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We must distinguish between the popular Christian cult that exists today and the esoteric teaching of Jesus. The popular Christian cult is not esoteric but exoteric. That is, it is a religious cult associated with organized institutions, a cult that appeals to masses of ordinary people by offering a conventional religious solution to the problem of existence. The cult of Christianity has never developed a consistently and truly esoteric message.

The primitive Christian church of Jesus' lifetime and shortly after was just another cult among many. In those very early days it was still possible to establish a secret, esoteric, non-popular teaching and process.

The history of modern Christianity, however, begins when Christianity was accepted as the official religion of the Roman state. From that time Christianity moved into the West and the rest of the world through the agency of the state and in the form of an exoteric religious teaching. The original esoteric and higher spiritual teaching was systematically eliminated during the development of the Christian cult over the centuries.

The popular Christian cult is a system of beliefs oriented toward the convention of religious salvation. It is quite a different system of religious understanding and processes than the esoteric teaching at the origin of Christianity. In the popular Christian cult Jesus, the individual, is the dominant offering or message. Salvation or reunion with God and the advantages that come from that union are offered as a process wherein one accepts Jesus and the drama of his apparent life as the means of salvation, or a positive personal destiny in which one is among the elect, those who are rewarded at the end of time, at the second coming or beyond it, in heaven, or even during this life. The goods of life, the blessings of God, come to those who believe.

The basic message of this exoteric cult is that Jesus is God, that Jesus has always been God, that Jesus is in fact the God who spoke to Moses and who is described in the Old Testament. He is simply God, who, at one point in human history, incarnated in human form. The teaching of Jesus, apart from his moral message, is not of any great significance within the exoteric cult. Rather, what is significant is that he is God and appeared on Earth, that he survived his death and returned to his God-state, and that in the process of dying and resurrecting and returning to the God-state he paid for the karmas—or in Western parlance, the sins—of mankind.

Therefore, in order to become associated with God, to be free of the condemnation that comes from one's sins, or karma, or accumulated tendencies, one must accept that there is God, that Jesus is God, and that Jesus has paid for your sins, thereby rendering unnecessary your suffering now and in the future. One who simply accepts this dogma can be born without ultimate negative consequences. One need only believe that Jesus performed the ceremony of birth, death, resurrection, and ascension that has saved you.

This is the basic exoteric message of the popular Christian cult. It is not a message about life in the Spirit or any higher form of life. It is a message to egos, to born beings, that if you will believe in Jesus, you will be granted a very high destiny that may be revealed to some degree while you are alive. In other words, by believing in God, by feeling yourself close to God and therefore to God's blessings while alive, you can probably expect good things to happen to you.

A kind of mysticism also developed within the cult of Christianity, but if we examine the esotericism that seems to have sprung from Jesus and the gathering around him, it is difficult to perceive a direct relationship between what that esotericism must have been and the development over the centuries of Christian mysticism,

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particularly within the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions. The mysticism that has appeared within the greater cult of Christianity is largely an ascetic mystical tradition, not at all akin to what must have been the esotericism of the early Christian community.

Ascetic mysticism has appeared within religious groups all over the world since ancient times, particularly among oriental mystical traditions. Such mysticism expresses an ascetic point of view toward God-realization, wherein this world and the body are viewed as negative forces. Mystical association with God in these traditions is basically a matter of inverting attention in order to pass beyond desiring and attachment in this world, even beyond perception of this world, into the domain of the immortal soul wherein one exists as an immortal spark of the Divine.

By identifying with that interior immortality, one attempts to escape this world and enter into contemplative union with the spiritual world, the God-world, while alive, passing on to that world for eternity at death.

Thus, there are two features of the exoteric Christian tradition: the idealism of salvation in this world, salvation as a mortal individual, as one of the elect who enjoys a relationship to the ultimate Savior who can change the world, and the ascetic mystical tradition—embraced mainly by uncommon individuals in the Christian cult, although it is also reflected in certain features of the popular cult. These two dimensions of Christianity developed from two features of the ancient world in which Christianity arose. The ideal of the perfection of this world is a reflection of the Judaism of the time. The ideal of mysticism is a development of the tradition of ascetic mysticism that could be found in the Hellenistic culture and the ancient oriental influences of that time and times since.

Neither of these two features of Christianity is directly an expression of the esotericism of Jesus. The true esotericism of Jesus insofar as it can be deduced by studying the extant texts and histories, relates more to the spiritual transcendentalism of the great cultures of the Adepts. This—worldly religious idealism and ascetical mysticism are features of human culture that appear all over the world and are not primarily expressions of the influence of Adepts in history. The tradition and the teaching of the great Adepts are not the same as these two oriental and occidental traditions.

