

Izvirni znanstveni članek (1.01)
 Bogoslovni vestnik 76 (2016) 3/4, 559—570
 UDK: 27-873
 Besedilo prejeto: 02/2016; sprejeto: 09/2016

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Antinomianism as the Crisis Periods' Ethical Attitude

Abstract: The article deals with the phenomenon of antinomianism, which is regarded as ethical attitude caused by the crisis perception of the world, formed, as a rule, in a situation of intense eschatological expectations. Authors refuse the narrow understanding of the »antinomianism« term associated with the Christian denial of the rules prescribed by the Law of Moses. They suggest the opinion that antinomianism is a universal spiritual orientation associated with the desire to go to some new ethical dimension, corresponding to the radical renewal of the world in general. In this regard, the previously unlawful can become a new moral regulator. The paper examines variations of this idea found in the early Christianity, including some Gnostic groups, as well as in the Jewish sectarianism.

Keywords: antinomianism, ethical attitude, the Law of Moses, eschatological expectations, Gnosticism, Sabbatianism, mysticism

Povzetek: **Antinomizem kot etična drža v obdobjih krize**

Članek obravnava fenomen antinomianizma, ki ga opredeli kot etično držo, ki jo praviloma povzroči krizna percepcija sveta oblikovana v razmerah močnih eshatoloških pričakovanj. Avtorja zavračata ozko razumevanje izraza »antinomianizem«, ki je povezano s krščanskim zanikanjem predpisov, ki jih nalaga Mojzesova Postava, ampak predlagata, da je antinomianizem univerzalna duhovna usmeritev, ki se povezuje z željo po neki novi etični razsežnosti usmerjeni v radikalno prenavo sveta na splošno. V tem oziru se prejšnje nezakonito more spremeniti v novega moralnega regulatorja. Članek pregleda različice te ideje v zgodnjem krščanstvu, vključno z nekaterimi gnostičnimi skupinami, kot tudi v judovskem sektarianizmu.

Ključne besede: antinomizem, etična drža, Mojzesova Postava, eshatološka pričakovanja, gnosticizem, sabbatizem, misticizem

1. Introduction

The subject of reflection in this article is an ethical phenomenon called »antinomianism«, which traditionally in the narrow sense refers to neglect of the precepts of

the Mosaic Law, as far as the latter is being opposed to the Gospel values. For example, Walter A. Elwell indicates that the term is »referring to the doctrine that it is not necessary for Christians to preach or obey the moral law of the Old Testament« (2001, 70–71). This concept can also be interpreted more broadly – as some universal trend having no exclusive binding to Christianity, the trend of denial of any existing laws and regulations in favour of the new, freely elected ones. However, even if we understand antinomianism in a broad sense, it is impossible to reveal the logic of antinomian ethics without analyzing of religious experience, because, in our opinion, religion experience (or its equivalents) is the basis of all value systems.

Our reasoning about values may seem old-fashioned in the »Apocalypse culture« era and too much attached to the religious experience. As to the first, we believe that the phenomena described in the notorious book edited by Adam Parfrey (1990), are not new and do not have a mass character. They are marginal, being generated by certain subcultural communities and their imaginary popularity in the masses is just a result of postmodern intellectuals' comments and attention of the media. Of course, mass value system has been changing greatly because of some factors including the influence of marginal subcultures, but we can hardly say that their antinomianism becomes the property of the masses.

Secondly, we believe that values are associated with the sphere of the Sacred; values cease to be what they are outside the circle of Sacred. A profaned value loses its original meaning. It continues to denote the importance of something for a person or the meaning attributed to some object, as well as continues to affect a person's behaviour, but it loses its absolute base, becoming a derivative of the man himself. Even so, in any secular morality and in any antinomianism (even quite secular one) we are still able to discern some remains of the sacral attitude to the values, to the Law. This almost weathered »flavour« of Sacredness in the profaned value systems is similar to the Kabbalistic *reshimu*, or remnants of the Divinity after the departure of the Deity, that Isaac Luria compared to the remnants of wine or oil remaining in an empty vessel.

