

Slavoj Žižek's Christian Atheism: A Dialogue with Chiara Lubich

Peter Morovic, Ján Morovic

This essay examines Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek's thought on Christianity through a comparative analysis with Chiara Lubich's charism of unity, revealing surprising convergences between Žižek's "Christian atheism" and Lubich's spirituality. Both see in Jesus Forsaken the crucial moment of identification between God and humanity, reject a distant and interventionist God "up there" who manipulates events from outside, and recognize in Jesus's presence in the midst of community (the "Holy Spirit" for Žižek, "Jesus in the midst" for Lubich) the privileged mode of relationship with the divine. Žižek, while declaring himself atheist, arrives through a Hegelian reading of divine kenosis at a profound understanding of Christianity's subversive core, proposing a God who is not transcendent but immanent in human history, entrusting his own destiny to humanity. However, the article also acknowledges the limits of the analogy: while Žižek performs a materialist philosophical reinterpretation that eliminates important elements of the Christian experience such as the resurrection and divine transcendence, Lubich instead represents a mystical experience lived from within the Church. This unexpected dialogue suggests that the search for truth, when conducted with intellectual honesty and passion for justice, can lead to convergent insights, without ignoring differences, which open the possibility for further dialogue.

Introduction

In his book "Jesus Forsaken, Master of Thought," Giuseppe Maria Zanghì, through advice given to him by Chiara Lubich, challenges us thus:

*"[...] each of [the] expressions of human research [is] in love with truth and in one way or another [...] has touched it. And there is in all of them a patrimony of suffering, of invocation, of waiting, which must be respected with humble attention and strong participation. 'You must learn from everyone,' [Chiara Lubich] told me, 'provided you know how to approach everyone with love.'"*¹

With this premise, then, one can approach the thought of Slavoj Žižek, the contemporary Slovenian philosopher. Known and celebrated contributor in many battlefields of current culture: from politics, economics and ethics to all artistic expressions, psychoanalysis and finally his original field, philosophy. Often called a "rock-star" of philosophy—also for his provocative and eclectic style—behind this image emerges an authenticity of research, a humble honesty of his thought and a strong commitment rooted in the actuality of the human condition (from the refugee crisis in Europe, the collapse of global financial systems, the US elections, etc.). With a gaze toward society that goes beyond superficial appearances, he seeks to go to the roots, to the essential of these questions often without simple answers, seeks to be a revolutionary, a radical in the true sense of the word, in today's world. He actively refuses the application of historical answers and commits to seeking the meaning of ideals in actuality in a manner not unlike the principle of actualization promoted in the documents of Vatican II² or the discourse of a necessary updating of the Work of Mary used by Jesus Moran³. Using Adorno's analogy that, referring to Hegel, Žižek proposes⁴:

"It is not right to ask 'What can this philosopher teach us today' but instead we must ask: 'Who are we, or how is our current condition, in the eyes of this philosopher? How would our epoch seem to this philosopher?'"

Žižek appropriates this principle and applies it rigorously, starting from the point of view of a Marxist, atheist (though self-declaring as atheist-Christian) and seeking the meaning of these classifications in today's world. It is in this context that Žižek positions himself before Christianity, the scriptures and the church and makes a reading that is almost surprising in its essentiality and freshness. As in the book "The Last Temptation of Christ" by Nikos Kazantzakis (and the eponymous film by Martin Scorsese), Žižek also arrives at a vision that concentrates and emphasizes specific aspects, accentuating certain realities in an incisive and radical manner that does not necessarily cover everything and that often responds to particular realities of social injustices or lack of harmony, using his own language with references from his context. Precisely for this reason the value of his analysis is great and can serve for discernment and deepening of one's own faith, of the life of Christians, of the church and of society (his original intention), with the perspective of, precisely, actualization and updating of it and applying the principle so emphasized by Žižek: seeking new answers to original questions⁵.

In what follows we will try to paint a broad outline of his thought related—explicitly or not—to the central themes of Christian faith. From the person of Jesus himself in the history of humanity and his abandonment by God until death on the cross, to the egalitarian spirit of community (the Holy Spirit) and the implications of his interpretations for social order. For Žižek the key to interpretation is, precisely, the social message of relations among equals, an equality in a certain sense also between man and God that makes the person of Jesus, and faith itself real and undeniable for him ("The only way to be an atheist is through Christianity").