To support this conclusion, there are passages in the Bible. First, in Genesis 2:5, we find the following description of Man:

At the time when Yahweh God made earth and heaven there was as yet no wild bush on the earth nor had any wild plant sprung up, for Yahweh God had not sent rain on the earth, nor was there any man to till the soil. However, a flood was rising from the earth and watering all the surface of the soil. Yahweh God fashioned man of dust from the soil. Then he breathed into his nostrils a breath of life, and thus man became a living being.

This description of Man is fundamental to an understanding of the true esotericism of primitive Christianity. The idea of Man as a being containing an immortal soul, which must get out of this world and go back to its true home, is not native to either Judaism or early Christianity. It is an Oriental description of Man that appeared in the Hellenistic culture at the time of Jesus. It was not characteristic of primitive Judaism. Thus, the Old

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Testament does not describe Man in an alien world that he must escape. Rather, Man is himself made from the stuff of this world. He is a living being because the Breath of Life has been breathed into him and pervades him.

We might consider other interpretations of this passage, but, in the terms of the Old Testament, Man does not contain a soul. He is a soul, a living being. "Soul" means "breath" or the breathed being, in Hebrew the "ruach" of the esotericism of the Jews. Man as a soul is conceived in human terms. The communicated esotericism of Jesus presumed this Old Testament description of Man.

There is much very ordinary talk in the New Testament, including moral tales and so forth. Only in a few passages can we get a feeling for the esoteric teaching. Among those passages, there appears in the Gospel of John, chapter three, an account of Jesus' communicating the esoteric teaching to someone. "Esoteric" means "secret", and here we have an example of Jesus secretly teaching someone, a man named Nicodemus, who comes to him at night:

There was at that place a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came at night to Jesus.

In other words, he came secretly. He could not be seen coming to a teacher who was considered to be a heretic. Such association was dangerous for an official of the synagogue. Therefore, Nicodemus came at night to Jesus:

And he said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher sent from God; for no man can do these miracles that you are doing unless God is with him."

This bit of acknowledgment was commonly added to the accounts of Jesus because it was not then presumed that workers of miracles were from God but rather that they were some sort of anti-Christ:

Jesus answered saying to him, "Truly, truly I say to you, if a man is not born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can an old man be born again? Can he enter again a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered saying to him, "Truly, truly I say to you, if a man is not born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. What is born of flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is Spirit."

Jesus goes on to say :

Do not be surprised because I have told you all must be born again. The wind blows where it pleases and you hear its sound but you do not know from where it comes and where it goes. Such is every man who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus answered saying to him: "How can these things be?" Jesus answered, "You are a teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? Truly, truly I say to you, we speak only what we know and we testify only to what we have seen and yet you do not accept our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how then will you believe me if I tell you about heavenly things?"

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Here is a fragment of primitive esoteric teaching, an example of Jesus secretly teaching somebody from the official temple who asked for the "real stuff." Nicodemus approached Jesus as if to say, "You are not in public now. You can let me know what is really happening." And Jesus gave him a bit of esoteric wisdom.

In this passage Jesus says that the secret of realizing his teaching is to be born again. Today there is a great deal of emphasis on being "born again" in the Christian tradition, but the born-again dogma of popular cultism is not the same as Jesus' secret Teaching. To be "born again" today is, for some, a genuine religious awakening. But for most people it is to accept the exoteric message about Jesus, to believe in Jesus as God who has incarnated in order to perform a bodily sacrifice that has paid for our sins, and to look forward to being saved when Jesus appears again. One is thus born again in the sense that one is no longer troubled by life as it is. One's hope has been reborn. The born-again movement is basically about awakening to the conventional consolation of exoteric religion.

Jesus, however, taught a spiritual process. The word "Spirit" is used several times in the sequence of remarks documented in this passage. "If a man is not born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. What is born of flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is Spirit." In the passage from Genesis that we considered earlier, Man is shown being born of the Spirit. He is brought to life, given existence, through the Spirit, which is breathed into him. Likewise, in the beginning of the Gospel of John, Jesus talks about God as Spirit and says that God must be worshipped in Spirit and in truth. The esotericism and the religious opportunity communicated by Jesus is a religion of the Spirit, a religion of conversion from the conventional, materially human point of view of existence to a point of view of existence in which everything is seen to arise as a result of the Divine Spirit, to be infused by the Divine Spirit, to be identical with that Spirit.

