

logion 48

Jesus said:

"If two make peace with each other in one house, they will say to the mountain, 'Move from here!' and it will move."¹

Commentary

The two inhabitants of one household whose good relations give rise to such a remarkable effect are the psychic man and the pneumatic man who dwell together in every human being.

The logion goes to the heart of the religious anthropology contained in the Christian message, how man's consciousness, grounded only in the many movements of the psyche, must rid itself of its habit of living with its back to its very essence and set out to discover in itself and by itself the higher, eternal, perfect consciousness of *man in Christ*.

This is, in one way or another, what the *sayings* of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of Thomas on which we are commenting are really all about. Likewise, this is almost invariably the common basis of most of the pericopes, parables and actions narrated in the canonical Gospels, especially when viewed in terms of their hidden aspect.

Regardless of the angle from which one approaches the Gospels, what the New Testament writers are *pointing out* in different ways is that the psychic man whom the mind imagines it knows, and which we call *the soul*, is not the essential man but a self-representation or image which this essential man reproduces in his consciousness. In this sense, the soul is a coming-together, a sum or succession of data of a psychic (or psychosomatic) nature that are secretly contemplated by *our selves*.

¹ Logion 106 expresses a thought similar to that in this logion, but in the perspective of the absolute unification of the two spheres of consciousness which *naturally* coexist in every man.

It goes without saying that these *our selves* which are, in the language of the New Testament, expressed in the term the *Son of Man*,² can be contemplated by no one, for it is always he himself *who is doing the contemplating*, and in any act of contemplation, who could contemplate the contemplator? This explains how consciousness, which is always made up of psychic contents, remains unaware of the Son of Man, its true Being, and consequently lives in utter ignorance of his life-giving, immortal breath, the breath of wisdom.

Thus man, imprisoned by the narrow horizon imposed by the contents of his consciousness, believes himself to be no more than a soul, a desert, an island doomed to suffer and to die. Still, this does not prevent a certain vague awareness from lingering in that consciousness, like a perfume that never completely vanishes: intuition of the true Being, the *I AM*. Tirelessly, Jesus strives to awaken in all who approach to hear him the presence of that essential man, wrongly relegated to the outer edge of our lives.

Thanks to the ineradicable persistence of that perfume of Being, consciousness never completely forgets that there is in its depths a contemplator who is its true Being. That is why we find—and are never surprised by them—so many expressions that implicitly point to the duality of the soul, beset by all its manifold states, and the Son of Man who contemplates these transient states: *and I will say to my soul: My soul, you have plenty of things*;³ *You must love the Lord your God [...] with all your soul*;⁴ *My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord*;⁵ or, as explicitly stated in an *agraphon* handed down by Clement of Alexandria, *Save*

² In the Old Testament and in apocrypha like the Ethiopian Enoch, the expression *son of Man* has a meaning parallel to that of the Son of Man in the Gospels. This sameness is not usually recognized when Christ is considered in terms of his *manifest* aspect, but becomes clear when studying his *hidden* aspect. Examples include David's Lord and the visible *glory* of the prophets—*Before Abraham was, I am*—for the Son of Man is the higher immortal man, the Spirit, the essence. This term is a circumlocution for the Self, *that-which-is*.

³ Luke 12:19

⁴ Matt. 22:37

⁵ Luke 1:46

yourself and your soul;⁶ or in Jesus' beautiful exclamation, so pregnant with knowledge: *My soul is sorrowful to the point of death*.⁷

It must be understood that it is not the soul, as ego or personal entity, that says *I will say to my soul, My soul proclaims*, or that warns *With all your soul, save your soul*.

As is well known, the soul, consciousness, possesses a protean reflexive quality that enables it successively and deliberately to make lightning switches from being its own actor to playing spectator to itself, and back again. The soul may sometimes perform as every man's one exclusive actor and at other times as a critic interested in his own actions. This does not, however, invalidate the obvious fact that consciousness is dominated by the firm conviction—one we could describe as *instinctive and deep-seated*—a conviction reflected by language, that the soul is an actor who reacts with more or less obedience and discipline to higher commands coming from another inhabitant of the same house, sometimes called the ego, sometimes the will or the self.