¹ Giuseppe Maria Zanghì, *Jesus Forsaken, Master of Thought*, pp. 14-15 (Città Nuova, 2008)

² Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, paragraph 52, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/it/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam.html

³ Jesús Morán, *Creative Fidelity. The Challenge of Actualizing a Charism*, (Broché)

⁴ Slavoj Žižek, International Conference on Marxism (Bloomsbury, UK), July 2, 2009

⁵ Luigino Bruni to the Focolare youth (Loppiano, 2016)

Although the topic of God, of the Christian God, is not his main theme, Žižek speaks of it often in various contexts and has published various books, such as “The Suffering God”⁶ or “Saint Paul Reloaded: On the Future of Christianity”⁷. Below we collect and summarize some central thoughts of his discourse.

The Death of the Interventionist God

Žižek uses strong language where he vehemently denies an interventionist God, a detached, external entity ('up there'), who observes 'from outside' and acts when and how he wants, who intervenes freely or even in exchange for something⁸:

“...the good-father up there who manipulates, somehow, things and you can trust him and everything will be fine...”

His discourse here culminates (adopting a Hegelian reading) by affirming

“...what truly dies on the cross is precisely this God. [...] God, as this secret mind that benevolently controls everything.”

Instead, according to Žižek, the Christian God is different, and much more real and present because “engaged in our history” and moreover, that

“Christ coming among us, who suffers with us [and dies on the cross], means precisely that our suffering is real [true].”

This his real suffering, shared with humanity, this death of a God (or of a concept of God), implies that we are dealing with a God involved and in dialogue with humanity:

“In all other religions we trust God, we believe in God. Christ's death instead means, God trusts us. It means, 'I give you your freedom, it's up to you.' [...] God entrusts the destiny of creation, his destiny, to us.”

Žižek then makes a reading, inspired by Meister Eckhart, of the relationship between man and God where both God puts himself at stake with man, but at the same time man in his essence does likewise in this relationship with God:

“Not only is man decentered with respect to God, in the sense that our center is not ourselves but out there, in God, but in order to legitimize man, it is necessary to accept that 'God is decentered in himself, with respect to himself.’”

Here Žižek seems to point toward the trinity where this “*God decentered in himself*” is the intrinsic nature of trinitarian dynamics and where, through Mary, all humanity is present and participant⁹.

The Experience of Divine Abandonment

Žižek goes beyond an abstract, theological analysis of Christ on the cross and maintains that the way to read it, understand it is by living the very reality of abandonment. Just as God self-abandons on the

cross (because Christ-God), so too when we feel absolutely abandoned, far from God, it is precisely there that we can enter into a direct and mutual relationship with Him, because we are identified with God¹⁰:

“[...] I maintain that the only way to redeem the subversive core of Christianity is to return to the theology of the death of God. To repeat the gesture today. What is lost in soft, post-modern theology, is the dimension indicated by the very name “death of God.” The traumatic core of divine kenosis. Of God's self-emptying. [...] In and through it, the divine dimension is emptied of it [...]. What is missing here from my point of view is something on which all good Hegelians (we) insist: it is that that kenosis [...] is not only a process applied to us [by God], but that our alienation from God is at the same time God's self-alienation from himself. What we do with God is what God is doing to himself. This is why in Christianity our access to God is totally different from other religions. It is not “God is there and somehow (through some asceticism) it is possible to approach God”, no, [...] at the very point where one feels completely empty, far from God, one discovers that one's identity [identification] with Christ on the cross, which is when God felt abandoned (the famous phrase “Father, why have you abandoned me?”) by himself. It is, when one sees how your experience, your abandonment by God, assimilates to divine self-abandonment.”

Finally he denies a purely materialist vision of the effect of this assimilation to Christ on the cross—of mutual emptying—and instead recognizes it as: a “double movement” in the man-God, God-man relationship, the fruit of which is precisely the “spirit of community” or Holy Spirit as Žižek calls it¹¹:

“This means something, [...] very precise: that [...] this Holy Spirit does not mean the simple Feuerbachian, Marxist vision that ‘we have discovered that there is no substantial God, that God is only a collective ideology of us humans and so on, so that all we have to do is reappropriate the alienated substance.’ No, it is precisely this double movement of what we experience as our abandonment by God is divine kenosis, this is the Hegelian heart of it.”

