

**ENLIGHTENED CHRISTIANITY:  
THE STORY OF JESUS, THE MYSTIC**

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Many people turn to our beloved cultural or religious traditions for encouragement and comfort. One of the most prevalent traditions in the Western world is the religious tradition of Christianity. And many accept without question the story of Jesus, its founder, as it has been told for centuries by the representatives of Christianity—the Christian Church. Today, in the twenty-first century, however, it has become incumbent on us to examine, in the light of experience and common sense, some of the precepts of Christianity that we currently take so much for granted.

The founding principle of Christianity is the notion that Jesus was literally the son of God. Nearly everyone would agree to the premise that for God all things are possible, but has anyone ever really thought through the idea that God, the Mind of the universe, personally fathered a son on a peasant woman in Bethlehem two thousand years ago? The anonymous theologians who came up with this notion no doubt took their inspiration from the earlier stories of the Greek gods. Such matings of the divine gods with mortals occurred frequently in the myths of the ancient Greeks, to be sure. But just as surely, it is incumbent on us today to clearly differentiate between myth and reality. Can we even conceive of a scenario in which the Spirit-Ground of all existence might impregnate a human female, either remotely, figuratively, or actually? Can't we all agree that when this idea is honestly examined, it is seen to be, not only unnecessary, but impossibly absurd?

It must be emphasized that Christianity, the canon of Jesus' teachings, can stand proudly *without* the phony magic and mythology, *without* the miracles and exaggerations. Jesus attempted to reveal to his peers the truth that we are in God, and are made of God, that God is our soul and our being, that because He is the Truth in which we live and move, we are bound by our very being to love one another in Him, and to serve our neighbor as ourselves. And that is more than enough to constitute an enduring spiritual legacy of which all Christians may be proud.

## The Story of Jesus

Little is known or has been related in scriptures about the life of Jesus prior to his great experience at a baptism in the river Jordan.<sup>1</sup> According to the story recorded in the Gospels, when Jesus was baptized in his late twenties by the baptizing sage, John, he received the gift of God's grace, and his spiritual vision was opened. That vision revealed to him the spiritual nature of this world and all that's in it. He, himself, he realized, was made of God and was nothing else but God. He was suddenly aware that he was all-embracing Spirit, no longer confined solely to this Jesus body, but existing everywhere, in the clouds, in the soil, in the stars, and in the creatures of the wood. It was a startling revelation, awakening in him a new awareness that he and all beings were contained in and consist of the all-pervasive Divine being.

But for that *experience* at the river Jordan, no one would have ever heard the name of Jesus and there would not have been a Christianity. But that mystical experience *did* occur in that young man. It was a purely subjective experience, but he later told many people of it; and, because of that unmistakably Divine experience, Jesus initiated his mission of announcing to everyone the amazing truth that had been revealed to him. At the time, the cultural expectations of a coming Savior were already rampant, and Jesus was later to be seen by many as the fulfilment of those cultural expectations, but in fact, he was simply a young Palestinian who had experienced a Divine revelation, a mystical vision.

In the days to come, he would say to his comrades, "Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me,"<sup>2</sup> and "I and my Father are one."<sup>3</sup> He said this as one who had observed a new empirical fact and was declaring his astounding discovery. But it was difficult for anyone who had not experienced that divine revelation to grasp the truth of what he was saying, for in the early centuries of civilization in the Middle East and specifically in the Jewish scriptures, God (*Yahweh*) was conceived and portrayed as an individual human-like entity, an all-powerful larger than life 'person' who walked on earth and talked with ordinary people. Though He had many different names and attributes, this 'god' of supernatural powers played a role in the myths and legends of nearly every tribe of people existing in the Middle East at that time. But Jesus had experienced God as He truly is, and God was revealed to him as the spiritual continuum in which he existed and of which he, himself, was constituted. And so, when he described God as

being within him, and described himself as being within God, those who conceived of God as an individual embodied being could make no sense of what he was saying. In fact, his words were interpreted by many as dangerously blasphemous.