What is born of the Spirit is Spirit. The process of esotericism communicated by Jesus is about conversion to an entirely spiritualized point of view:

"If a man is not born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." What does the water refer to? In the first chapter of John, John the Baptizer says: "I baptize with water, but among you stands One whom you do not know. He is the One who comes after me and is ahead of me, the One even the strings of whose shoes I am not good enough to untie." And later John says: "I come to baptize with water, but the One who comes after me baptizes with fire." John the Baptizer is associated with baptism by water, yet Jesus says you must be born of water and the Spirit.

The religious process of the primitive community of Christianity was a process of two stages of baptism. One was baptism with water. Those who came to Jesus' disciples and to Jesus personally were confronted by a kind of Spirit-religion preaching, and, if they responded, they were baptized by water. Baptism—by water is part of the ancient tradition of sacramental worship. Water cleanses. To be baptized by water is to be converted on the basis of "hearing" the spiritual message. The other baptism was baptism with fire. In the ancient traditions of sacred ritual, fire is the element identified with the Spirit. Jesus is saying that we must be baptized with water and we must be baptized with the Spirit. The process whereby we are born again is realized through the process of baptism in the religious or esoteric cult of Jesus.

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Thus, the process that Jesus recommended is to "hear" the teaching that God is Spirit, that we come from God, that if we fully realize that we are born from the Spirit, then we are Spirit, and that our life must therefore be based on the presumption that we are Spirit, that God is Spirit, that we commune with God spiritually, and that existence is a spiritual process that continues through time after baptism. If you responded to this teaching, the first thing you would do, having been converted, having heard this teaching, is to repent of your entire point of view and all the actions you have performed based on the presumption of the flesh, the presumption that you are just a mortal being. You must repent of everything you did and thought and now think that relates to a non-Spirit view of existence. You must be converted from your limited, mortal point of view.

If you could hear Jesus' teaching to the point of such conversion, you would be baptized with water. You would repent, you would be washed, you would pass through a sacramental ritual associated with this change. We may presume that this sacrament was practiced in the circle that surrounded Jesus. In addition the disciples preached and demonstrated certain kinds of spirit-power that were effective in converting people. Those who were converted, who would respond to that message, were then baptized or washed. They would from that point assume the condition to consider the teaching about the Spirit and to change their way of life.

Perhaps the fundamental orientation to which they were led is summarized elsewhere in the Gospels as well as in the Old Testament. That is that we must love God with every aspect of the being, not just with the inner soul, but with body, mind, action, everything. We must relate to God through love in all these areas of existence, and to all beings. Baptism with water, a necessary step in one's ultimate transformation, confirmed the individual in all these changes.

Water baptism was followed by baptism of fire, or the Spirit. And it is to be presumed, since Nicodemus is later named among the circle of Jesus, that Nicodemus had in fact been converted and baptized and that he was, at least secretly, part of the inner circle of Jesus. Jesus was described by John the Baptizer as a baptizer who was greater than himself. John's job, as probably the job of others, was to bring respondents through the process of repentance and accepting the conditions of practice and to perform the priestly ritual of water baptism. Water baptism, however, is only the first step in one's conversion. Presumably, then, there was another, secret form of baptism.

The Spirit baptism is not the mystical affair communicated in the ascetic, mystical tradition of the Orient and of present-day Christianity and other religions. Man, as a living being and therefore as a saved being, is viewed, in the true esotericism of Jesus' teaching, in his human terms, in his born terms, as a physical individual. Thus, Jesus did not teach that you must discover that you are an immortal soul, a spark of the Divine, that you must return to the Divine. He said that you must realize that you are born of the Spirit and that you are Spirit therefore. God is Spirit. Everything comes from God. Therefore, everything is Spirit. The nature of the universe is Spirit—not matter in the conventional sense of something dark, separate, and damned.

However, to speculate about this baptizing ritual, we can refer to a book called *The Secret Gospel*, by Morton Smith. It is a study of a fragment of an ancient document. A portion of a letter from a man named Clement of Alexandria, who lived in the first century or so after the presumed time of Jesus, was found on the back of another document from that time. Clement was one of the elders of the early Church and therefore an

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initiate into what would at that time still have been the esoteric tradition around Jesus, before Christianity was adopted as the official Roman religion. Only a portion of Clement's letter survives, but a sufficient portion to indicate that he was describing a form of secret baptism.