The Parallel with Chiara Lubich

In the charism of unity, the crucified Christ—Jesus Forsaken—is one of the cardinal points of spirituality. It is the culmination of the Father's Love for humanity where He loves the world to the point of giving the life of his only begotten¹² and the light itself¹³. The point of total unity between man and God, the annihilation of God (his “death” to use Žižek's words) and the total unity of Jesus with the human condition, to show His infinite love and give us a new, complete freedom. Lubich demonstrates to us another key moment in this perspective of dialogue between humanity and God: the annunciation to Mary. Just as Christ dying on the cross is witness to a God who loves humanity in a radical way to the point of “hurting” himself and sacrificing in a certain sense his own freedom (although not his freedom as Žižek defines it—as an interior necessity) to give it to us, so asking

⁶ Žižek, Gunjević, *God in Pain* (Seven Stories Press, 2012)

⁷ Žižek, Milbank, *Saint Paul Reloaded: On the Future of Christianity* (Transeuropa, 2012)

⁸ Žižek, “Calvinism is Christianity at its Purest,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohNbDnlQp78>

⁹ Chiara Lubich, *Paradise '49*, video from Flüeli (commentary by A. M. Baggio)

¹⁰ Žižek, “Wither to the ‘Death of God,’” Montreal

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² (cf. Jn 3:16)

¹³ Giuseppe Maria Zanghì in Oreste Paliotti, “The Last Farewell to Peppuccio” (*Città Nuova*, January 23, 2015): “But attention: for Jesus forsaken, who is the icon of the ‘night,’ of God's absence, ‘my night has no darkness.’ That is, this dramatic situation, if lived in love for him, immediately becomes gift, source of life. Jesus forsaken, in fact, is not a moment to pass through to enter the light, he is the light itself. If you understand this you have understood the tactic with which God works on you.”

Mary and through her, asking humanity for “permission” to be able to do it, also shows a God not detached, external, but a God in dialogue with his creation. When Žižek says that in the crucified Christ “God entrusts the destiny of creation, his destiny, to us,” this event is indeed not punctual, unique, but precisely characteristic of God. While Jesus is man-God, the lamb of God because sacrificial offering, Mary is humanity and it is she who permits Jesus/God to be the personification of this real dialogue with humanity, sharing everything, up to total separation and death. Thus, for Žižek, the cross is a point of inflection from a distant God to a God who walks with humanity who makes himself vulnerable. In reality God, throughout the history of humanity and creation, is always this God in donation, in dialogue, in relationship with man.

Freedom and Predestination

He also denies a God of utilitarian economic exchanges “...if I do this, it will be OK...” declaring that it is an “*obscurity that our salvation depends on our good actions.*” If God truly gives us freedom and involves himself, even ‘abandons himself’ to (“*trusts*”) humanity, Žižek concludes that an argument of exchange cannot be sustained because it is contrary to His nature. He proposes, instead, a new reading where free choice is a fundamental part of predestination, saying¹⁴ that

“it is written up there, but it is written backwards”

and elaborating:

“Something may happen or not, but if it happens, retroactively it seems that it had to happen from the beginning.”

Here Žižek uses an extraordinary and convincing image:

“every great work of art retroactively changes its entire past”

giving examples like Kafka being influenced by Dostoevsky, Poe, Blake, but to see the dimension in these authors of the influence that Kafka gives us, Kafka had to already be there. That is, this dimension in Dostoevsky, Poe, Blake was not perceived until Kafka was there. Žižek calls it a “*retroactive constitution of necessity*” and elaborates that it means, according to him, at the level of free choices facing difficult moral situations where on one hand it is not true that one is completely free to choose one thing or another (e.g. getting involved in great injustices) and instead these choices come from an “*interior necessity*.” He then proposes predestination as the only valid explanation, but a predestination that instead of constraining, liberates:

“Predestination means that we are, at a much more radical level, free to constitute our own predestination. [...] True freedom is, in a certain sense, to choose our necessity.”