Jesus' words were a true reflection of the Divine revelation that occurred within him, and yet it is easy to see that his words could be offensive to those with strongly held traditional religious beliefs. Jesus, however, was totally convinced that it was his God-given mission to relate to the people the knowledge that had been revealed in him. But a group of religious 'authorities' made it their mission to put an end to his public pronouncements, and they incited the prelate of the occupying Roman forces to arrest Jesus for sedition against the state, a crime punishable by death on the cross.

After Jesus was cruelly killed at the insistence of the ignorant mob, a few of his followers, believing that no one would be inclined to follow his teachings unless they had reason to believe that he was not a mere mortal, but was the very incarnation of God, hastily hatched a plot: it was a simple matter to move Jesus' body under cover of darkness to an undisclosed grave, and the imaginations of the superstitious villagers would do the rest. Others of the group served as biographers who fashioned a lovely story of how God visited Jesus' mother, while she was still a virgin, and caused her to conceive him supernaturally (though the existence of Jesus' older siblings suggests that she had already had numerous children by the time of Jesus' birth).

It was not long before the followers of Jesus, relying on his own declaration of oneness with God, and in opposition to the established Judaic tradition, officially recognized Jesus as 'the Son of God', and a suitable theology was constructed to establish his divinity. However, by their counterfeit theology, the followers unwittingly put an end to the universal significance of Jesus' observation of his spiritual nature, for that observation obviously applied only to special men of Spirit like him, who had been fathered by God, and not to ordinary people who were parented by mortals like the rest of us.

Then, after a couple of centuries, along came others who experienced the same interior revelation, the same mystical vision that all this is God's appearance in form, and they too would say: "I am in God, and God is in me. I and the Father are one." But this time, no one, not even the mystics

themselves, claimed that they were Messiahs. So, this cast a different light on what was believed about Jesus. For, now, there were a number of guys saying the same thing, though none of them claimed to be a special incarnation of God, but just ordinary men. Clearly, it was not necessary to be a God or a relative of God in order to be visited by this revelation. But can the vision of these men be true? Can it possibly be true that all of us are made of God-stuff? Can it be that we really are living in 'the Kingdom of God'? That we are in Him, and that He is in fact our very self?

I suggest that we look carefully at what young Jesus said. Look at what he actually said! He was telling us way back then of our true spiritual nature. But those who had not experienced that revelation for themselves could not understand what he said. Now, two thousand years later, there have been many all over the world who have had the same revelatory experience and have declared the same truth that Jesus expressed. How many more will need to experience this revelation and make the same declaration before we begin to understand? Only time will tell.

What, we must ask, can be done to reformulate Christianity in accordance with our current enlightened view of the life and teachings of Jesus? What would such an enlightened Christianity look like? First, we must acknowledge that the story of Jesus of Nazareth in the New Testament of the Bible is a true story—well, most of it is anyway. The virgin birth and the resurrection were added by well-meaning zealots, but the rest is factual. Jesus, as a young man, came under the influence of the wandering holy man, John, the Baptist, and was initiated by him in the river Jordan. At that time, Jesus had a profound experience of his own divinity. The grace of God awoke in him, revealing the truth that he was indeed a manifestation of God in human form. The part of the story that often gets left out, however, is that this experience of divine Grace revealed to Jesus not only his own divinity, but the divinity of all existence. He realized in that enlightening moment that nothing other than God exists, that all this universe of manifold forms—the clouds, the grass, all the creatures, the vast expanse of stars and planets and galaxies—all are made of God's creative light. And with that revelation, the aim of awakening that knowledge in the hearts and minds of all people became the mission of Jesus' brief life.

