

The Story of My Life

GA 28

Chapter XXVI

Individual assertions regarding Christianity which I wrote or uttered in lectures at this time appear to be contrary to the expositions I gave later. In this connection the following must be noted. At that time, when I used the word “Christianity,” I had in mind the “beyond” teaching which is operative in the Christian creeds. The whole content of religious experience refers to a world of spirit which is not attainable by man in the unfolding of his spiritual powers. What religion has to say, what it has to give as moral precepts, is derived from revelations that come to man from without. Against this my view of spirit opposed itself, desiring to experience the world of spirit just as much as the sense-world in what is perceptible in man and in nature. Against this likewise was my ethical individualism opposed, desiring to have the moral life proceed, not from without by way of precepts obeyed, but out of the unfolding of the human soul and spirit, wherein lives the divine.

What then occurred in my soul in viewing Christianity was a severe test for me. The time between my departure from the Weimar task and the production of my book *Das Christentum als mystische Tatsache*¹ is occupied by this test. Such tests are the opposition provided by destiny (Karma) which one's spiritual evolution has to overcome.

In my thoughts I perceived that there could result from the knowledge of nature – though this did not result at that time – the basis upon which man might attain to insight in the world of spirit. I therefore laid much stress upon the knowledge of the foundation of nature which must lead to the knowledge of spirit. For one who did not stand in living reality within the world of spirit, such a sinking of himself into a certain course of thought signified a mere activity of thought. For one who experiences the world of spirit, it signifies something quite different. He is brought into contact with Beings in the world of spirit who desire to make such tendencies of thought the sole predominant ones. Their one-sidedness in thinking does not merely lead to abstract error; there is a spiritual and living intercourse with a being which in the human world is error. Later I spoke of Ahrimanic beings when I wished to make reference to this. For these it is an absolute truth that the world must be a machine. They live in a world which touches directly upon the sense-world.

In my own ideas I never for one moment fell into this world, not even in the unconscious. For I took pains that all my knowledge should be reached in a state of discriminating consciousness. So much the more conscious was my inner struggle against the demonic Powers who would cause to come about from the knowledge of nature, not perception of spirit, but a mechanistic-materialistic form of thinking.

He who seeks for knowledge of spirit must experience these worlds: for him a mere theoretical thinking about them does not suffice. At that time I had to save my spiritual perception by inner battles. These battles stood behind my outer experience.

In this time of testing I succeeded in advancing farther only when in spiritual perception I brought before my soul the evolution of Christianity. This led to the knowledge which was expressed in the book *Christianity as Mystical Fact*. Before this the Christian content to which I had referred had always been that found in existent creeds. This was true of Nietzsche also.

In an earlier passage in this biography I have narrated a conversation concerning Christ that I had with the learned Cistercian who was a professor in the faculty of Catholic theology of the University of Vienna. I was in the presence of a sceptical mood. The Christianity which I had to seek I did not find at all in the creeds. After the time of testing had set before me stern battles of the soul, I had to submerge myself in Christianity and in the world in which the spiritual speaks thereof.

In my attitude toward Christianity it can clearly be seen that I have by no means sought and found in spiritual science by the path which many persons have ascribed to me. These state the matter as if I had collected together the knowledge of spirit left in ancient traditions. I am supposed to have elaborated Gnostic and other teachings. What is achieved of the knowledge of spirit in *Christianity as Mystical Fact* is brought directly out of the spiritual world. Only when I wished to show to those who heard my lectures and to the readers of the books the harmony between the spiritual perception and the historic traditions did I first take these traditions and blend them in the content. But nothing existing in these documents have I blended in the content unless I had first had this before me in the spirit.

At the time when I made the statements concerning Christianity so opposed in literal content to later utterances, it was also true that the real content of Christianity was beginning germinally to unfold within me as an inner phenomenon. About the turn of the century the germ unfolded more and more. Before this turn of the century came this testing of the soul here described. The evolution of my soul rested upon the fact that I stood before the mystery of Golgotha in most inward, earnest joy of knowledge.

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