The Holy Spirit as Egalitarian Community

Žižek then uses a suggestive image to argue for the prohibition of making images of God, iconoclasm, in Jewish religions saying¹⁵ that “*it is not an image to be made*” since “*God is no longer the substantial master up there, God is [...] the spirit of our community.*” Thus, with God’s death

on the cross the Holy Spirit is born, according to Žižek, and he challenges us to take seriously: “*Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*”¹⁶ This phrase from the Gospel of Matthew—so central also for the Work of Mary—he uses often, for example during the Wall Street protests at Zuccotti Park in New York where he ends his improvised speech to a group of rather angry young anti-establishment people saying¹⁷:

“What is the Holy Spirit? It is an egalitarian community of believers who are connected to each other with mutual love and who have only their freedom and their responsibility to live it. In this sense the Holy Spirit is here present now!”

On another occasion he elaborates:

“The Holy Spirit for me [...] means the gift of freedom. [...] It means that God entrusts the destiny of creation, his destiny, to us. It means that what happens here is part of, so to speak, God’s history.”

If then the “Holy Spirit” (the egalitarian community) is the essential cell of Christian life, Žižek insists that it is precisely this the context in which one can live one’s faith, one’s relationship with God, denying instead an individual relationship:

“[W]hat interests me [...] is precisely the church as institution. [...] It is not this ‘me and God’, no! It is the Gemeinde, the community. This is absolutely fundamental for me. For example, I absolutely agree with this fundamental Protestant intuition: what does it mean, to read the Bible alone? [...] It means the word of God for me. Reading the Bible means precisely that it is not possible to ignore the Logos.”

Here too the charism of Unity of Lubich is close and evident since it has as its main goal life with Jesus in the midst (“That all may be one”¹⁸)—Lubich chooses it as the key to God’s presence in humanity and the possibility of participating in the life of the trinity. Therefore also the key to the relationship with God where she complements (without denying) the Interior Castle¹⁹ of Saint Teresa of Avila with an Exterior Castle²⁰. In Lubich’s charism, Jesus in the midst (the spirit of community as Žižek calls it) is closely linked to Jesus Forsaken—the God who dies on the cross—because one is the inseparable key to the other. The presence of Jesus is a gift and occurs through grace, because there is need for man who collaborates and makes himself nothing (assimilates, approaches the abandonment of Jesus on the cross) so that on this nothingness He can be present in the midst (“the spirit of community” in Žižek’s terms is Jesus himself in the midst of the community). At the limit the “making oneself nothing” (self-naughting) points toward the experience of Jesus forsaken himself and thus Lubich invites to relive this reality which in some way is to relive the crucified Christ—an annihilation that gives freedom to the other—the key to dialogue, to entering into relationship (God-Humanity, man-man). Lubich, with her life, develops this notion much further, culminating in her experience of the Pact with Igino Giordani where truly this mutual annihilation between two makes real the presence of God and leads to a mystical experience of participation in the life of the Trinity and an illumination that is its fruit. Žižek also sees the enormous value of life with Jesus in the midst (with the Holy Spirit present in the community—as he calls it) both for the equality among those present (an egalitarian community), and for the bond whose principle is a

¹⁴ Žižek, [Calvinism is Christianity at its Purest](#)

¹⁵ Žižek, [Christ is God](#)

¹⁶ (Mt, 18,20)

¹⁷ Žižek, [Slavo Žižek at Occupy Wall Street](#), Zuccotti Park (New York, USA)

¹⁸ (Gv 17,21)

¹⁹ Santa Teresa de Jesús (de Ávila), *El Castillo Interior*, 1577

²⁰ Jesus Castellano Cervera, “Il castello esteriore. Il “nuovo” nella spiritualità di Chiara Lubich”, Citta Nuova (Roma 2011).

Christian love (whose image is God's love for man) and finally as the main vehicle (or in his vision unique) for relating to God. In Lubich the relationship with God is nourished both by individual interior life and by life in his presence in the midst of the community²¹:

"An interior castle, therefore, as Saint Teresa called the reality of the soul inhabited by His Majesty, to be discovered and illuminated, is good. It is the culmination of sanctity in an individual way. Now perhaps the time has come to discover, illuminate, build for God also his exterior castle, so to speak, with Him in the midst of men. It—if we observe well—is nothing but the Church, there where we live, which, also for this spirituality, can become more and more itself, more beautiful, more splendid [...]."

