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IN SEARCH OF AN ADVAITIC UNDERSTANDING OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

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INTRODUCTION

The fundamental problem that lay behind the *vedāntic* thinking was the identity of the self. Authentic sense of the self was ambiguous. An inquiry into the authenticity of the self is the theme of *vedānta* and it is especially so in one of *Vedānta's* most important branches, the *advaita*.

This quest for the meaning of self was already there in the *Upaniṣads*, the source-book of *Vedāntic* thinking. The ambiguity with regard to the meaning of the self which characterized the *upaniṣadic* thinking developed into complex systems in *vedānta* school of philosophy. Thus we have *advaita* (Non-dualism) where all differences are ultimately reduced to pure identity; *Viśiṣṭādvaita* (qualified non-dualism) where differences are maintained with a sort of identity; *dvaita* (dualism) where differences are eternally real, etc. These systems are generally known as theistic or monistic as stress is laid on the idea of a transcendent God or an immanent Absolute.

As a rule Christianity has shown a greater leaning towards and readiness to accommodate the theistic systems, especially that of Rāmānuja. This is partly because of the idea of a transcendent God prevailing in the system which guarantees the distinction between the supreme and individual self. Christianity is used to such a pattern of thinking because Christians believe in a God who spoke to their

forefathers, promised them salvation, gave them commandments and directed their history. The entry of God in the history of mankind made the Christian concept of God highly anthropomorphic. Theologically however, Christianity favoured the idea of a transcendent God who is also immanent.

With the belief in the incarnate Word the Christian theology readily became theological anthropology, and rightly so. But here the anthropomorphism gave way to true and authentic anthropology where, once again, the truly transcendent became intimately immanent.

A quest for divine immanentism can be seen today all over the world. A God who gives commandments from above, who judges and condemns, seems to be less attractive. On the contrary a God who is within me, who is the centre of my consciousness, who in some way is myself, is less repugnant. These are only two aspects of discovering the same God. *Advaita* is perhaps the system which has accepted the principle of divine immanency to the greatest extent, the pure identity of the individual self with the Supreme Self.

Theologies are always limited by the angle of vision they cherish with regard to reality. This limitation characterizes their inner thinking. Christian theology is thus very limited by its angle of vision, as any other theology is by theirs. Hence a glance from a different stand-point is always good to understand in depth the very truths we are believing. There may be many tenets in our own faith, which are not yet developed because the current of the then theological thinking, characterized by the limitation of the past, did not favour such a development. In this paper we are trying to see Christian theology from an *advaitic* stand-point. We hope that *advaita* can contribute some new insights towards a better understanding of our Christian faith.

This paper is divided into two parts. In the first part we will briefly examine the main tenets of the *advaita* philosophy. The second part will deal with a few insights which Christianity can develop in the light of the *advaita* philosophy.

THE MAIN TENETS OF THE ADVAITA

1. The Analysis of Consciousness

In the introduction to his *Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya* itself, Śaṅkara proposes a serious inquiry into the true nature of our knowledge.¹ At present our knowledge is superimposed on us by our senses. But by examining the various states of consciousness we have to find out the true nature of our consciousness. This true nature is that which is permanent in all states of consciousness. And in the varied states of consciousness what remains permanent is just consciousness. Consciousness is simply *Svayamprakāśatva* - Self-illumination. All determinations of time and space which we notice in various states of consciousness do not pertain to the true nature (*svabhāva*) of consciousness. They are superimposed on consciousness.² But we always understand ourselves along with this super-imposition.³ Hence in ordinary experience I am conscious about myself as something, as a student, lecturer, etc. Thus our consciousness is bound up with the determinations of time and space. Therefore our consciousness is not real knowledge, the identity of self: it is knowledge on which certain determinations are super-imposed. This is called *adhyāsa*. *Adhyāsa* is super-imposing the characteristics of time and space on knowledge, i.e. attributing the *viśaya* (object) on what is *citmātra* (pure intelligences) by nature. Real consciousness is simply *citmātra*.