God's revelation showed to Jesus that he and the Father are one; and this is a truth that we are able to know as well. It is not necessary that our mother's hymen grow back, that we were conceived in a manner other than

the normal one, or that after our death we are seen rising from our grave. We need only the Grace of God, revealing the knowledge that we consist of God's own Being; that He is our own foundation and eternal Self. God's revelation in the story of Jesus is a real-life occurrence—one that has played out many times in the real lives of various people of various lands who have been graced by God over the millennia. And while, in the West, we are taught the life and tragic death of Jesus, few are aware of the many others who have known their Divine identity and spoke of it, such as Plotinus, or al-Hallaj or Meister Eckhart, or Rumi, or Shankaracharya, or Ibn Arabi, or any of the hundreds of other mystics who are renowned in other parts of the world. <sup>4</sup> It seems to me that an enlightened Christianity must recognize those mystics throughout the world's history whose experience corroborates and affirms the mystical realizations of which Jesus spoke.

**NOTE:**

1. *Matthew*. 3:16, *Mark*. 1:10, *Luke*. 3:22, *John*.1:32.
2. *John*. 13:40.
3. *John*. 10:30.
4. If you would like to know about some of the many well-known mystics besides Jesus who have realized their identity in God, please see my book, *History of Mysticism*. It may be downloaded free at: [www.themysticsvision.com](http://www.themysticsvision.com).

**The Life And Revelation of Jesus**

Prior to my own spiritual revelation, I was skeptical of the claims of traditional Christianity, but after having been graced by God with the knowledge of my own divinity and the divinity of all creation, I naturally began musing on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and his legacy. It quickly became clear to me that Jesus was, like me, the recipient of a divine 'mystical experience' that revealed God's immanent presence. It was clear also that, in the time of Jesus, such a mystical experience was unheard of among the local population and was not at all understood. Therefore, those Jewish writers who were tasked with writing the history of Jesus' brief life and career had to rely on their own mistaken assumptions regarding Jesus, his mystical experience, and his message. It was these well-intentioned, but mistaken, individuals who created the myth of Jesus' supernatural birth, the voice of God sounding from the heavens proclaiming

him to be His son, and the apparently miraculous resurrection of Jesus after his entombment. It seems clear, as well, that Jesus' disciples learned from the lips of Jesus himself of the mystical experience that occurred to him at the time of his baptism by John, though they had no intellectual context by which to understand that experience; and they chose to interpret it as the long-expected fulfillment of a Judaic prophecy that told of a coming 'Messiah'.

The life and revelation of Jesus was an annunciation to the people that a virtuous and devoted man is able to win the Grace of God, and come to know directly his oneness, his identity, with the almighty God. But that divine message went unrecognized by the people; instead, a small group of men, devoted to the notion of the special relationship of Jesus to the Father, manufactured a new faith raising Jesus to a place of worship in their churches alongside the Father. They believed that Jesus came down from heaven to proclaim the message that he was a unique anomaly, a singular being identical with God, and that to believe that this fantastic story was true was synonymous with divine 'salvation'. The true message of Jesus, the perennial message of all the mystics, that *all* men are of a divine nature, one with the Father, once again went unheard and unheeded and remains unrecognized and unacknowledged to this day.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus had seen in an inner revelation that he was a manifestation of the Father, as was all that was created. He was not representing himself as a special manifestation of God but was revealing the universal truth of human existence: that we are born in God and consist—each of us—of His divine Light. He asked all men to know that Light in themselves, to live in the enlightened awareness of their true being, and to manifest that Light in the world of men.

**NOTE:**

1. We can scarcely imagine how unheard of and how inexplicable were the occurrences of mystical experience in earlier times and civilizations. Not only were the people of Jesus' time and place unfamiliar with the phenomena, people of all subsequent centuries, up to and including our own, have been woefully uneducated regarding the nature and occurrence of the unitive or nondual mystical experience, that interior revelation of identity with the divine universal Mind that comes to 'the pure of heart'. Even today, there are only a few Western scholars and academics familiar with the

pancultural and panhistoric occurrence of the nondual mystical experience, and fewer still who have actually experienced it.