Social Implications

Žižek also makes an analysis from the point of view of a social order, basing it again on egalitarian relations where classical functions do not exist and where the main characteristic is a continual struggle²²:

"How to read these horrible declarations of Christ [like] 'If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father, mother, wife, children... and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple' It is not 'hate,' like a pseudo-dialectic of an opposite to 'love'. Instead it is 'hate for love'. [...] This is for me what Christ means by 'hating your father, mother, ...': not literally hating them and killing them, but hating precisely in their institutional symbolic function as 'mother,' 'father,' and so on. The message is wonderful. It is that, the social order is not the real hierarchical one. Instead there is space for an egalitarian collective that, so to speak, cuts through it. And not only in this Buddhist way of 'in Nirvana we are all equal.' No, no, we can all be equal on this earth already. [...] The Christianity is not the religion of 'establishing a harmonious order.' It is the religion of struggle, of disequilibrium. To be universal there is need to fight. The only true universality is the universality of struggle."

Thus Žižek moves toward what Lubich proposes as life of unity and trinitarian relations where, in the image of the trinity, there is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit but where this distinction is in continual and dynamic "struggle" so that each 'plays' his role in function of what is Love in the present moment²³. Žižek completely denies these roles to highlight the egalitarian aspect that he sees so lacking in society. Lubich instead unites the distinction of social roles with their continual, dynamic change where a "father" can act as father in a certain moment, but can act as "son" or "mother" in another, in function of the present moment and with the unique motivation of that 'for love' of which Žižek also speaks.

Conclusion of the Analysis

Žižek then describes and invites to a faith lived in community, a faith in a God who has given himself to, and walks with humanity, a God whose greatest gift to humanity is freedom, his "trusting us." And finally Žižek, who declares himself atheist-Christian, affirms that to be truly atheist one cannot not pass through Christianity because precisely, it arrives at true freedom, the Holy Spirit (life with Jesus in the

midst) and the relationship of mutual love among equals through a conscious life of self-identification with the Crucified Christ (the culminating moment of closeness to God, as Žižek says). This thought of Žižek shows surprising parallels with Lubich's charism. In her, the charism of unity also renews thought itself, arriving at a harmony between God "beyond" and God "within" and present among us, between individual and community relationship.

Two of Lubich's most well known and important meditations, "I have only one spouse on earth"²⁴ and "The great attraction of modern times,"²⁵ highlight once again the closeness of Žižek's thought. In the first, Lubich declares her choice of Jesus—seeking him, assuming him, identifying herself with him:

"I have only one Spouse on earth: Jesus Forsaken: I have no other God outside of him"

and recognizing a suffering God

"And his is the universal Pain"

and assuming him as her own

"Mine all that is not peace, joy, beautiful, lovable, serene..., in a word: that which is not Paradise. [...] Thus for the years that remain to me: thirsting for sorrows, for anguish, for desperation, for melancholy, for detachments, for exile, for abandonments, for torments, for... all that is him and he is Sin, Hell."

Instead in the second, Lubich contemplates the highest life of relationship with God in the midst of humanity:

"Here is the great attraction of modern times: to penetrate into the highest contemplation and remain mixed among all, man beside man."

where the culmination of reality is between a housewife mother and a carpenter, two simple workers in a humble house:

"Because the attraction of ours, as of all times, is what is most human and most divine that can be thought: Jesus and Mary, the Word of God, son of a carpenter, the Seat of Wisdom, housewife."

who live together as a first example of an egalitarian community: Mary, mother of Jesus, disciple, point of reference for the disciples; Jesus, child, son of Mary, teacher, son of God; Joseph, father, carpenter, follows and trusts Mary and Jesus without ever losing his identity. The Holy Family as an example of that egalitarian community of which Žižek speaks and the example that Lubich presents to us.