The fragment reads as follows:

From the letters of most holy Clement, author of the Stromateis. To Theodore: You did well in silencing the unspeakable teachings of the Carpocratians. For these are the "wandering stars" referred to in the prophecy, who wander from the narrow road of the commandments into a boundless abyss of the carnal and bodily sins. For, priding themselves in knowledge, as they say, "of deep [things] of Satan," they do not know that they are casting themselves away into "the nether world of the darkness" of falsity, and, boasting that they are free, they become slaves of servile desires. Such [men] are to be opposed in all ways and altogether. For even if they should say something true, one who loves the truth should not, even so, agree with them. For not all true [things] are the truth, nor should that truth which [merely] seems true according to human opinions be preferred to the true truth, that according to the faith.

Now the [things] they keep saying about the divinely inspired Gospel according to Mark, some are altogether falsifications, and others, even if they do contain some true [elements], nevertheless are not reported truly. For the true [things], being mixed with inventions, are falsified, so that, as the saying [goes], even the salt loses its savor.

[As for] Mark, then, during Peter's stay in Rome he wrote [an account of] the Lord's doings, not, however declaring all [of them], nor yet hinting at the secret [ones], but selecting those he thought most useful for increasing the faith of those who were being instructed. But when Peter died as a martyr, Mark came over to Alexandria, bringing both his own notes and those of Peter, from which he transferred to his former book the things suitable to whatever makes for progress toward knowledge [gnosis]. [Thus] he composed a more spiritual Gospel for the use of those who were being perfected.

Nevertheless, he yet did not divulge the things not to be uttered, nor did he write down the hierophantic teaching of the Lord, but to the stories already written he added yet others and, moreover, brought in certain sayings of which he knew the interpretation would, as a mystagogue, lead the hearers into the innermost sanctuary of that truth hidden by seven [veils]. Thus, in turn, he prearranged matters, neither grudgingly nor incautiously, in my opinion, and, dying, he left his composition to the church in Alexandria, where it even yet is most carefully guarded, being read only to those who are being initiated into the great mysteries.

But since the foul demons are always devising destruction for the race of men, Carpocrates, instructed by them and using deceitful arts, so enslaved a certain presbyter of the church in Alexandria that he got from him a copy of the secret Gospel, which he both interpreted according to his blasphemous and carnal doctrine and, moreover, polluted, mixing with the spotless and holy words utterly shameless lies. From this mixture is drawn off the teaching of the Carpocratians.

To them, therefore, as I said above, one must never give way, nor, when they put forward their falsifications, should one concede that the secret Gospel is by Mark, but should even deny it on oath. For, "Not all true

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[things] are to be said to all men." For this [reason] the Wisdom of God, through Solomon, advises, "Answer the fool from his folly," teaching that the light of the truth should be hidden from those who are mentally blind. Again it says, "From him who has not shall be taken away," and, "Let the fool walk in darkness." "But we are "children of light," having been illuminated by "the dayspring" of the Spirit of the Lord "from on high," and "Where the Spirit of the Lord is," it says, "there is liberty," for "All things are pure to the pure."

To you, therefore, I shall not hesitate to answer the [questions] you have asked, refuting the falsifications by the very words of the Gospel. For example, after "And they were in the road going up to Jerusalem," and what follows, until "After three days he shall arise," [the secret Gospel] brings the following [material] word for word:

He is quoting here from the secret Gospel he refers to. This particular quote relates to the secret, spiritual baptism. This is the quote from the secret Gospel of Mark:

"And they come into Bethany, and a certain woman, whose brother had died, was there. And, coming, she prostrated herself before Jesus and says to him, 'Son of David, have mercy on me' But the disciples rebuked her. And Jesus, being angered, went off with her into the garden where the tomb was, and straightway a great cry was heard from the tomb. And going near Jesus rolled away the stone from the door of the tomb. And straightway, going in where the youth was, he stretched forth his hand and raised him, seizing his hand. But the youth, looking upon him, loved him and began to beseech him that he might be with him. And going out of the tomb they came into the house of the youth, for he was rich. And after six days Jesus told him what to do and—in the evening the youth comes to him, wearing a linen cloth over [his] naked [body]. And he remained with him that night for Jesus taught him the mystery of the kingdom of God. And thence, arising, he returned to the other side of the Jordan".

After these words follows the text " And James and John come to him " and all that section. But naked [man] with naked [man] and the other things about which you wrote are not found.

And after the [words], "And he comes into Jericho" [the secret Gospel] adds only "And the sister of the youth whom Jesus loved and his mother and Salome were there and Jesus did not receive them".