The fact is that the Son of Man—the name given by Jesus to this higher fellow-householder of whom we are now speaking—never enters into the psyche's battlefields as an actor. When this figure confers bliss and the *breath* of wisdom, this is not purely the outcome of his action but a fact, an occurrence that invariably takes place when the soul becomes aware of his witnessing presence.

The logion shows up the fact that the soul—psychic consciousness—lives with its back turned to the constant presence in its own house of this exceptional eyewitness. The soul's daily life boils down to ignoring the presence of the eternal beholder, and this results in the splitting of man as a unified being into a psychic-spiritual duality. Hence, fear, ignorance and loneliness. Jesus warns insistently of the negative

⁶ Clem. Alex, *Excerpts of Theodotus* 2, p. 2638. Agrapha 21 (A. de Santos Otero, *Los Ev. apocrif*, BAC, 1956, Madrid, p. 123).

⁷ Mark 14:34

outcome of this dichotomy⁸: *...If a household is divided against itself, that household can never stand. And: A man's enemies will be those of his own household.*⁹

The general intent of the Gospel is to proclaim the means whereby these two separated householders or principles, the pneumatic *captive* and the *oppressed* psyche—oppressed because of his own blindness—can attain the union that will signify redemption for both. Jesus first sets this out when he reads from a text of Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth. Thus, he reveals the two facets of the action he intends:

- a. *To proclaim liberty to captives* (pneumatic men, the poor to whom the good news is announced).
- b. *To set the downtrodden free* (meaning psychic men, once they have recovered their sight, for they are *blind*).¹⁰

Far later, in the momentous words in Saint John's Gospel said to have been pronounced by Jesus immediately before his Passion, he again insists, in his entreaties to the Father in prayer, on the dual nature of the redemption that he brings. He says: *I pray not only for these* [for the pneumatic men consecrated¹¹ in the truth of the Word] *but for those also* [the psychic men] *who through their words* [the Word that dwells within them] *will believe in me. May they all be one.*¹²

This all comes down to realizing unity, the *unification* of the two separate dwellers under the same roof. Such is the task that Jesus' Gospel sets itself from the very outset when it proclaims baptism.

With the culmination of the long and complex process of baptism, following the two baptisms by water and the Spirit, the assumption takes place in the Son of Man of all those

⁸ Mark 3:25; Matt. 12:25

⁹ Matt. 10:36

¹⁰ Luke 4:18; Isai: 61:1

¹¹ *Consecrated* means set aside for God, sanctified.

¹² John 17:21-22. *Through their words* means through the Spirit of Truth that dwells in them, in their pneumatic principle. *Be one* means here to make ourselves one, to be *unified*. With regard to *unification*, see GT logia 4,11, 22, 23, 30, 61, 75 and 106, inter alia.

contents of the psyche which their worth for justice has enabled to survive the hard test of refinement like silver in the fire of the Spirit.¹³

The baptism preached first by John and, in its totality, by Jesus, is the science of religion revealed for the benefit of the Christian community, a complete science of religious *askesis*, the methodological development of which has barely been studied or practiced in the Christian sphere, since it is necessary to admit that, going beyond its *manifest* expression as the traditional bath performed in order to receive grace, a lengthy immersion in the contents of the soul is necessary for purification to take place. This immersion calls for a method to be followed; it calls for compliance with standards like those of a science, even though grace comes, not through science, but as the Spirit wills it.

The fundamental of immersion is none other than conversion—*metanoia*—when the soul, whose primary, undisciplined tendency is always to look outside of itself, turns in on itself in order, first to acknowledge and contemplate its own contents; following which, conversion takes place of its own accord, without the interference of any qualifying action, whether of condemnation or praise. This makes for a preliminary cleansing, an essential precondition for undertaking a religious *askesis*.

Contemplation of the contents of the psyche leads without question to a better understanding of what motivates the soul. It is an action that has effects parallel to what the apostle St. James called the *confession of sins*¹⁴, even though its accomplishment must in this case be purely inward. In the literature of the mystics, who discover many things through the apperceptive power of love alone, despite their ignorance of religious science, this process that arises in conversion is known as the *dark night of the soul*.