Limits of the Analogy

The convergences highlighted so far are surprising and real, but it is also useful to recognize where Žižek and Lubich diverge profoundly. These differences do not diminish the value of the dialogue and the closeness of thought, but they specify its boundaries and nature.

The first fundamental difference concerns the starting point itself. Žižek starts from a materialist position, rooted in Marxism and Lacanian psychoanalysis. His reading of Christianity is a philosophical operation, an attempt to "save" what he considers the subversive core of the Christian message by freeing it from its metaphysical

²¹ *Ibid.* pp. 63-67/68.

²² Žižek, *Wither to the "Death of God"*, Montreal

²³ "Un continuo unirsi e distinguersi a mo della Trinità" (Nota 109, Paradiso'49)

²⁴ Chiara Lubich, *Paradiso* '49 (20 settembre 1949)

²⁵ Chiara Lubich, *Meditazioni*, Citta Nuova Ed., 1970

superstructures. Lubich instead starts from a direct mystical experience, from a personal encounter with God. When she speaks of Jesus Forsaken or Jesus in the midst, she is not doing philosophical analysis but witnessing to a lived reality, a relationship with a Person.

A crucial difference emerges in the treatment of the resurrection. For Žižek, the emphasis remains on God's death on the cross as the definitive moment. The resurrection, when mentioned, is interpreted in collective and immanent terms: the birth of the Holy Spirit as an egalitarian community. For Lubich, instead, the resurrection is a central and essential reality. Jesus Forsaken finds his full meaning precisely in the resurrection: abandonment is not the final word, but the passage toward new life. Jesus's presence in the midst is not a metaphor for human solidarity, but the real presence of the Risen One who continues to live in his Church.

Žižek explicitly affirms that the Christian God "is no longer the substantial master up there" but "the spirit of our community." This affirmation, however suggestive, entails a reduction of the divine to the communitarian human horizon. Lubich, while strongly emphasizing the communitarian dimension ("Jesus in the midst"), never reduces God to the community. God remains Transcendence, Otherness, personal Presence who gives himself but is not exhausted in the giving. Lubich's trinitarian God is simultaneously "beyond" and "in the midst," transcendent and immanent. The relationship with God includes personal interior experience, individual prayer, the "interior castle" that Lubich integrates with the "exterior castle" without replacing it.

The approach to the institutional church also diverges profoundly. Žižek, while affirming the importance of the *Gemeinde*, often proposes a Christianity that seeks to recover the "true" message against its institutional crystallizations. Lubich instead always operates within the Catholic Church, in full communion with its hierarchy. Her charism is born as a gift to the Church and for the Church, even though she herself considers it universal and therefore for all Humanity. Even when she proposes renewals, she does so with filial love that seeks reform from within.

For Žižek, "salvation" is essentially a collective project of social emancipation, an immanent historical task that humanity must realize. For Lubich, salvation is first and foremost God's gratuitous gift, fruit of Christ's Passion (death and resurrection), which one receives personally through faith and the sacraments. It has an ineliminable communitarian dimension, but also includes the interior transformation of the person, sanctification, participation in trinitarian life that begins already on this earth but finds its fulfillment "beyond" history.

When Žižek speaks of "mutual love," he understands it mainly as human solidarity, reciprocal recognition among equals. It is a horizontal love, among peers. The Christian love (agape) of which Lubich speaks has this horizontal dimension, but also includes a vertical dimension: it is participation in God's own love, it is a supernatural gift, it is charity that loves the other not only out of solidarity but "because of God," seeing in every person the image of Christ.

These clarifications do not intend to diminish the depth of Žižek's intuitions. The convergences we have highlighted are real, but they are situated at the level of "resonances," of partial intuitions, of points of

contact that can stimulate the thoughts of believers. Žižek, in his attempt to recover the subversive core of Christianity through Marxist and psychoanalytic categories, performs a philosophical operation of great interest. He can help Christians rediscover forgotten dimensions of their faith: the radicality of abandonment, the centrality of community, the critique of idols. His is an interpretation "from outside," however penetrating.

Lubich invites us to approach Žižek "with love," to learn from him, to let ourselves be questioned by his "provocations" but also to recognize in him a brother on a journey of searching for Truth, like all of us.