But the many other [things about] which you both wrote both seem to be and are falsifications.

Now the true explanation and that which accords with the true philosophy . . .

Here the text broke off in the middle of the page.

This letter documents the fact that in the first century or so, the Christian community was made up of many sects all with different points of view and that there was at that time an esoteric teaching. As Clement writes, not everything was said to everybody. A Gospel was written by somebody called Mark—perhaps the same person who wrote the Gospel that appears in the New Testament. This was perhaps an original form of the New Testament. That Gospel about which Clement writes was a secret Gospel. In other words, it contained certain elements of the secret teaching that were communicated only to a few.

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Apparently this Carpocrates deceived the presbyter in the church at Alexandria and obtained a copy of it. Thereafter he went about preaching interpretations that were his own. This is Clement's complaint in his letter to Theodore. He writes identifying that there was a secret teaching and at least one book, perhaps others, that contains the secret teaching, although perhaps other aspects of the secret teaching were verbally or secretly communicated. As Clement suggests, even this secret Gospel did not contain everything.

Apart from the account of miracles, the secret Gospel quoted by Clement describes how an individual was initiated into the mystery of the kingdom of God or the secret teaching. In a very short passage are described some of the circumstances that surrounded such secret initiation. "And in the evening the youth came to him wearing a linen cloth. (He was naked except for this cloth.) And it was at night. And he stayed with Jesus that night. And Jesus taught him the mystery of the kingdom of God."

Perhaps the heretic Carpocrates had been speculating some sort of sexual relationship to Jesus, you see. That is probably the vulgar things that Clement refers to. Apart from the politics of the Church, this passage corroborates the theory that there was an esoteric teaching given by Jesus and furthermore describes something of the circumstances in which the secret teaching was given. In this case the individual actually came to Jesus, having had some previous instruction. For some reason he was naked except for a simple white cloth, which apparently signified repentance and purity. The individual came at night, one of the reasons for which was surely secrecy. He stayed that night with Jesus, who taught him the mystery of the kingdom of God.

To be taught the mystery of the kingdom of God is to be baptized in the Spirit. The mystery of the kingdom of God is the metaphor for the high and secret teaching of Jesus. As Jesus said to Nicodemus in the passage we read earlier, "If a man is not born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The mystery of how one attains the kingdom of God is what the secret teaching and the secret baptism is all about. So somehow or other, in secret, one was born again, one was given Spirit-baptism.

In the Old Testament and, particularly, the New Testament are many references to the Spirit and to the kingdom of God. Clearly the New Testament was basically selected from many streams of instruction that were extant in the early Church, and then modified and edited over time according to the point of view of the Church as it developed as a cult. But in this letter, in the words of an early patriarch of the inner circle of the Christian community, is described a secret dimension to the teaching that was not outwardly communicated and not therefore present in the New Testament as it now exists. Beyond even the secret written teaching there was also a secret form of communication and initiation. Clearly the teaching that appears in the New Testament itself was about realizing the kingdom of God. That process is viewed in esoteric terms, in terms of mystery. It was about being born again in the Spirit, going through the process of baptism, first water baptism and then Spirit or fire baptism.

Clearly baptism by the Spirit existed. It is referred to often in the New Testament, but it is not described there. Clearly it existed. Many early figures in the Christian Church refer to it, including Clement in this particular example. Thus, we conclude that there was an esoteric inner circle at the time of Jesus, and it was this baptism by the Spirit that was the core of his activity. However, it is not at all the core of the exoteric teaching

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of Christianity as it soon developed and persists today. You may not go to the Pope or to some high individual within the Christian Church and receive from him this Spirit baptism. The leaders of the Church today do not know about the Spirit baptism. It has been lost. At least it is certainly not openly referred to anywhere. It may be hidden away somewhere in the Vatican library.

You cannot invent the Spirit, but you can relate to God in all kinds of ways. Thus, the world is filled with all kinds of cultural media for associating with the Divine. Some of those media are spiritual and others are not. Some are just worldly. These look toward improving Man's circumstance. They view Man not as a spiritual being, but as a mortal, human, fleshy individual. Thus, idealisms tend to be addressed by most exoteric religions. Other religious cultural movements seem to be spiritual in some way because they relate to secret mystical teachings and uncommon experiences of what might be presumed to be the Divine.

