deceits of Natural Religion." (Milton, 37:21-25.)

He speaks in 1804 of having been for twenty years "a slave bound in a mill among beasts and devils." "I have indeed fought through a hell of terrors and horrors (which none could know but myself) in a divided existence, now no longer divided nor at war with myself I shall travel on in the strength of the Lord God, as Poor Pilgrim says."

These twenty years correspond approximately to his revolutionary period which followed his Swedenborgian youth, when he came under the influence of the Enlightenment as represented by Godwin

and Priestley and Paine. Now he returned to Christianity, though it was a strange theosophical Christianity that had more in common with Böhme and St. Martin than with any kind of Christian orthodoxy. He still retained his antinomian hostility to moral law and repressive authority, but it is in deism rather than in Christianity that he finds the representative of this evil power.

You O Deists profess yourselves the Enemies of Christianity; and so you are; you are also the Enemies of the Human Race and of Universal Nature. . . .

Man must and will have some religion; if he has not the Religion of Jesus, he will have the Religion of Satan, and will erect the Synagogue of Satan, calling the prince of this World God, and destroying all those who do not worship Satan under the Name of God. . . .

Your Religion, O Deists, Deism, is the worship of the God of this World by the means of what you call Natural Religion and Natural Philosophy, and of Natural Morality or Self Righteousness, the selfish virtues of the Natural Heart. This was the religion of the Pharisees who murdered Jesus. Deism is the same and ends in the same.

Voltaire, Rousseau, Gibbon, Hume charge the spiritually Religious with hypocrisy: but how a Monk or a Methodist either can be a hypocrite, I cannot conceive. We are Men of like passions with others and pretend not to be holier than others. . . .

You also charge the poor Monks and Religions with being the causes of war while you acquit and flatter the Alexanders and Caesars, the Louises and Fredericks who alone are its causes and its actors. But the Religion of Jesus, Forgiveness of Sin, can never be the cause of a war or a single martyrdom.

Those who martyr others, or who cause war, are Deists, but can never be Forgivers of Sin. The glory of Christianity is to conquer by Forgiveness. All the destruction, therefore, in Christian Europe, has arisen from Deism, which is Natural Religion.

Blake had come to realize that salvation was not to be found in negation and that the spirit of revolution might in its turn become the instrument of evil.

Accordingly, he abandoned the crude idealism of his earlier system which is expressed in the myth of Urizen, the evil God and creator of this world, and Orc, the spirit of freedom and revolt. In its place he created the new myth of Albion, the universal man, and Jerusalem, the divine vision, a myth which has considerable affinities to the system that St. Martin had developed in his prophetic books such as *L'Homme de Desir* and *Le Nouvel Homme*. Man has become separated from the divine unity. He has turned his back on the divine vision and has sunk into the deadly sleep of materialism, from which he can only be delivered by the annihilation of the

selfhood "when the Divine Mercy steps beyond and Redeems Man in the body of Jesus."

Jesus said: "Wouldst thou love one who has never died
For thee, or ever die for one who has not died for thee?"
And if God dieth not for Man and giveth not Himself
Eternally for Man, Man could not exist; for Man is Love
Even as God is Love; every kindness to another is a little death
In the Divine Image, nor can Man exist but by Brotherhood.

This doctrine is less Christian than it appears at first sight, for Blake not only assimilates the savior to the creative imagination and the prophet to the artist, but asserts the substantial identity of God and man in terms that seem to exclude any belief in the divine transcendence. "I know of no other Christianity and no other gospel," he writes, "than the liberty both of body and mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination—Imagination the real and Eternal World of which this Vegetable Universe is but a faint shadow and in which we shall live in our Eternal or Imaginative Bodies when these Vegetable Mortal Bodies are no more."

But Blake's Imagination is no subjective human faculty; it is the creative and eternal *Logos*. "Imagination is the Divine Vision, not of the world, nor of man, nor from man—as he is a natural man." Neither do his pantheism and antinomianism cause him to shut his eyes to the problem of evil or the necessity of moral effort. He was equally hostile to the facile optimism of the radicals with their cult of enlightened self-interest and to the callous indifference of church and state. In *Jerusalem* he prays,

O divine Saviour, Arise
Upon the Mountains of Albion as in ancient times. Behold!
The Cities of Albion seek thy face. London groans in pain
From Hill to Hill and the Thames laments along the valleys.
The little villages of Middlesex and Surrey hunger and thirst
The twenty-eight cities of Albion stretch out their hands to thee.
Because of the Oppressors of Albion in every City and Village
They mock at the Labourer's limbs; they mock at his starv'd children;
They buy his Daughters that they may have power to sell his Sons;
They compel the Poor to live upon a crust of bread by soft mild arts;
They reduce the Man to wars then give with pomp and ceremony,
The praise of Jehovah is chaunted from lips of hunger and thirst.

This intense sensitiveness to the sufferings of the poor distin-

guishes the religion of Blake from the orthodox Christianity of the age. If his ideal of creative imagination and spiritual intuition resembles that of the German romantics, his devotion to social justice has more in common with the utopian socialism of Fourier and the St. Simonians. He is an isolated figure standing alone between the religious underworld of the sects and the secular world of contemporary art and literature, and leaving no disciples to develop this thought in one direction or the other.

Nevertheless, he is a significant figure, because he reflects in a highly individual and independent form the spiritual conflict which underlies the social changes of the age and which resulted from the insurgence of the spiritual forces that had been repressed by the rationalism and moralism of the Enlightenment. This movement took two different forms: on the one hand, as in the Catholic revival on the Continent and subsequently the Oxford movement in England, it was a movement of return to the tradition of historic Christianity—a Catholic renaissance—which went back behind the Enlightenment and behind the Reformation to the religious faith and the religious art of medieval Christendom. And on the other hand, it was a movement of innovation and change which proclaimed the advent of a new religion in harmony with the spirit of the new age, like the new Christianity of the St. Simonians, Comte's religion of humanity, or Mazzini's religious nationalism. Nevertheless, in spite of the apparent opposition of these two forms, they are far more closely connected than one should suppose. The religious liberalism of Lamennais developed from the religious traditionalism of de Bonald and de Maistre; Comte was a disciple of the same school and borrowed the forms of his religion of the future from the religion of the past, while some of the chief apostles of the religion of progress, such as Pierre Leroux and Buchez, advanced through the new Christianity to the old. Religion failed to reconquer and reunite European civilization as de Maistre and the Christian romantics had hoped, but on the other hand, it recovered its vitality and once more asserted itself as an autonomous force in European culture. In comparison with the eighteenth century, the nineteenth century, especially the first half of it, was a religious age.

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Michael Grant
the witness on the witness