Human being can exist only in the space of Sacred, and the idea of the Sacred is an essential structure of consciousness. It is this aspiration to transcendence that reveals the true essence of human, as the sign of the *Homo religiosus* species. The word »religion« may be not quite appropriate, as Mircea Eliade also noted in due time, however, no other word more likely to express the experience of the Sacred is to be looked for: as the same Eliade mentioned, the term (religion) can be useful, if we do not forget that it does not necessarily imply a belief in God, in gods or spirits, but is related to the experience of the sacred and, therefore, is associated with the ideas of being, significance and truth. (1971, 9)

The phenomenon of Sacred applies to the Superbeing, or otherwise, the highest degree being, for its exclusive ability of giving form and meaning to the world. The Sacred, i.e. Absolute Reality, is beyond any human ways of perception and mastering of the world, and, therefore, is beyond any opposition inherent in human thinking. Divinity can be defined as *coincidentia oppositorum*, the coinciden-

ce of opposites, which is reflected in a large number of specific myths, rites and beliefs, which, according to Mircea Eliade, are designed to remind people that the divine foundation of the world can be comprehended only as a paradox or a mystery, and the concept of divinity is not deducible from the sum of the qualities or properties, it is absolute freedom, which is beyond Good and Evil. (1998, 380)

Thereafter, the religious feeling directed towards the attainment of the Supreme Reality, has to overcome all the limits imposed on the human being, including those phenomena which, at first glance, are not of a religious nature and may even consciously deny religious experience. The way of thought of the Jacobins, the writings of the Marquis de Sade, Nietzsche's research in the field of morality, revolutionary catechism by Sergei Nechayev, Arthur Rimbaud's life in art and outside it – all these examples, like so many else, show us the human desire to go beyond their own limits, to transcend to the Other, which we define as the extreme manifestation of religious feeling.

We also believe that understanding of antinomian ethics in its practical aspects is methodologically important for the study of a number of specific socio-cultural phenomena of our time. Studies of socio-cultural identification mechanisms always lead to the question of the value basis of a group with which the individual identifies himself. The issue of understanding the latent logic of ethical and practical requirements, facing the followers of different religious groups, becomes very important in the contemporary situation of wide dissemination of various new religious movements.

2. In Anticipation of the New Aeon: To Throw Down the Clothes of Old Morality

Any fundamental change in the spiritual life is certainly related to a kind of reinterpretation of the Deity's and community's requirements to the person. Sometimes we even meet not only new reading or interpretation of the previous establishments, but the real break-up of the views recently seemed unshakable – which deals with the system of prohibitions, with »you need – you may – you must not« system, and the question is not just about morality, but also about the revision of the religious beliefs as such, including prescriptions fixing human position in relation to the Divine, and therefore, it is about the essence of man and his place in the universe.

Here we have a situation of »the revaluation of all values«, which in its radical version is viable only for a very short time, the time of tense expectation of Deliverance. Later this radicalism is being gradually displaced to the periphery of the doctrine, marginalized as a manifestation of unorthodoxy, becoming the lot of heretical sects and esoteric groups. Orthodoxy tends to smooth out the rough edges of the revealed contradictions, especially if they are found in the core of the doctrine itself.

The idea of changing regulations of human being is actualized in the periods when eschatological expectations aggravate and the feeling of This World's end closeness coincides with the ecstatic pre-feeling of the Deity's proximity, which allows people from all bonds and indicates them the Transformed Reality, located in almost half a step from them. »Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.« (Mt 16:28) These words of Jesus Christ perfectly characterize the existential experience that creates denial of »old« normativity.

The one who proclaims the new era, »New Aeon«, should be entirely rejected from former establishments either by openly declaring this rejection, or by trying to maintain the illusion of succession, proving that his actions only seem to contradict the statutes of bygone days, being in fact their essential fulfilment.

»Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them« – so said Jesus (Mt 5:17), however, breaking a number of rules and commandments, including the commandment to observe the Sabbath. The canonical Gospel text to a certain extent moves away from the image of the Jew Yeshua observing all the commandments of the Law, although contains numerous references to the Old Testament tradition, meaning to emphasize the predetermined character of the described events, proclaimed by the prophets.

Of course, the first Jewish followers of Jesus did not oppose Judaism itself. As the Russian researcher Irina Svetsitskaya notes, »Christianity of the second half of first century AD did not yet realize itself, i.e., it considered itself within Judaism, as a kind of ›true Judaism‹« (1989, 91). Subsequently, the focus on the gap with the Jewish Law becomes quite obvious in historical Christianity. Let us recall the well-known argument of the Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Romans: »So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead /... / But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.« (Ro 7:4,6)

In the 1 Co 5:7 there is still the same antinomian enthusiasm reaching its highest point in the sixth chapter: »I have the right to do anything,« you say – but not everything is beneficial. »I have the right to do anything« – but I will not be mastered by anything.« (1 Co 6:12) Faith frees man from the bondage of the Law, from any bondage at all, for freedom is in faith. But, experiencing everything, one should not let himself be caught, for not all that can be accomplished and tried carries the benefit. But by means of the Spirit, found in faith, one can recognize his own benefit and understand what should be sought and what should be rejected. Is it not the »reevaluation of all values«?

