

A PROPHETIC CRITICISM OF “GREAT RELIGIONS”

The “religious” awareness and “experience” of the Western “world” is trapped within an archaic structure of myths, dogmas, and irreducible social conflicts that no longer serve the right “religious” and Spiritual process of humankind. These myths, dogmas, and irreducible social conflicts are, even now, being forcedly perpetuated by the large-scale cultural, political, and economic dominance of the “religions” of the ancient “world”.

Human beings themselves cannot awaken to the esoteric process that fulfills their Spiritual heart-impulse until the spell of mythological and ego-possessed thinking is broken. And a unified, whole bodily culture of humankind, in which East and West will realize a new cultural synthesis, cannot take place until all the old “religions” are submitted to the Principle of Truth Itself—or to the Universal Principle of Prior Unity and the Intrinsically egoless Transcendental Spiritual Principle (or Self-Nature, Self-Condition, and Self-State) That Is Reality Itself. As a matter of urgent necessity (for the sake of global cooperative order and peace), it must be universally accepted that every human being, and every collective human manifestation—and, thus, every “religion”—must be always held subordinate and accountable to the Self-Evident (and Universally Self-Manifested) Truth That Is Reality Itself.

People tend to think of “religion” as a benign influence on individual thought and behavior—and this is, indeed, the case when the more benign aspects of “religious” awareness and “experience” begin to inform the thought and behavior of any individual. Yet, in the context of the larger “world” of the collective of all of humankind, “religion” is only rarely found to be functioning on the basis of its benign aspects—and, indeed, most characteristically, the ego-based and even negative aspects of “religion” are most apparent in the collective (and inherently non-sectarian) larger “world” of all-of-humankind-together. And, at large, it is certainly the case that very few individuals become truly creative personalities, mystics, Saints, or even reliably good men or women as a result of their “religious” beliefs and associations. “Religion” is, in general, an exoteric cultic phenomenon that controls the thought and behavior of individuals through external and psychologically manipulative “techniques”. Thus, the principal “religious” phenomenon that is common in the “world” at large is not true (or free) “religious” awareness and benign behavioral habits on the part of individuals. The principal phenomenon of “religion” is all the separate and separative institutions that contain and otherwise manipulate broad and massive segments of the human population.

The primary institution within any “religious” tradition is (itself) the “religion”—insofar as any “religion” affects the “world” at large. And large-scale (or “great”) institutional “religion” is—because of its “worldly” public status—not primarily a benign power in human society. One has only to look at the cultural and political conflicts in the total “world” of today to see that the immense institutions of ancient “religion” have now become, for the most part, contentious, absolutist, and the perennial sources of irreducible social conflicts. And “great religions” characteristically are “established” (and their power legitimized) by a nearly indivisible union with the State (or the otherwise secular national power). And the problematic nature of all of this is made extreme by the immensity of these “great religious” institutions, each of which controls even many millions of people.

The power of the “great” traditional “religious” institutions is, for the most part, a “worldly” power. That is to say, these institutions are actually political and broadly social agencies that manipulate the political, social, and economic motivations of the citizens of all nations. The only public alternative is control of the people by exclusively secular political institutions, which tend to suppress and exclude not only “religious” institutions but also every kind of benign “religious” (and, otherwise, esoteric) awareness, “experience”, practice, and association—and this pattern of enforced secularization has also begun to spread to many areas of the Earth that have, traditionally, been under the powerful influence of “religious” institutions. In the popular media of the present time, small, “non-establishment religious groups” are often (with negative and “demonizing” intent) called “cults”—thus making such groups “fair game” for hostile and suppressive commentaries. Nevertheless, any “religious” (or, otherwise, esoteric) group (or non-”orthodox” sect, or even “great religion”) may appropriately be called a “cult”, if the word “cult” is intended simply to mean a system and a culture of devotion to a particular “subject”. Therefore, all exoteric “religions” and all esoteric sects (or cultural entities) are cults—and to use the word “cult” with bad intentions is nothing but a power-game, whereby “established” cults (and the agencies, within the larger society, which support the dominance of the local “established” cults) make suppressive efforts to subordinate, de-legitimize, and exclude the non-”established” cults. Indeed, the fact of the matter is that, in general, non-”establishment” cults (or minority sects) are, characteristically, oriented toward the promotion of a more universal (or deprovincialized, and non-”tribal”, and not at all “bonded-to-the-State”) form of the “religious” (or, otherwise, esoteric) practice of life. Truly, the “worldly” domain of the “establishment” of so-called “great” institutional religions”—and not the small-scale (and, especially, esoteric) domain of “non-establishment religions” and otherwise sacred institutions—represents the more direct and practical threat to human development, and (ultimately) to the communication of the Truth of Reality Itself.