Final Reflections

Žižek's reading of Christianity and his insights certainly seem authentic and his research

*"in love with truth [...with a] patrimony of suffering, of invocation, of waiting."*²⁶

Undoubtedly influenced by the predominantly Christian cultural context of 20th-century Slovenia, but also by the world wars, communism and the subsequent change to capitalism of this Alpine country of Europe, it is difficult to imagine that it is possible to arrive at these conclusions without a personal and deep experience of his own—both his strong conviction of Marxism, and his interpretation of Christianity.

But what are the experiences that led him to these conclusions? Can one remain at the level of philosophical intellectual analysis without "getting dirty" with faith? His vehemence and passion are his responses—using the tools of his trade—to injustices and sufferings of the human family of a person not indifferent, but indignant and involved. A Marxist then, who not only speaks of social equality, but also of mutual love (often invoking Mt 18:20) as the nature of these egalitarian relations, and of Jesus crucified and forsaken as his key. The "Christian atheism" of which Žižek speaks seems rather an authentic Christianity of research, of personal commitment. This atheism is not however an atheism "without God" but without a distant God and instead of a God who puts himself in relationship and at stake with humanity, involves himself and even entrusts himself to humanity.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis between the thought of Slavoj Žižek and the spirituality of Chiara Lubich reveals unexpected convergences but also differences that require further analysis and dialogue. The resonances we have highlighted are real and significant: both recognize in Jesus's abandonment on the cross a crucial moment, both see in community founded on love the privileged space of divine presence, both refuse an interventionist God "up there" detached from human history.

However, these convergences must not obscure the fact that Žižek and Lubich operate on different planes. Žižek's "egalitarian community" and Lubich's "Jesus in the midst" may seem parallel expressions, but they arise from different experiences and lead to different conclusions. For Žižek, it is a philosophical intuition that reinterprets Christianity in materialist terms; for Lubich, it is witness to a mystical

²⁶ Giuseppe Maria Zanghi, *Gesù abbandonato maestro di pensiero*, pp. 14-15 (Città Nuova, 2008)

experience, to a real presence of the Risen One in the community of believers.

The Žižekian reading of Christianity performs an operation of great philosophical interest: it seeks to recover the “subversive core” of the Christian message by freeing it from what it considers metaphysical superstructures. In this process, however, it also eliminates elements that for Christian faith are constitutive: the resurrection as a real event, God as transcendent Person, salvation as gratuitous gift that transcends history.

Lubich, instead, maintains the tension between transcendence and immanence, between God “beyond” and God “in the midst,” between personal experience and community life, between historical commitment and eschatological hope. For her, Jesus Forsaken is not only a symbol of divine self-emptying, but a Person who has really suffered, really died, and really risen. Jesus’s presence in the midst does not replace the transcendent God but is the way in which the trinitarian God chooses to make himself present in history after Easter.

This dialogue between critical philosophy and mysticism and spirituality remains however fruitful and necessary. Žižek, with his provocative reading, can help Christians rediscover forgotten or trivialized dimensions of their faith: the radicality of incarnation, the seriousness of abandonment on the cross, the importance of the communitarian dimension, the necessary critique of every idolatry (including religious ones). His insistence on the “death of God” can serve as a salutary antidote against infantile or magical conceptions of the divine.

On the other hand, Lubich’s spirituality can also challenge those who, like Žižek, approach Christianity “from outside.” The authenticity of her experience, the concreteness of her witness, the existential fruitfulness of her charism pose questions that a purely philosophical reading cannot easily evade: is it possible that these mystical experiences are simply ideological projections? How to explain the real transformations of life, the communities that are born, the tangible fruit of a lived spirituality?

The lesson that emerges is not that of an easy synthesis or a pre-established harmony. It is rather the invitation to an honest dialogue that recognizes both the points of contact and the substantial differences. Authentic Christianity does not fear confrontation with critical thought, on the contrary, it can be stimulated, purified, deepened through it.

The value of this confrontation lies precisely in keeping it open, without forcing synthesis, recognizing both the resonances and the distances, and remaining faithful – as Zanghi teaches us, citing Lubich – to the invitation to “approach everyone with love,” as a starting point for a dialogue that in itself invites us to be able to experience “where two or three are gathered in my name...”