### **The Demystification of Jesus**

In the past, when it came to the founding of a new religion, the founding parties frequently deemed it necessary to establish the supernatural birth and immortality of the religion's namesake in order for that religion to be acceptable to the gullible masses. This was the case in ancient India, Egypt, Greece, and in the Roman empire. And, it seems, this was the case as well with the establishment of Christianity, in which Jesus, the slain Jewish mystic of the first century, was deified in all popular accounts as the divinely appointed savior (Hebrew: *Messiah*), and the divinely anointed one (Greek: *Christos*). The zealous followers who wrote about Jesus' life in what are called *the Gospels* did not have personal contact with him, but only the benefit of hearsay; moreover, as early advocates of the newly formed sectarian Church of Christianity, they had an incentive to portray him as a supernatural being, and the stories of his virgin birth and resurrection after death were fashioned to support that legend. The effect of these propagandist legends was that the crucified Jesus quickly came to be regarded by the people as an element of Divinity Itself—the “Son” of God, or at least the *Logos*, or creative power, of God, who would forever dwell thereafter in some ethereal realm at the right hand of God, sitting in eternal judgment of the living and the dead.

For twenty centuries, we in the West have allowed these fairytales to avoid the overt censorship of our rational judgments, and the time is now long past due for reasonable men to make a serious effort at demystifying and demythologizing the legend of Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth, who lived in the first century of the Current Era, and was slain by order of the Roman prelate, Pontius Pilate, was indeed a real, historical person, like you and me. Whether the need for the religious zealots of that early period to exaggerate and embellish their accounts of the lives and exploits of those who had direct experience of the Divine was born of ignorance or expediency is not for us to say, but it has left us with the legend of a ‘fairy-tale’ Jesus, which maligns and denigrates the man himself, misrepresents the legacy of his ‘mystical experience’, and leaves a false impression in the minds of simple unlearned people regarding the life and attainments of one of our greatest mystics.



## Mythology

In the Roman empire of the first century, Greek mythology was still the fundamental religious tradition, and in that mythology the primary god, Zeus, was depicted as a profligate womanizer who often fathered his progeny on the female mortals to whom he was attracted. This improbable myth was considered a realistic possibility even at this late date. Little wonder, therefore, that the story of God's fathering of a child upon a mortal woman would make its way into the Greek literature outlining the origin of the budding Christianity of that time. In that nascent theology, it seemed only natural and believable that Jehovah/Zeus would have impregnated the mother of the martyred hero, Jesus, providing him with an immortal lineage. In the twenty-first century, however, we should know better, given the advance in our current knowledge of human reproductive biology. And yet, the myth persists as the very foundation of a Christian religion accepted by a substantial number of people in the Western world.

Is it not time to accept that Jesus was a normal human male, born of a normal human mother, and who, at the age of twenty-eight or twenty-nine, had a spiritual experience, a mystical experience, as documented in the historical Gospels, that revealed to Jesus the Divine nature of his own being and of all reality! Over the course of many centuries, a number of others have experienced that same revelation, that same mystical vision, and have told of it to an incredulous public. It is a recurring revelation, not of the exclusive divinity of one individual, but of the innate *nature* of each one of us as human beings. I am convinced that the commonsense reevaluation of the mystical revelation of Jesus and of other later mystics will usher in the emerging paradigm of our current age. And though the immense edifice of 'tradition' will stand against the emerging of this paradigm, because it is in the cause of truth and recognizable as such by the hearts and minds of coming generations, it will eventually prevail.

In the two thousand years since Jesus lived, a great deal of knowledge concerning subsequent mystics of all religious affiliations and the nature of mystical experience has been accumulated. Despite objections from the cynics who represent the strictly empirical sciences, today there is universal recognition of the factual occurrence of mystical experience occurring to isolated individuals throughout recorded history, and Jesus was certainly

one such individual. Though many still cling blindly to the ancient myths and legends fostered by the early enthusiasts of the Church, there is ample evidence to suggest that Jesus was simply a bright young Jewish lad educated in the Judaic tradition who, in his late twenties, participated in a baptism at the hands of a holy man, and suddenly had an opening of his spirit and was illumined by the Grace of God. The story of his ‘divine’ birth was simply an embellishment added by his misguided admirers.