The pure consciousness, associated as it is with the *adhyāsas*, super-impositions, is now operating in us. Let us call this the human consciousness, or the psychosomatic organism called *jiva*. According to Advaita, *Jiva* is made up of two principles: *Sākṣin* and *antaḥkāraṇa*. *Sākṣin*, which means witness, is the element of steady consciousness in us. It never becomes object, nor does it undergo any changes. *Antaḥkāraṇa* is the complex of internal organs in which the mind dominates. *Antaḥkāraṇa* which undergoes change known as *vṛtti*

¹ Śaṅkarācārya, *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, Introduction.

² Śaṅkarācārya, *Ātmabodha*, 10, 11.

³ *Ibid.* 15.16.

takes the form of the object in the understanding. In reality *sākṣin* only witnesses this change that takes place in the self. But often the *vṛtti* (Object transformation) is attributed to the *sākṣin* as *Jiva* practically fails to make the sharp distinction between *sākṣin* and *antaḥkāraṇa*. *Jiva* is in a state of confusion. It identifies itself with the *antaḥkāraṇa* and forgets the true nature of *sākṣin*. This is ignorance (*avidyā*). When true knowledge dawns the *antaḥkāraṇa* vanishes in the *māyā* from which it ultimately emerged and the *sākṣin*, completely freed from the limiting superstructures of *antaḥkāraṇa*, realizes itself as Brahman.

2. Brahman, *Māyā* and the Universe

i. Reality is the Absolute Brahman

According to Śaṅkara, the ultimate reality is the absolute Brahman which is pure Being.⁴ This alone is really real (*pāramārthika satya*) in the sense that this alone is eternal and absolutely unchanging.⁵ This Brahman is infinite, transcendent, incomprehensible and ineffable. It is the ultimate ground of all affirmations and denials. No human intellect can comprehend it nor can it be properly qualified by any attribute. As the Absolute and ultimate Reality, Brahman is to be understood as *nirguṇa*, which means beyond all attributes. Hence, the only way we can designate this Brahman is "*neti, neti*", which means 'not this, not this'.⁶ This, however, does not mean Brahman is an empty concept. It is the highest realization of Being, and the highest Being man can ever conceive. But even the highest thought of man cannot express it as it is in itself. As pure Being it is also at the same time, pure consciousness. Absolute identity of Being and Consciousness in one is Reality according to *advaita*. Reality is one and non-dual (*ekam-eva advitīyam*).⁷

⁴ Śaṅkarācārya, *Vedāntasūtrabhāṣya*, 1.4.22. Eng. Trans. George Thibaut, *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XXXIV and XXXVIII. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890, 1895).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.1.4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.1.11.

⁷ *Chand. Up.* VI. ii. 1.

ii. Brahman and Māyā

Brahman is incomprehensible and ineffable. But assuming name and form, Brahman has given rise to a world of plurality. This happens through *māyā* which as the manifestative power of Brahman is inseparable from him. The entire universe is the manifestation of Brahman through *māyā*. The true nature of *māyā* is indefinable: It is neither real nor unreal. Since it projects the world of appearance which is real (*sat*) *māyā* is real. But since it does not have any reality apart from the reality of Brahman and no reality outside Brahman should add anything to the absolute reality of Brahman which alone is real, *māyā* must be mere appearance and ultimately unreal (*asat*). *Māyā* is, therefore, a composite of being and non-being and hence indefinable (*sat asat anirvacaniya*).⁸

Māyā however, has a twofold function described as *āvaraṇa* *vikṣepa*: projecting - veiling or revealing - concealing. On the one hand it projects (reveals) Brahman in manifoldness. But since, once revealed, what we see is no more Brahman in itself but its external manifestation, *māyā* really veils (conceals) Brahman from us. *Māyā* thus points to the essential nature of any divine revelation which is, inevitably both revealing and concealing. Since *māyā* has the negative characteristic of concealing Brahman from us and projecting him in non-Brahman forms, *māyā* confounds human intellect and gives rise to a radical misapprehension of Reality. Hence *māyā* is also known as *mūlāvidyā*: radical ignorance. Ignorance is associated with *māyā*, and *māyā* with revelation since "otherness" that is, Brahman appearing in names and forms is essentially involved in any revelation of the Absolute.