Actually, the problem of antinomianism in its original form was formed in the course of thinking on the »Apostle Paul's attitude to the Law« theme. For a long time Paul's understanding of the Law and various contradictions in his writings

concerning this issue have remained one of the most significant matters in the discussions about the formation of early Christianity.

Through the famous works by William David Davis (1980), Ed Parish Sanders (1983), James D.G. Dunn (1990) and other researchers, postulating of the antinomian character of Paul's views was subjected to critical reflection: the ideas of »the Apostle of the Gentiles« were once again placed in the context of the Jewish religion, and the opposition of »faith« and »works of law«, accented by Protestant theologians, was withdrawn, as well as there were revealed some diverse and previously not quite obvious shades of the word *nomos* meaning, and even Paul's criticism of Judaism began to be considered as a rejection of Jewish identity markers in the name of the new religious universalism, but not the rejection of the Law as such.¹

However, in the context of this paper we are interested in the fact that at a certain frame of mind one can make some antinomian conclusions from the Romans and Galatians, as well as from report of the incident in Antioch in Acts 15 and the degree of radicalism here will depend on the particular interpreter. Apparently, even in Paul's time such conclusions had already been made as evidenced in Ro 3:8: »Why not say – as some slanderously claim that we say – ›Let us do evil that good may result‹?«

In the Christian apologetics there can be found some quite remarkable reflections, emphasizing a break with Judaism. For example, Tertullian in his *Adversus Iudaeos* treatise argues that the commandments of the Law of Moses are the heritage not only of the Jews, but of all the other peoples, however, he also writes: »The law was given through Moses' at a definite time, so it should be believed to have been temporarily observed and kept. And let us not annul this power which God has, which reforms the law's precepts answerably to the circumstances of the times, with a view to man's salvation.« (2006, 243) Earlier, similar thoughts were expressed by Saint Justin in his »Dialogue with Tripho« (1950).

Quite remarkable is the fact that the overcoming of the Law becomes the central theme of one of the earliest Old-Russian texts – »Word on Law and Grace« by the Kiev Metropolitan Ilarion, and one of the central allegorical motifs of this work is the motif of Sarah and Hagar, apparently dating back to the Galatians 4:21–31. »What was attained by the Law, and what has been attained by Grace? First there was the Law, then there was Grace: first the shadow, then the Truth. As a figure of Law and Grace, consider the women Hagar and Sarah: Hagar the bondswoman and Sarah the free woman; first the bondswoman, and then the free woman. And whoso readeth, let him understand.« (1991, 4–5)

The expulsion of Hagar the slave together with her son Ishmael and making Isaac the true and only heir of Abraham are interpreted by Ilarion as the statement of Truth and Grace above the Law, in relation to the opposition of the Jews and Christians (as circumcised and uncircumcised): »So after the resurrection of the

¹ About contemporary Pauline studies see Farnell 2005; Porter 1996.

Lord Jesus, when the disciples and others who had come to believe in Christ were in Jerusalem, and when both Jews and Christians lived side by side, then the Grace which came of baptism was mocked by the Law which came of circumcision; /... / So when Grace saw her sons the Christians being mocked by the Jews – by the sons of the bondage of the Law – she cried out to God: »Cast out the Jews and their Law! Scatter them among the nations! For what communion is there between the shadow and the Truth, between Jewry and Christianity?« (7)

Obviously, the violation of the former Law becomes possible only on the basis of some new establishments or a completely new experience, which in the minds of their adherents replace the old values. These new principles of life get the nature of the living and direct revelation.

The desire for twisting the law inside out is detected in the ages of ultimate eschatological tension caused by the supposed Theophany (which has already taken place or is just being expected), involving a significant number of people, sometimes even acquiring a mass character. But, in addition to it, antinomianism can exist outside of those periods in the esoteric aspects of the activity of certain closed communities or even individuals, being rooted in the mystical way of religious life. In this case, eschatology is not a revelation of what will be, but a kind of chronicle of what is happening here and now.