Why is it that “great religious institutions”, which seem to be founded on the greater human and cultural persuasions, ultimately become the primary basis of social conflict and even personal neurosis? The reason is that “great” (or popular, and, necessarily, public-oriented, and even State-”bonded”) “religious” institutions are (because of their orientation) obliged to include (and identify with, and even to pander to) masses of immature people who have very little will or capability for the practical personal and cultural exercise of right “religious” or (otherwise) Spiritual (or esoteric) life. As a result, the institutions of “great religion” develop much like the institutions of State develop under the same conditions of universal human immaturity—and, indeed, because of that likeness, “great religions” (and even all “establishment” institutions) are, characteristically, “bonded” to the State in which they are “established” (and by which their public power is legitimized). Thus, right “religious” practice (or, otherwise, esotericism in general) characteristically eschews mere popularism, and all subordination to “establishment” cults, and all tendencies toward the non-separation between “religion” and “State”.

Every popular (or even “great”) “religious” institution tends—except during periods of renewal by living Adept-Realizers—to become more and more dogmatic, and, eventually, to become irrevocably associated with fixed ideas that, in one manner or another (and to one or another degree), deny the very (and, necessarily, esoteric, recondite, and intensively demanding) Truth relative to Which all “religions” (and all mere ideas) are mere pointers. Likewise, the fixed-mindedness of dogmatic popular “religiosity” also tends to vigorously (and in a presumptuous “culturally superior” manner) deny the “religious” authenticity or “religious” completeness

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of people who belong to other “religious” institutions or cultures. The conventional (or ego-based, and ordinary, or merely public-oriented, and, therefore, less than Truth-oriented) “religious” institution, like any other mortal (or inherently threatened) entity in the “world”, tends to become more and more centered in itself—and more and more devoted (more or less exclusively) to its own survival (and its own public power).

Conventional “religious” (or even esoteric) institutions learn how to survive by serving and manipulating a massive membership that is largely incapable of right “religious” (or, otherwise, esoteric) responsibility in practice. This is done by minimizing the right “religious” (or, otherwise, esoteric) demand for literal and personal conversion of mind and action, and replacing that difficult demand with the “easier” (less rigorous) and more secular demand for mere allegiance to systems of myth, belief, ritual, dogma, and rote practice of ego-supportive “methods” and ego-reinforcing “techniques”. Thus, the condition for membership in most institutions of “great” (or merely public-oriented and society-bound) “religion” is allegiance to fixed ideas and other outward (or superficial) signs of belonging to the cult—whereas right “religious” (or, otherwise, esoteric) practice is founded on active conversion of body and mind to the Divine Reality, and on the acceptance of behavioral disciplines that (at the very least) make the individual an outwardly benign (or socially “self”-restrained) character.

Of course, “great” institutional “religions” do recommend various “social morality” attitudes, but the practice of “self”-restraint is not made a condition of membership—except, perhaps, in the case of a few selected acts that are, often for absurd reasons, taboo. Furthermore, institutionalized “morality” tends to be associated with archaic, neurotic, and petty sexual and social taboos, rather than with the truly human obligations of ego-transcending love, service, and compassion. Likewise, most “religious” institutions today have abandoned the detailed (and even ancient) “religious” disciplines associated with “right life”—including, for example, the ancient recommendations relative to personal disciplines of a healthful dietary nature, such as the obligation to avoid meat or other killed food, impure food, toxic stimulants, and so forth. And the esoteric and universal Spiritual teachings that are the only real significance of “religion” have been almost totally abandoned and even lost by the non-esoteric “orthodoxy” of the “great religions”.