Advaita also uses many other terms to describe *māyā*. It is called *vivarta* (appearance) because the whole *māyā* is only a phenomenal appearance of Brahman (hence *Vivarta vāda*). It is called *adhyāsa* (super-imposition), because ultimately *māyā* is a super-imposition on pure consciousness which is the real essence of Brahman. It is even called *bhrānti* (error) because one who misunderstands the projection of Brahman as the Brahman is really in error. However *māyā* enjoys empirical reality (*Vyāvahārika Satya*) in contrast to absolute reality

⁸ V.F. Vineeth, *Foundations of World Vision* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications), pp. 64-65. Cf. also Chandradar Sharma, *Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979), pp.274-275.

(*pāramārthika satya*) which is Brahman's alone. Being empirically real it stands true for all practical purposes. Its locus (*āśraya*) as well as object (*viṣaya*) is Brahman itself; yet Brahman remains untouched by it.

(iii) *Māyā* and the Reality of this World

The reality of this world is exactly the reality of *māyā*. Hence everything that has been said about *māyā*, can also be said about this world. This world is not absolutely unreal. In *advaita* unreal means absolutely unreal. What is absolutely unreal is that which never come into existence in any form, such as a hare's horn or a barren woman's son. But the world is not so. It is empirically real. It does exist for all practical purposes. Only compared to Brahman, which is Being itself, is the world said to be unreal, because its being is composed of being and non-being (*sadasat*). Hence what is denied is 'reality for all time' as in the case of Brahman. In fact the unreality of the universe means the 'non-eternality' of it. Just as the unreal appearances in dreams are real as long as the dream lasts, so also the world is real for us as long as the state of ignorance lasts. When enlightenment dawns upon us we understand that Brahman alone is really real. To illustrate this Śaṅkara uses the simile of the rope and the snake. In the twilight of the day one may mistake a rope for a snake. He may even be frightened by it. The snake, though in fact unreal, is real for the frightened man. Only true light will free him from his fear. Similarly only true knowledge of Brahman will make us realize the inferior form of reality of this world. There are three kinds of reality: (1) *Prātibhāsika*, the realities of the dream-world (2) the *Vyāvahārika* the empirical realities of the waking stage (3) *Pāramārthika*, the reality of the Absolute. Through right knowledge we have to move from *prātibhāsika* to *vyāvahārika* and from *vyāvahārika* to *pāramārthika* and see everything from the Absolute's point of view. As Chandradhar Sharma rightly remarks: "None can condemn this world as unreal; he who does it is not qualified to do so, and he who is qualified to do, will not do so, for he would have risen above language and finite thought."⁹

⁹ Chandradhar Sharma, *Op.Cit.*, p.279.

3. Brahman, *Īśvara* and *Ātman*

Brahman is all transcendent, inconceivable and ineffable. This does not mean that He is sheer negation. Brahman is all-Reality. This Reality is manifested through *māyā*. Through *māyā* we can grasp Brahman and Brahman thus grasped by us is called *Īśvara* or *Saguṇabrahman*, Brahman with attributes.

Īśvara is a multi-faceted understanding of Brahman, as far as man's everyday life is concerned. But certainly *Īśvara* is not the presentation of Brahman as He is in Himself. Brahman is pure subject, and is never the object of any intellect. The moment we try to understand him in terms of the categories of our intellect and thus make him the object of our mind, we lose his essential nature. He is no more the unconditioned consciousness, rather he becomes anthropomorphised or *māyā*-bound. This Brahman is *Īśvara*.

Īśvara is, thus, the Brahman reflected in *māyā*. The Lord, we come to know through the universe, which is the appearance of Brahman through *māyā*, is *Īśvara*. *Īśvara* is the Lord of the universe, and as such the lord of *māyā* as well.¹⁰

To this God we can be personally related. We can be devoted to Him. We consider Him as king, father, and the Lord of the universe. *Īśvara* is the personal presentation of the impersonal Brahman.

Īśvara is *sat-cit-ānanda*. He is both transcendent and immanent. Though he transcends the whole universe, he is also immanent in it, and controls it from within. As the immanent inner ruler he is the *antaryāmin*. He is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the universe. He is the source of everything and the goal of everything.

Generally, our whole religion is centred on *Īśvara*. Thus *Īśvara* is an important concept in *Advaita*. It is not a non-entity. Just like *māyā* is real for all practical purposes, so is *Īśvara*. *Īśvara* is Brahman himself, now manifested, and thus made available to man.

¹⁰ Śaṅkarācārya, *Vedāntasūtrabhāṣya*, II.1.14. Cfr. also S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1962), p.545.