Occurring Revelation is seen as a unique event, qualitatively changing the world and time structure, essentially terminating the previous phase, which apparently dies or ceases – and discretion triumphs. The new is always completely new, even though it can be thought as once predicted; it can also be viewed as a return to some original perfect state (such as the Krita Yuga, the Golden Age, or, in terms of the ontology – Pleroma, the One, etc.).

However, in any case, this »New« refutes completely what was before, with no way back to the past, for going back means death, returning to dust, to the decaying, rotting old appearance, which has already been dropped by the new world. Those remaining within dead are themselves dead, and a matter of life is to forget about everything former, to destroy it and upgrade itself.

3. Beyond the Sin: Gnostic »Asceticism Turned Upside-Down«

If we *ad verbum* understand and properly develop the ideas which are present at some theses of Paul, we can come to a complete denial of the necessity of good works (because one is saved by faith alone), and to the denial of the good itself. After all, the good as well as evil are the concepts of man, and lose their sense being applied to God, for the commands of God, construed as moving a person to good and stating something as good, for God himself do not have the strength.

Anyone who approaches God and beholds his secrets knows that there is nothing on earth that could tarnish him, as if sin ceases to exist for those longing

for the New Kingdom, the New Aeon. On the other part, »evil« and »sin« can be recognized as a reality that requires overcoming. However, the latter must be fulfilled by the maximal immersion into the reality of evil and sin: the lower the fall, the higher spirit rises. Transgression of the commandments and laws in this case is interpreted as an existential necessity and a religious duty.

In other words, the antinomian logic can be twofold:

1. Occurred fracture, or spiritual change completely transforms the human beings by their communion with God, therefore they cannot make sins in the old sense of the word, not because they will perform only good deeds, but because all their actions from now on are aside old ideas about good and evil. The chosen ones acquire a new system of values, which is contrary to all that has been before or in general is not comparable to it;
2. Everything is permitted, even the unclean and sinful, or especially the unclean and sinful, because we are to overcome it by accomplishing it. It is a kind of ascetic mindset put inside out, an ascesis of sin aimed at immersing into a chasm of materiality.

Such attitudes found their expressions in the various currents of Gnosticism in which some schemes of antinomian ethics were worked out; later they made a significant impact on Western culture. As noted by John A. Saliba, »understanding Gnosticism is important because many of the theological ideas and religious practices of the Gnostics have reappeared in some form in sect and cults throughout the centuries« (2003, 46).

Gnostics are known to distinguish the three origins – spirit, *psyche* and body, which divided all people, respectively, into spiritual, soul and animal ones. Only having the spiritual origin (pneumatics), who were able to know in the Spirit and rise above the flesh and the soul, were conceived as the chosen to salvation. Irenaeus, describing the teachings of the Valentinians about the three sorts of men, writes: »But as to themselves, they hold that they shall be entirely and undoubtedly saved, not by means of conduct, but because they are spiritual by nature. /... / Wherefore also it comes to pass, that the ›most perfect‹ among them addict themselves without fear to all those kinds of forbidden deeds of which the Scriptures assure us that ›they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God‹.« (1950, 530–531)

Pneumatics are chosen, but their election appears only in the comprehending (*gnosis*): being by their very nature capable of this, they discover their own spiritual nature (*pneuma*, a spark of light that belongs to the transcendental world), at the same time acquiring freedom from the Law. The latter is just an element of the flawed universe, created by inferior Demiurge (often identified with the God of the Old Testament) and his angels, who are ignorant of their origin and existence of a higher power. The world must undergo a denial being the creation of unwise and arrogant Demiurge. This way of thinking, according to Irenaeus, was inherent in many of the Gnostics, but before all in Simon Magus, called by heresiolo-

gists »the father of all heresies«, attributing to him all Gnostic deviations from orthodoxy. (572–573)

Hans Jonas writes:

»The gnostic God as distinct from the demiurge is the totally different, the other, the unknown. /... / And as this God has more of the *nihil* than of the *ens* in his concept, so also his inner-human counterpart, the acosmic Self or *pneuma*, otherwise hidden, reveals itself in the negative experience of otherness, of non-identification, and of protested indefinable freedom. /... / Both the hidden God and the hidden *pneuma* are nihilistic conceptions: no *nomos* emanates from them, that is, no law either for nature or for human conduct as a part of the natural order.« (2001, 271)

Nomos is a tool of bringing the human soul into submission to lower demiurgic forces, just as the laws of nature are the means of human enslavement at the flesh. Consequently, the »new man«, »gnostic« either ignores the law referring to the two orders – both physical and mental, or actively opposes to it, acting in defiance of the will of the insidious archons.