Even so, they do not often teach the total conversion of the individual in the Spirit. Rather, they usually call you to conceive of yourself as an immortal soul, somehow situated deeply within this human appearance, that natively exists in a spiritual world, and if you can invert yourself from this carnal, psycho-physical life to a state of identification with the immortal soul, then as the immortal soul you can contemplate and ultimately rise up to the spiritual world.

There are two common conventional dimensions of persuasion in the world that are associated with religions. One is ascetical and mystical and relates to the being as an immortal soul. The other is worldly and idealistic and relates to the religious message as proposed by the exoteric cult of Christianity. But there also exists true esotericism, and we can see that Jesus' teaching is clearly related to that dimension of spirituality, however indirectly we try to deduce its description. We can see that such true esotericism was what he was about. Likewise, we can see other individuals in human time who are related to the same spiritual esotericism, which is quite a different thing from ascetical mysticism and worldly idealism.

Not only can we point to historical examples of Adepts who have in one fashion or another developed this transcendental spiritual point of view, but, because all of this is about the living, actual, real Divine, it is possible that we ourselves, in present time, may enter into Communion with the spiritual Reality. On the basis of the realization that is granted through such Communion we can understand the life and teaching of other Adepts in history, like Jesus.

The true Teaching is not simply to be read about. It can be realized in the present. It is not just ancient dogma. It is a description of a process, a reality, that is eternal and therefore present and into which we may enter. Having entered into it through our persuasion, orientation, experience, we can understand what the disciples were up to in that primitive setting around Jesus—presuming, of course, that he actually existed! And we can also see the likeness of that process we have realized in other traditions and in other Adepts than Jesus. Therefore, by examining the universal tradition of spiritual transcendentalism, we can obtain a fuller historical picture of the esoteric ideal, which is different from the worldly as well as the ascetical-mystical idea. It is a total conversion of Man in his totality into a spiritual realization.

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Because of Christianity's association with ascetical mysticism, it tends to belong to that tradition that always views Spirit over against matter, Spirit as an alternative to the body. In talking to Nicodemus, Jesus does not discuss the Spirit as an alternative to the flesh. Rather, he talks about Man's realizing that he is Spirit. He is not talking about inversion towards that part of you that is a "soul," but about realizing the spiritual nature of everything altogether. Everything is breathed alive by God. Everything is infused with the Divine, which is Spirit and which pervades everything. This living Person is the Condition of everything.

The initiation would have involved not merely spending time with the Adept, with an individual who was spiritually realized, but being baptized by that individual. One would be instructed, but one would also be baptized. And the transference of Spirit Power, baptism by the Spirit Power, was communicated in secret.

That baptism is fundamentally what we know as shaktipat, but it should also be viewed in much larger terms than the conventional shaktipat of the Hindu traditions. As it is described in the mystical traditions, shaktipat is generally associated with the ascetic, oriental, mystical point of view and therefore generally related to inversion and dissociation from this world, from the body, from Life-positive activity, from the transfiguration and transformation of the body, and bodily Communion with the Divine. But shaktipat as the transmission of spiritual influence, via the internal mechanism of the nervous system as well as the total transformation of the being, is certainly what was communicated by Jesus and by his disciples who became baptizers as a result of his initiating them.

The Spirit baptism was the transference of the breathed Spirit Presence. Just as it says in the Old Testament, this Presence, this Spirit, that is breathed into the being is its source, its identity, its condition. It is felt and realized bodily, psychically, altogether Realized through initiation. Once you have been converted to the Spirit and confronted by the Spirit, and once you know how to breathe and feel and commune with the Spirit, then life becomes the endless process of transformation in the Spirit. Such life is the kingdom of God, then. One enters the kingdom of God through Spirit realization, through conversion and initiation, and thereafter lives in the kingdom of God.

Thus, the baptism implied in this Christian esotericism is one of conversion, through "hearing," to realizing existence as Spirit, existence inhering in Spirit. The life that follows the water and the fire is the life in the Spirit, the life in which the Spirit is the Condition, the controller of the destiny, the transformer of your existence. Such life is different from the mortal ideal of God's coming as some man and accomplishing some great political change on Earth. It is also a different thing from inverting yourself into the immortal spark within. It is a matter of existing in the Spirit, of seeing that everything exists in the Spirit, of communing with the Spirit, worshipping God in the Spirit, living in the spiritual process, living as the Spirit itself, realizing the body-mind as a single thing existing in the Spirit and as Spirit. By thus entering into the kingdom of God—the kingdom of God being simply existence in the Condition of Spirit, the Condition of God—by entering into that spiritual realization, one enters into existence as a process of transformation in the Divine.