But since *Īśvara* is Brahman manifested and grasped by the human intellect, *Īśvara* is not *parabrahman*. *Īśvara* is *aparabrahman* or lower Brahman. It reminds us of *paravidya* and *aparavidya*. Knowing Brahman as He is in Himself - that is, knowing Him as subject and not as an object and which is possible only by way of becoming Brahman, is *paravidya*. Knowing *Īśvara* and the world of *Īśvara* is *aparavidya*.

The unobjectified Brahman who is ever the subject of consciousness is *ātman*. Brahman is therefore *ātman*, the Supreme Self, the only Self. It is the Self which is self-luminous (*Svayamprakāśatva*). Ultimate Reality is this simple Self.

This Self cannot be denied, because denial presupposes it. The one who denies is a self already existing. All our mental operations rest on the self, which ultimately is the Self. This Self alone is real and non-relative. Everything else is relative and is understood as the object of our intellect. And in becoming the object of our intellect they become relative. The Self alone refuses to become an object, because by nature it is the subject. And to be subject is its very essence. It is the ultimate subject in every self-hood.

As subject, the self is pure consciousness. No distinction exists between the knower, knowledge and the known. They all are one in the Self. Existence and consciousness are one. "The Real is the Rational and the Rational is the Real."¹¹

4. Brahman, *Jīva* and Liberation

Brahman who is pure consciousness is *ātman*. But consciousness experienced as something individualized is *Jīva*. Hence the distinction between *paramātman* and *jivātman*. Hinduism uses the same word to designate God and man. Both are *ātman*.

Brahman delimited by nescience or ignorance is *jivātman*. But why nescience or ignorance? This is the inevitable accompaniment of the individualization of consciousness. This individualization takes place through *prakṛti* with which consciousness becomes related.

¹¹ *Sattaiva bodha bodha eva ca satta*: Śaṅkarācārya, *Vedāntasūtrabhāṣya* III.2.21.

Prakṛti provides the receptacle for consciousness to participate in *antaḥkāraṇa* (mind), *liṅgaśarīra* (subtle body) and *sthūla-śarīra* (gross body). They are evolutes of *prakṛti* itself. Brahman as individualized consciousness is *jīva*. Both *Īśvara* and *jīva* are similar and related to Brahman. In fact they are Brahman itself. *Īśvara* is the product of *māyā*, which is said to be *mūlāvidyā*, the radical ignorance contained in the production of something that is 'non-Brahman'. *Jīva* is said to be the product of *avidyā*, because what is rooted in *mūlāvidyā* is now made concrete in the particularized form of consciousness. In *jīva* consciousness gets particularized because of its relation to *prakṛti* in a concrete and an individualized form. Enveloped by a mind-body structure its consciousness now becomes limited. It identifies itself with the mind-body structure. Thus the real consciousness now becomes a composite of consciousness and *avidyā*. Ignorance keeps it in bondage.

From the state of this ignorance (*avidyā*) the individual self is to be liberated. This is known as *mokṣa*. Liberation is obtained through knowledge. When true knowledge shines forth the darkness of ignorance just vanishes.¹²

Though there are three *yogas* namely, *karma yoga*, *bhaktiyoga* and *jñānayoga*, *karma* and *bhakti* are subsidiary to *jñāna*. After all the way of action (*karma*) and devotion (*bhakti*) cannot bring the self to its realization as Brahman. But these ways may prepare the self for *jñāna* which will lead it to final liberation.

The way of *Jñāna* is a way of intuitive realization of the self. Though *Advaita* holds that Brahman can never be made an object of our intellect, *Īśvara* which is lower Brahman can be made the object of our intellect. The reality as it is in itself can also be known, but not by objectifying it as in the case of other knowledge. Reality, which is the ultimate subject or self of all, is to be known by subjective intuition. It is experiencing rather than knowing, and this experiencing itself is becoming or realizing its true nature of pure self-hood or consciousness. The real knowledge of Brahman is, therefore, becoming Brahman or Brahman-realization (*Brahmasākṣātkāra*) of the individual self.

¹² Śaṅkarācārya, *Vedāntasūtrabhāṣya*, I.i.4.