The truth is that all men are born of God; all are Divine—not one more than another. To continue to regard Jesus as a special incarnation of God may seem harmless enough, but it not only puts him in a category that clearly does not biologically exist, it tends to set him apart as an unattainable model for human behavior; whereas if he is seen as a normal human being graced by God he becomes someone to whom we can relate, someone we can genuinely admire and emulate. But more importantly, the false notion of who Jesus was prevents us from the recognition of the fact that mystical experience is an avenue open to all of us through prayer and devotion, and that the life of Jesus is clearly relevant to our own human lives and understanding; that Jesus is not just a figurative icon to worship as an impossible ideal. He was a man like you and me, and he was an authentic *seer*, one who had experienced divine vision, who had clearly known the truth of his own divine nature and the divine nature of all humanity, and proclaimed that truth to all who would hear, even at the cost of his own life.

### **Why We Celebrate The Birth of Jesus**

Why do we celebrate the birth of Jesus? Because he attempted to teach the populace of his time the mystical truth that had been revealed to him: that all the world is, and each of us are, the manifestation of the one Divinity. But, as he went about teaching, there were many who believed he was claiming that he alone was of Divine origin, that he alone was someone special; and so, they cruelly murdered him. And today, two thousand years after his martyrdom, there are still many, under the banner of his name, who promulgate the same erroneous message that Jesus, and Jesus alone, was the sole manifestation of God on earth. But even a cursory search of Jesus’ teachings will reveal that this is not at all what he taught.

His was a mystical understanding, not easy for an uninitiated populace to comprehend. It was a metaphysical understanding derived from a deep

spiritual vision that everything and everyone is born of God and is nothing else but that one Divinity, that God is the hidden Light that projects the images of all things and all beings in the world and exists within them as their source and creator:

“Jesus said, ‘The world’s images are manifest to man, but the Light in them remains concealed; within the image is the Light of the Father. He becomes manifest as the images, but, as the Light, He is concealed’.”<sup>1</sup>

Jesus had seen in the full clarity of his mystical vision that the divine Light was the sole reality in all, and he openly declared that that Light was his own true Identity, because he had *seen* it in a God-given vision. In the unitive mystical vision, the individual soul becomes transparent to its Source, and it knows that Source as its only true and eternal Identity:

“Jesus said, ‘I am the Light; I am above all that is manifest. Everything came forth from me, and everything returns to me. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift a stone, and you will find me there.’”<sup>2</sup>

“If you knew who I am,” he said, “you would also know the Father. Knowing me, you know Him; seeing me, you see Him. Do you not understand that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? It is the Father who dwells in me doing His own work. Understand me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.”<sup>3</sup>

Some believe that, in this declaration, Jesus was saying that he was in some way a unique manifestation of God. But what did Jesus actually mean by this? He was saying that we are like waves on the ocean of God; that just as a wave exists in the ocean, we exist in God; and that, just as the ocean, because it constitutes the very substance of the wave, is *in* the wave, so God is in us; that, in fact, we and the Father are one. This is, of course, true for all of us, but Jesus had *seen* it, had *experienced* it in a divine revelation, a ‘mystical’ vision, and though others might vaguely sense the divine nature of their being, for Jesus, it was radiantly clear, and his certainty was absolute. It is also clear that Jesus never meant this truth to be applied exclusively to himself; he knew very well that *everyone else* was also a manifestation of the divine Light; everyone else existed in the Father as well,

and everyone else contained the Father within them—even though they might not yet be aware of it:

“He said to them, ‘There is a Light within a man of Light, and It lights up the whole world. If it does not shine [within that man], he is in darkness.’”<sup>4</sup>

Jesus taught everyone who would hear him that the eternal Light is the sole reality manifest as each of us: ‘You are that light’ he said, ‘it is who you are!’