¹³ Zech. 13:9

¹⁴ Jam. 5:16

Purification calls for a quarantine of sustained askesis, although no set period of time is specified. This simply means however long it takes for the purification of the soul to attain a certain degree. In the Gospel texts, the period in question is symbolized by the forty days in the wilderness. Throughout this passage through drought and aridity, one is continually beset by those *temptations* of which both the Gospel and the lives of the saints tell.

These *temptations* should not come as a surprise. As we now know all too well, the soul is, among other things, a mnemonic storehouse of lived experiences and when one peers into it, its first reaction is to disclose all its frustrations and residual desires, which in any case constitute a large part of what it in fact is.

The cleansing of the soul, when performed in accordance with the science that pertains to it, consists of the revelation and consequent acknowledgment of temptations. Only after this process can the clean waters of the mind freely receive the descending influence sent by the Spirit. The purifying properties of the introspective action of baptism by water (= immersion in the contents of the soul) are quite evident. John put it in these words: *Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight*;¹⁵ and this is expressed even more clearly in Isaiah's direct text: *Prepare in the wilderness [in the soul] a way for YHVH*.¹⁶

Contemplation of the contents of the psyche calls for deep humility, if it is to be effective. This means renunciation, annihilation of the ego, never identifying with the *temptations*, or apparitions of the psyche. This absolute humility calls for energetic practice until such apparitions are no longer ever perceived by consciousness to be part of oneself, becoming mere external objects. Humility consists in this, being nothing, hence the saying: *Zeal for your house devours me*.¹⁷ All these objective appearances, those on which one does not act, merely

¹⁵ Luke 3:4; Matt. 3:3

¹⁶ Isai. 40:3

¹⁷ John 2:17; Ps. 69:9

performing the objective action of *seeing* them, remain thereafter in their condition as dead matter, not grain for storage but chaff which the perfect pitchfork of objectification first separates then winnows, subsequently to be burnt and so never to return. To the extent that this can be verified, such burnt chaff is a sterile aggregate that had become attached to the soul, until renounced. The true way, the path of baptism, consists of renunciation, meaning, as Jesus asks, *renouncing oneself*.¹⁸

The way is hard and narrow and calls for perseverance. It can therefore be trodden only by those who love intensely freedom, truth or the path itself. Continuous contemplation of whatever mental content arises will straighten the inner way and clear it of obstacles. Until one day you notice that, *without observing it*, you have begun to perceive, or be revealed, the ineffable intuition of Being.

There is no way of foreseeing the intuition of Being, but it will come only when the heart is pure enough, as in Saint Matthew's beatitudes.¹⁹ Then you will understand how right the Gospel was when it proclaimed: *The kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the good news*.²⁰ For those who now perceive this perfume of Being, it is indeed easy to believe, and once you believe, you learn that the Kingdom is close, it is within one, although for those who do not know and so do not believe, it may seem infinitely far.

Saint Luke speaks of what then often arises: *A time will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man and will not see it*; ²¹ but there will be no point in trying to run after it, for it cannot be seen. You only know that it is there, very close, that which you cannot see, nor can it be seen, for it is *what-one-is*, *what- is*. Inseparable from the probing consciousness, it is the seeker's very essence. This is the real eternal Being, that which

¹⁸ Matt. 16:24-25

¹⁹ Matt. 5:8

²⁰ Mark 1:15

²¹ Luke 17:22

is named as the absolute, inseparable ground of one's self when the soul says I AM.

It has all simply been a matter of turning inward on oneself and on the intuition of Being, something so alive, so fleeting: *as the lightning from one part of heaven lights up the other.*²² Yet thenceforth the presence remains—as indeed it has always been there—that of the dweller in the house who, as one now discovers, is not the “other” householder, the one who lives *above*, but the one and only true householder: the mountain that was far off and is now near, very near.

Matthew, too, says this, but one must know how to read the words: *And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven.*²³ The *sign* is the intuition of his presence, which opens the gates to faith, and *heaven* is the clear, clean depth of the waters of the soul. He then adds: *So with you when you see all these things: know that he is near, at the very gates.*²⁴

²² Luke 17:24

²³ Matt. 24:30

²⁴ Matt. 24:33