Drawing on the *Upaniṣads*, Śaṅkara proposes the following steps to accelerate the process of Brahman realization: *Śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*. *Śravaṇa* (hearing) is the study of the *Upaniṣads* with the assistance of a Guru. It means that truth is ultimately to be "heard". The revealed texts (*śruti* which originally meant what is heard) as well as the teachings of the *Guru* are important for an aspirant of Brahman realization. Once he has heard the 'word' or revelation he has to think over it: *manana*, which means arguing within himself. The aspirant has already received the truth from the Scriptures and from the lips of the *Guru* who expounds the Scriptures to him. Now he has to make it his personal conviction. *Manana* is meant for this. By constantly thinking over this noble truth within himself he removes from his mind all doubts against this truth.

Manana gradually gives way to *nididhyāsana*, which is intense meditation on the truth of *Advaita* already received: namely, the identity of the individual self with Brahman. The aspirant keeps on meditating until this truth becomes an immediate (*aparokṣa*) experience. Then the self sees itself as the Self, the pure consciousness, the Brahman. This is Liberation.

He is no more bound by the ignorance of the misapprehension of the self. Thus the ultimate philosophical truth, derived from the *upaniṣads*, "*aham brahmāsmi*"¹³ (I am Brahman) is finally realized. This realization can happen while the self is still with the body. Then it is known as *Jīvanmukta*. The liberated self may remain with the body for a few days more for the sake of others. But no action can bind him any more. Finally he will be released from the body also. Thus the self acquires the status of *videhamukta*, the final state of liberation. It is actually the realization of self as the Self, the *ātman*, the Brahman.

CHRISTIAN INSIGHTS INTO ADVAITIC EXPERIENCE

Religion has always tried to express the ineffable. Hence no religion can claim to have expressed truth in the most authentic way. The true nature of ultimate Reality in which everything is finally united transcends the power of human thinking. However, this Reality is being grasped by the saints, experienced by the mystics. They have

¹³ Śaṅkarācārya on *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up.* I.iv.10.

tried to articulate their experiences. *Aham brahmāsmi* is a classical expression of it. 'It is not I who live, but Christ lives in me' is another. I do not say that these two expressions mean the same. However, a tendency towards a higher unitary experience is seen in both. The difference may also be due to the tools they have used to articulate their respective experiences. By tools I mean the language and expressions with their philosophical traditions, angle of vision, inner orientation, etc. It is true that tools, to a large extent, are intrinsic to the experience and hence inseparable from it. However, it is also true that a man of very high super-human experience may choose a form of language which is at a much lower level than the experience itself, provided it makes some sense to his hearers. Biblical language is often so. It has never claimed to have conveyed the content of the whole truth in one sentence. Rather it has tried to provide man with glimpses of truth through parables, similes, narratives, etc. Because of their non-dogmatic character which has often been dogmatized in the Church later they can always bring to us new insights because the experience has not yet been exhausted by the expression.

1. The Logos and the Ultimate Identity of Human Consciousness

In the prologue of his Gospel itself St. John introduces the Logos as the ultimate cause of everything. "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God... all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (Jn 1:1-13). The Logos which is the self-reflective consciousness of the Father is the ultimate source of every being. Tillich calls this the ground of being.¹⁴ Logos is the ground of being, because being begins to be according to the design given to it by the Logos. As the exemplar cause the Logos becomes the inner design in everything. The Indian equivalent for this inner design is *nāmarūpa*. Being or entity arises from the infinite resourcefulness of the Father (*sat*) according to the design (*nāmarūpa*) given by the Son (*cit*). The Logos is the heart and soul of this new being. Creation is to be seen from this point of view.

What is the function of this *nāmarūpa*? Why should the Logos assume the limitation of a design? Christianity has an answer to this question, an a posteriori answer. I call a posteriori, because it is

¹⁴ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I., p. 175.

ultimately based on the faith in Jesus Christ whom I encountered in history as God made man, the Word made flesh. Hence my approach to the problem is thoroughly history-bound (a point generally considered to be different from the Hindu way of thinking), but at the same time transcending all history (a point of agreement with the Hindu way of thinking) as it tries to analyze the original "movement" in the Divine Essence beyond all time and space.