“You are the Light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your Light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”<sup>5</sup>

Many others, since the time of Jesus, have been graced with the vision of God, and they too have proclaimed the saving knowledge that God is realizable as the source and manifestation of one’s very being, one’s very Self. But Jesus, because of his extraordinary life, his words, and his martyrdom, is rightly remembered and celebrated above all others as the knower of knowers, the teacher of teachers, and the very brightest of stars in God’s heaven.<sup>6</sup>

#### NOTES:

1. James Robinson, *The Gospel of Thomas*, 1977; 83, p. 135.
2. *Ibid.*, 77, p. 135.
3. The Gospel of John 13:40
4. James Robinson, *The Gospel of Thomas*, 1977; 24, p. 129.
5. The Gospel of Matthew 5:14-16.
6. For more about Jesus and the many others throughout history who knew and taught the message of the divine Self, please see my book, *History of Mysticism: The Unchanging Testament*.

## Nonduality In The Teachings of Jesus

It is important to stress the fact that no one religion holds deed to the Truth over and above the devotees of other lands and other religious traditions. Every religious tradition worth its salt recognizes the same eternal Truth; and all great religious teachers have taught according to their own intimate experience of God, their “mystical vision”—whether it is called “*samadhi*,” “*nirvana*,” “*fana*,” or “union with God.” Since there is but one ultimate Reality, which all share, each one who has experienced the Truth has experienced that same ultimate Reality. Naturally, therefore, their teachings about it, and about how one can experience It for oneself, are bound to be identical.

However, the languages and cultures of the various teachers who have lived throughout history are, no doubt, different from one another. Their personalities and lifestyles are different; but their vision is one. In the mystical experience, which transcends all religious traditions and cultures and languages, the Christian, the Jew, the Muslim, the Buddhist and the Vedantist, all come to the same realization: Each realizes the oneness of their own soul and God, the Soul of the universe. It is this very experience, which prompted Jesus, the originator of Christianity, to explain at various times to his disciples that he had known the great Unity in which he and the Father of the universe were one:

“If you knew who I am,” he said, you would also know the Father. Knowing me, you know Him; seeing me, you see Him. Do you not understand that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? It is the Father who dwells in me doing His own work. Understand me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. <sup>1</sup>

This is the truth that the Indian philosophy of Vedanta speaks of as “Non-Dualism.” The term, “Unity,” is, of course, the same in meaning; but it seems that the declaration, “not-two” is more powerfully emphatic than a mere assertion of oneness. Indeed, the word, “Unity” is often used by religionists who apply it to God, but who have not even considered the thought that they themselves are logically included in an *absolute* Unity. Nondualism, the philosophy of absolute Unity, is the central teaching, not only of Vedanta, but of

all genuine seers of the Truth. This understanding is embodied in the Vedantic assertion, *tat twam asi*, “That thou art.” Jesus expressed the same truth when he said, “I and the father are one.” That saying contains the whole teaching of Jesus, and it is the most perfect expression of Nondualism ever uttered.

Once we begin to look at the teachings of Jesus in the light of his “mystical” experience of Unity, we begin to have a much clearer perspective on all the aspects of the life and teaching of the man. His teachings, like those of the various Vedantic sages who’ve taught throughout the ages, is that the soul of man is none other than the one Divinity, none other than God; and that this Divine Identity can be experienced and known through the revelation that occurs inwardly, by the grace of God, to those who prepare and purify their minds and hearts to receive it. The words of Jesus are so well known to us from our childhood that, perhaps, they have lost their meaning through our over-familiarity with them. He attempted to explain to us, with the words, “I and the Father are one,” that the “I,” our own inner awareness of self, is none other than the one divine Self, the one all-pervasive Awareness, the Lord and Father of us all.

Why, then, are we so unable to see it? Why should it be so hard for us to attain to that purity of heart, which Jesus declared so essential to Its vision? Probably because we have not really tried—not the way Jesus did, going off into the wilderness, jeopardizing everything else in his life for this one aim, focusing completely and entirely on attaining the vision of God. Not the way the Buddha did. Not the way all those who have experienced God have done. Perhaps we’re not ready for such a concentrated effort just yet. Perhaps we have other desires yet to dispense with before we will be free enough to seek so high a goal. For us, perhaps, there is yet much to be done to soften the heart, so that we are pure enough to hear the call of Divine Grace. It is to such as us, for whom much yet needs to be accomplished toward the attainment of a “pure heart,” that Jesus spoke.