The behavior of the »perfect man«, thus, can be based either on ethical indifference, making no distinction between good and evil, or on the approval of the need to make »evil« for its overcoming. This second antinomistic line can be traced, in particular, in the teachings of Carpocrates Gnostic and his followers. The Carpocratians also proceeded from the fact that the difference between evil and good deeds was caused only by the human mind, but in this case they taught that a person had to come to know all the possible forms of behavior, because only it led to the complete liberation of soul, which otherwise would again be placed into body like into prison.

This idea of rebirth, rising, apparently, to the Pythagoreans, was reflected in a peculiar Carpocratians' interpretation of the Jesus' words about the prison, from which a man would not walk without giving away everything he has (Lk 12:59): »No one can escape from the power of those angels who made the world, but that he must pass from body to body, until he has experience of every kind of action which can be practised in this world, and when nothing is longer wanting to him, then his liberated soul should soar upwards to that God who is above the angels, the makers of the world.« (Irinæus 1950, 578)

Heresiologists (Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Epiphanius, Clement) with one voice convict Carpocratians of committing all sorts of obscenities, such as sorcery, homosexual relationships, group orgies, and so on. It is difficult to say whether in fact the Gnostics from the circle of Carpocrates practiced all of the above, since the evidence comes from their irreconcilable opponents, but the theoretical backgrounds of Carpocrates' and his son Epiphanes' teaching may well entail respective practical consequences. Similar views, according to Irenaeus, were expressed by the Cainite sect.

H. Jonas makes the following comment on the teachings of the Cainites and Carpocratians: »The idea that in sinning something like a program has to be com-

pleted, a due rendered as the price of ultimate freedom, is the strongest doctrinal reinforcement of the libertinistic tendency inherent in the gnostic rebellion as such and turns it into a positive prescription of immoralism.« (2001, 274)

It seems to us that this rebellion should not be seen only as an attempt to bring some theoretical justification for their moral laxity, as the Christian apologists hint, for Simonian and Carpocratian antinomianism raises the question not so much on the revision of some moral requirements, but on the transformation of the moral base itself.

4. Mystical Experience as the Foundation of Antinomian Attitude

Freedom is conceived as overcoming of limitations, as going beyond in an attempt to embrace all and to achieve the missed completeness. The Law attaches limits, cuts parts of ourselves from us, but if there is no old Law, everything is allowed – not because there is no Law at all, but because it reveals a new Law delivering us from our limitations, saying: »do what thou wilt«.

We think that here we have to escape from concrete historical reference to certain currents of Gnosticism as we are talking about some universal properties of the human spirit, manifested about the same way in all epochs. Thus, Gershom Scholem astutely writes about »a position which, as the history of religion shows, occurs with a kind of tragic necessity in every great crisis of the religious mind. I am referring to the fatal, yet at the same time deeply fascinating doctrine of the holiness of sin.« (1995, 315)

The antinomian rebellion is rooted not in the man, but in the man's sense of the Divine intimacy, and the unlawful is attached to the divine. The final meaning of the negation of the Law is the acquisition of the Divine integrity and completeness, and the way in which it is achieved is the »mystical comprehension« of Divinity and unity with it in Spirit. Mystic experience is of an entirely individual nature and rejects sociality with all its attributes. Human social forms are a »coat« of inner life, but, as a mystic feels it, inner life erodes this coat, eradicates it and goes beyond the socially established borders. Group mystic trance is practicable, though it would show some asocial features to an even greater extent.

The mystic ceases to be bound by any kind of rules, and from the inside he breaks any connection with the institutions serving as mediators between him and Godhead. Russian religious philosopher Leo Karsavin notes that

»a mystic considers himself a saint during his trance. He does not need either anybody's help at that moment, or even the assistance and prayers of the Church, because it is God who sanctifies him. He does not need confession, /... / because he is a saint anyway, and God himself has made all the good for him. He does not need the Eucharist: he partakes of God's spiritual body by the mouth of his soul. He does not need this church cult at all.« (1994, 17)

From the Orthodox prospective Karsavin points out to quite an obvious danger of mysticism to the Church (if we may put it in a more general sense: mysticism bears potential danger for any social institution) (18).