Christianity believes that the Word was made flesh. This is Christ. Christ is the expression of the Father as the Word is the consciousness of the Father. In Christ the content of the Word was made visible and this was done through the medium of Christ's humanity. Humanity is, therefore, not something the Word has assumed from outside, though this expression is rightly used in Christian theology from a historical point of view; rather it is the medium of the Word's own self-expression, the very outpouring of the Word which is born of the Father. That which is born of the Father, the Logos, is the very reflection of the Father and is now made visible through the humanity of Christ. Hence Christ could say "He who sees me sees the Father." This seeing is made possible through the humanity of Christ. Humanity is, therefore, nothing but the visibility of the invisible God. The original "movement" in the essence of God was to express himself in a possible "otherness" - and this "otherness" was the humanity of Christ. Humanity was the basic *nāmarūpa* the Word could think of for his own self-expression.

Though humanity was the medium of divine self-expression coming from the interiority of the Logos - if it does not come from the interiority of the Logos we cannot say Christ is the revelation of the Father, or the Word made flesh, - humanity is a limited form imposed on the Word, to make the Word Christ. In strict Advaitic terminology the humanity of the Logos is a "super-imposition" (*adhyāsa*) on the Logos, which alone is pure consciousness. *Adhyāsa* is an unfortunate term, because of its negative connotation. What is really meant by *adhyāsa* is what has been superadded on pure consciousness, and as superadded it does not enjoy the same degree of reality as that of pure consciousness which alone was and is eternally real. It is true that, according to Christian faith, the 'superimposed' forms of humanity will never be separated from the Word (Hypostatic union). However it is a limited form expressing the inner content of the Word: the Word became flesh.

The formation of humanity around the Word has an even wider dimension. The original movement of becoming flesh was not an 'instant movement'; rather it was a process. In order to become flesh in the person of Christ, the Word had to become humanity in every man. Flesh contained man and man contained humanity. Hence becoming flesh was the great process of becoming humanity in general, and since humanity included also the universe, the becoming flesh in its wider sense included also the creation of the universe. There was only one movement in the divine essence, that of becoming flesh (visible) which included the whole of humanity and the universe in which humanity is situated.

The Logos is, therefore, the inner content of every being, as everything is the extension of the Logos made flesh.¹⁵ "I am the way the truth and the life" of everything. Logos is the *antaryāmin* of all, the meeting point of the entire universe. Everything returns to it and everything is gathered up in it. The intensity of the presence of the Logos differs in Christ, in man and in creatures. This is understandable because Christ was the primarily intended goal of the original movement, and man was an extension of the same and the universe another further extension.

Since humanity, as it is originally conceived in terms of Christ, is the visibility of the Logos, and since every man shares the human nature of Christ, the Logos itself must be the inner centre of every human consciousness. Logos is in man not as something in him, rather it is the base or the ultimate content of his own consciousness. This ultimate content, around which the changing ego-consciousness has been formed as its own expression, does not change, but is always there witnessing the functions of the ego-consciousness (*ahamkāra*). The human consciousness contains the Logos as any expression should contain what has been expressed. This witnessing element of the Logos in our changing consciousness makes 'conscience' possible, which is a radical reference of finite consciousness to the original consciousness of the Logos present in one's own consciousness. In *advaitic* terminology this unchanging witness is called *sākṣin* and the changing consciousness the *antaḥkāraṇa*. *Advaita* maintains that in true enlightenment the *antaḥkāraṇa* will vanish and the *sākṣin* will

¹⁵ V.F. Vineeth, *Call to Integration* (Bangalore: ATC, 1980), pp.77-90: Ch. 1: "The Word and the Centre of Integration in man."

realize itself as Brahman. I do not hold on to this point now as it is not yet clear to me. Why should all forms of existence be finally reduced to the pure identity of Being? In that case, what is the meaning of the whole process of Divine Self-expression? To my mind these questions are not satisfactorily answered in *Advaita*. But one thing is certain. In the final liberation the disharmony between the *sākṣin* (Logos) and the *antahkaraṇa* will completely vanish and the *sākṣin* or Logos will be the sole governing principle of the entire human consciousness. It is so in Christ and it will be so in every liberated human being. "Out of his fullness we have received."