In the conventional affair of popular “religion”, the communication of rigorous demands (and, also, of esoteric understanding and practice) is avoided, because conventional “religious” institutions are trying to survive (and, also, to achieve or, otherwise, maintain public power) by acquiring and maintaining massive memberships. Thus, conventional (or popular, public-oriented) “religion” is promoted and sold by hyped appeals to the non-discriminating mind of “Everyman”.

In contrast to conventional popular “religion”, esotericism is a superior human impulse, founded in “self”-understanding and profound psycho-physical conversion (or change). However, over time, it tends to be more and more the case that only false and merely exoteric (or popular, and public-oriented) “religious” inventions are communicated by so-called “great religions”. And, at last, not only is the esoteric Truth and practice of the esoteric Way eliminated as the core of “religious” instruction, but the survival pressures of dogmatic popularism tend to make both Truth and right practice unacceptable. Thus, over time, “great religions” tend, in fact, to make right “religious” practice secondary to “membership”—and, likewise, “great” (popular) “religions” (or “cults” of dogmatic belief) tend to become the enemies of authentic esotericism (or of the “experiential

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knowledge” and the “gnosis”, or the tacit “knowledge-beyond-mind”, that makes both mere belief and mere ideas obsolete).

This was the situation that confronted Jesus of Galilee—and it was (and is) the situation confronted by all prophets of right “religious” life and all Realizers within esoteric schools and traditions.

Since actual and mature (and both true and right) “religious” practice has been generally (or popularly) replaced by outward adherence to false (or deluding) exoteric beliefs and merely superficial behavioral modifications, the true esoteric core of “religion” has lost its use within the “great” traditional “cults” that exist today. The entire affair of traditional “religious” institutions has become (in a sense) dangerous, because such “religious” institutions long ago abandoned the practice of making right “religious” or (otherwise) esoteric participation a condition of membership within the “official” domain of popular “religious” institutions. If the demand for authentic (or wholly true and right) participation had, historically, been continued, the institutions of “religion” that are now, as a matter of convention, called “great” would likely have remained small esoteric communities (if they survived at all). However, the ancient “religious” institutions chose gross survival and “worldly” power, to the exclusion of Truth—and, therefore, they adapted to the “world”, rather than persist in the demand that the “world” change itself.

Right “religious” (and even esoteric) practice is a universal and (necessarily) ego-transcending psychophysical motivation of human beings. However, up to the present stage in human history, only relatively few individuals in any generation have been willing and able to make the gesture that is such right practice. In their great numbers, most people have, up to now, never yet been ready or willing to adapt to the true (and progressive) practical, moral, devotional, Spiritual, and Transcendental Wisdom-culture of right life. An authentic “religious” (or, otherwise, esoteric) institution must be devoted entirely to both the communication and the practice of “religious” (or, otherwise, esoteric) Truth and the unrelenting demand for right and always greater human transformation (and, ultimately, Perfect Truth-Realization). Historically, only relatively few people in any generation of humankind have been interested in accepting that Truth-message! An authentic “religious” (or, otherwise, esoteric) institution must never subordinate itself or its message to either the pattern and the demands of egoity itself or to the stream of daily secular or “worldly” society.

Indeed, until humankind in general is able to embrace right “religious” practice (or, otherwise, to become Really Awake), right “religion” (or, otherwise, right esotericism) must remain largely prophetic in its function. That is to say, right “religion” (or, otherwise, right esotericism) must (even always) accept the role of critic (and, thus, of the “outsider”) in the (public and popular) “world”—and right “religion” (or, otherwise, right esotericism) must never become like the “world” (or function as an “insider” within the “world”) in order to become powerful and “great” in the “world”.

– F. Jones