All of what Jesus taught to his disciples was by way of explaining to them that his real nature, and that of all men, is Divine; and that the reality of this could be realized directly. Furthermore, he taught them the path, or method, to follow in order to attain this direct realization. Let us look to his own words to corroborate this: In the Gospel book of John, he laments to God, “O righteous Father, the world has not known Thee. But I have known Thee.”<sup>2</sup> And, as he sat among the orthodox religionists in the Jewish

temple, he said to them, “You say that He is your God, yet you have not known Him. But I have known Him.”<sup>3</sup> Jesus had “known” God within himself. Whether this 'mystical' experience of revelation occurred at the moment of his initiation by John the Baptist, or later, during his time in the wilderness, we cannot know for certain. However, it is certain that that experience had separated him and effectively isolated him from his brothers, because he alone among his contemporaries seemed to possess this rare knowledge of the truth of all existence.

This is the difficult plight of all those who have been graced with “the vision of God.” It is the greatest of gifts, it is the greatest of all possible visions; and yet, because the knowledge so received is completely contrary to what all men believe regarding God and the soul, it is a terribly alienating knowledge, which brings upon its possessor the scorn and derision of all mankind. History is replete with examples of others who, having attained this saving knowledge, found the world unwilling to accept it, and ready to defend its ignorance aggressively. This circumstance is little changed today.

Because the “vision” of God was so difficult to convey to those who had not experienced it, Jesus spoke often by way of analogy or metaphor in order to make his meaning clear. He spoke of the experience of “seeing” God as like the entrance into a realm beyond this world, a realm where only God exists. In his own Aramaic language, he called this realm *malkutha*. In the Greek translation, it is *basileia*. In English, it is usually rendered as “the kingdom of God.”

His disciples asked him, “When will the kingdom come?” Jesus said, “It will not come by waiting for it. It will not be a matter of saying ‘Here it is!’ or ‘There it is!’ Rather, the kingdom of the Father is [already] spread out upon the earth, and [yet] men do not see it.”<sup>4</sup>

... Indeed, what you look forward to has already come, but you do not recognize it.”<sup>5</sup>

The Pharisees asked him, “When will the kingdom of God come?” He said, “You cannot tell by signs [i.e., by observations] when the kingdom of God will come. There will be no saying, “Look, here it is!” or “There it is!” For, in fact, the kingdom of God is [experienced] within you.”<sup>6</sup>

Jesus said, “If those who lead you say to you, “See, the kingdom is in the sky,” then the birds of the sky will have preceded you. If they say to you, “It is in the sea,” then the fish will precede you. Rather the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you [as well]. When you come to know your Self, then you [i.e., your true nature] will be known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living Father. But if you will not know your Self, you live in poverty [i.e., you live in the illusion that you are a pitiful creature far from God].”<sup>7</sup>

Another of Jesus’ metaphors utilized the terms, “Light” and “darkness” to represent the Divinity and the inherent delusion of man, respectively:

Jesus said, “The world’s images are manifest to man, but the Light in them remains concealed; within the image is the Light of the Father. He becomes manifest as the images, but, as the Light, He is concealed.”<sup>8</sup>

He said to them, “There is a Light within a man of Light, and It lights up the whole world. If it does not shine, he is in darkness.”<sup>9</sup>

These are terms which have been used since time immemorial to represent the Divine Consciousness in man and the hazy ignorance brought about by the material Creation which obscures It. In the very first paragraph of the Gospel of John, we find an excellent explanation of these two principles, and their Greek synonyms, *Theos* and *Logos*.