The problem of disharmony between the witnessing Logos and the changing human consciousness is the problem of sin, which is a radical misapprehension of human consciousness about itself. It forgets the inner content of its own consciousness which is the Logos. It forgets what has been expressed (namely the Logos) and remains only in expression (in human / world-consciousness). This is *avidya*. In its essence the Christian sin is the same: the deviation of human consciousness from its own divine centre, the consequences of which are, as Tillich puts it, unfaith (deviation), *hubris* (remaining in human consciousness) and concupiscence (turning to the world).¹⁶

The disrupted human consciousness can however be re-integrated into its own divine content, the Logos, and this is done through Yoga, especially through *jñāna yoga*. Meditation is a process of integration through which the disrupted consciousness is brought back to its origin, the Logos, which is in itself the *sākṣin*. Intense concentration helps the human consciousness to 'identify' itself with the Logos, assuming the power and characteristics of the Logos into itself. Gradually, the Logos becomes clearer and clearer, emerges as the sole life principle of the human consciousness. Now the self would say: "Now it is not I who live, but it is Christ the Logos who lives in me." The ultimate identity of human consciousness is, therefore, the consciousness of the Logos.

2. Humanity of Christ as the *āvaraṇa-vikṣepa* of the Logos

We have already seen that humanity is the medium of the Word's self expression. As a medium of the Word's own self-expression,

¹⁶ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II, p. 69.

humanity is a 'projection' of the Word from within to outside. In *Advaitic* term it is *vikṣepa*. But since what has been projected outside is not the Word as it is in itself, but the interiority of the Word in a possible otherness, the very projection becomes its own concealment. In *Advaitic* terms this is *āvaraṇa*. The inevitable nature of divine revelation is that it cannot reveal without concealing itself at the same time. Revelation is always a process of *āvaraṇa-vikṣepa*: God cannot reveal himself except in a possible 'otherness' and since the 'otherness' is not God as He is in Himself, all divine revelation is necessarily its own concealment. The Humanity of Christ is, therefore, both the revelation and the concealment of the Logos. That is why there was the radical possibility of not accepting Christ as God. What is seen is 'man' in whom the Logos is concealingly revealed. Every sacrament has this character of revealing and concealing since it is a visible sign of an invisible grace. Christ being the primordial sacrament of God is the visible sign of the invisible Logos, the source of all grace.

This phenomenon of revealing itself in concealment is one of the main features which Śaṅkara attributes to *māyā*. *Māyā* is *āvaraṇa-vikṣepa*. *Māyā* is Brahman's manifestation not as in itself, but in some other form. When man who encounters the manifested form stops with the form and does not reach the content of the form which is Brahman, he is in *avidyā*. The Jews saw the humanity of Christ, but they did not see the Logos. They were in a radical *avidyā*, in a misapprehension of the true self of Jesus. This misapprehension was made possible, ultimately because of the *māyā* character - the revealing-concealing nature of the self-manifestation of the Logos. Since the manifestation of the Logos necessarily involves the *nāmarūpa*, and hence limitation of form, the manifested Logos, though it expresses the inner content of the Logos, is still in a limited form. However, supreme this form might be, it is not the Logos as it is in itself. This accounts for the distinction between *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa* brahman in *Advaita*. Christ is thus not just the Logos, but the manifestation of the Logos in human form and as such points to *Īśvara* or the *saguṇa* brahman in *Advaita*. *Īśvara* is Brahman in some conceivable or manifested form. On the other hand, it is also to be remembered that in the hypostatic union the humanity of Christ is completely freed from the *māyā*-character of impermanence. The humanity of Christ, as Christians believe, is permanently united to the Word and is actuated by it. Hence, the humanity which is

hypostatically united to the Word is no more a matter of *māyā*, but a historical as well as transhistorical and an everlasting reality.

Since every man shares the same humanity of Christ, what has been said about the humanity of Christ can, with necessary alterations, be applied to one's own humanity. In every man human nature is at the same time a principle or medium of revelation and concealment of the Logos. He is another Christ receiving his greatness, fullness and likeness from Christ himself.

Generally, Christians think that they have the fullness of revelation in Christ. This is technically correct, since in Christ the Logos itself has become flesh. But since no revelation can be without its own concealment, revelation is never complete or exhaustive in the strict sense of the word. Christianity has to admit that it has a 'finite' revelation of God in Jesus Christ, though what is being revealed is unequivocally definite and infinitely rich. *Advaita*, with its radical assertion of the absolute over all particular forms of revelation, reminds us of the inexhaustibility of the content of the Logos which is pure consciousness, or consciousness of the Father.

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