A consistent mystic point of view would lead us to nothing but accepting the mystic's independence from any possible conventions since he achieves union with God. This is what many philosophers and theologians realized: in particular, V. N. Lossky writes of a wide spread tendency to oppose mysticism to theology, and uses as a striking example the views of Henri Bergson »who distinguishes between static church religion – that is social and conservative – and dynamic mystics' religion – a private and refreshing one«. (2012, 10)

Antinomianism, as a universal feature of the human spirit, is found even in such a conservative religion as Judaism. The most obvious manifestation of the Judaic antinomianism is probably Sabbatianism – a messianic teachings associated with the name of Sabbatai Zevi and his »prophet« Nathan of Gaza.

Sabbatai Zevi, proclaimed himself the Messiah and awaken in 1665–1666 a powerful wave of eschatological hope in all of European Jewry, was (because of his mentality or even a mental illness) a paradoxical mystic prone to commit antinomian acts, sometimes directly contrary to the Law. Justification of those actions was associated with the idea that every epoch prescribed its own order in the relationship between man and Divinity: thus, each generation got its version of the Torah, and the Torah of Galuth ceases to operate in the era of Redemption. It sounds similar to the earlier ideas of the Joachim of Flores about the three Eras and even to the later concept of occultist Aleister Crowley about the change of aeons and the coming of the Age of Horus.

Being a fanatic ascetic, Sabbatai Zevi at the same time admitted the commission of acts called by his followers *maasim zarim* – »strange deeds«: publicly spelled Tetragrammaton, made a ceremony of his marriage with the Torah, for one week celebrated the Passover, Shavu'ot and Sukkot, proclaimed the abolition of the mitzvoth, etc.

Gershom Scholem writes:

»What the Sabbatians call the ›strange acts of the Messiah«, have not only a negative aspect, from the point of view of the old order, but also a positive side, in so far as the Messiah acts in accordance with the law of a new world. If the structure of the world is intrinsically changed by the completion of the process of *Tikkun*, the Torah, the true universal law of all things, must also appear from then under a different aspect. /... / The Messiah stands at the crossing of both roads. He realizes in his Messianic freedom a new law, which from the point of view of the old order is purely subversive. It subverts the old order, and all actions which conform to it are therefore in manifest contradiction with the traditional values.« (1995, 311–312)

Sabbatai Zevi's proclamation of himself as the Messiah meant the onset of a new eschatological epoch, namely, the time that is quickly coming to its end, the

time of the Redemption, and »redemption implies the destruction of those aspects of the Torah which merely reflect the *Galuth*« (312).

We shall not dwell here on the links between Sabbatianism and Lurianic Kabbalah, even though it is based on the teachings of Isaac Luria or, rather, a specific interpretation of the ideas of Luria Nathan of Gaza, acting as the main ideologue of this paradoxical Messianic movement. The central paradox it was, of course, the denial of the Messiah of the Jewish faith and his conversion to Islam perpetrated under the threat of death. This event had a shock effect on the Jewish masses involved into eschatological exaltation, and in full revealed the antinomian potential of the Sabbatianists, who not only were not ashamed of their teacher's actions, but even put them for his merit.

Two images stand before us in all their otherness, yet at the same time being surprisingly close: Jesus the Messiah, put to death on the cross, and the apostate Messiah Sabbatai Zevi, saving his life by means of renunciation; crucified God and the betrayer Deliverer. Here we have an absurd figure of suffering and dying God,² on the one hand, and (perhaps even more absurd) figure of the Messiah-traitor, on the other hand.³ In both cases, the denial of the old values leads to strengthening of the antinomian tendencies, sometimes acquiring an extremely radical form.

It may seem that all self-will, every »I want to« can be justified in a similar way, but it is not so, for deeds are justified only if they are derived to some higher order of being. If »I want to« pursue some human need and is derived to the man himself, it is not justified by itself, because justification is acquired only in the Spirit.

² Of course, only in the perspective of the ancient heathen concept of Deity.

³ This brings to mind a fascinating image of the Savior, which humbles himself by taking on the role of the Greatest Sinner, from the story by Jorge Luis Borges, »Three Versions of Judas«, where Judas Iscariot is declared the true Son of God, sacrificing himself as the Savior, the true mission of whom no one will ever know.

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