In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God. He [or It] was with God in the beginning. All things were made by Him; without Him nothing was made. Within Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of man. And the Light shone in the darkness, but the darkness comprehended It not.<sup>10</sup>

A word of explanation is necessary: These two terms, “Light and “darkness,” are also indicative of the cosmic aspects of Reality; in other words, they are not only the Divine Consciousness in man and the darkness



of unknowing, but they are, at a higher level, the very Godhead and Its Power of manifestation. They are those same two principles we have so often run into in other mystical texts, whether called *Brahman* and *Maya*, *Purusha* and *Prakrti*, *Shiva* and *Shakti*, or *Jahveh* and *Chokmah*. It is the Godhead in us, which provides the Light of Consciousness in us; it is His Creative Power, His manifesting principle, which, in the process of creating an individual soul-mind-body, provides us with all the obscuration necessary to keep us in the dark as to our infinite and eternal Identity.

Jesus said, "If they ask you, 'Where did you come from?' say to them, 'We came from the Light, the place where the Light came into being of Its own accord and established Itself and became manifest through our image.'

"If they ask you, 'Are you It?' say, 'We are Its children, and we are the elect of the living Father.' If they ask you, 'What is the sign of your Father in you?' say to them, 'It is movement and repose.'" <sup>11</sup>

Jesus said, "I am the Light; I am above all that is manifest. Everything came forth from me, and everything returns to me. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift a stone, and you will find me there." <sup>12</sup>

Here, Jesus identifies with the Eternal Light; but it is clear that he never intended to imply that he was uniquely and exclusively identical with It; it should be clear that his intention was always to convey the truth that all men are, in essence, the transcendent Consciousness, manifest in form:

Ye *are* the Light of the world. Let your Light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. <sup>13</sup>

Frequently he declared to his followers that they too would come to the same realization that he had experienced:

“I tell you this,” he said to them; “there are some of those standing here who will not taste death before they have seen the kingdom of God already come in full power.”<sup>14</sup>

“The heavens and the earth will be rolled up in your presence. And the one who lives from the living ONE will not see death. Have I not said: ‘whoever finds his Self is superior to the world?’”<sup>15</sup>

“Take heed of the living ONE while you are alive, lest you die and seek to see Him and be unable to do so.”<sup>16</sup>

“That which you have will save you if you bring It forth from yourselves. That which you do not have within you will destroy you.”<sup>17</sup>

“That which you have” is, of course, the Truth, the Light, the Divinity who manifests as you. “That which you do not have” refers to the false identity of a separate and independent individuality, which is simply a lie. It is the wrong understanding of who you are that limits you, and which prevents you from experiencing the Eternal.

The teaching, common to all true “mystics” who have realized the Highest, is “You *are* the Light of the world! You *are* That! Identify with the Light, the eternal Truth, for That is who you really are!” And yet Jesus did not wish that this should remain a mere matter of faith with his disciples; he wished them to experience it, to *realize* this truth for themselves. And he taught them the method by which he had come to know God. Like all great seers, he knew both the means and the end, he knew both the One and the many. Thus, we hear in the message of Jesus an apparent ambiguity, which is necessitated by the paradoxical nature of the Reality.

In the One, the two—soul and God—play their love-game of devotion. At one moment, the soul speaks of God, its “Father”; at another moment, it is identified with God, and speaks of “I.” Likewise, in the words of Jesus to his disciples, we see this same complementarity: At one moment, he speaks of dualistic devotion in the form of prayer (“Our Father, who art in heaven”); and at another moment he asserts his oneness, his identity, with God (“Lift the stone and I am there ...”). But he cautioned his disciples

against offending others with this attitude (“If they ask you, ‘Are you It?’ say, ‘We are Its children ...’”).

At times, identifying with the One, he asserts that he has the power to grant the experience of Unity (“I shall give you what no eye has seen and what no ear has heard and what no hand has touched and what has never occurred to the human mind”).<sup>18</sup> And at other times, identifying with the human soul, he gives all credit to God, the Father (“Why do you call me good? There is no one good but the ONE, that is God.”).<sup>19</sup>

There is an interesting story that appears in both Matthew and Luke which illustrates the knowledge, from the standpoint of the individual soul, that the realization of God comes, not by any deed of one’s own, but solely by the grace of God: Jesus had just commented upon how difficult it would be for a young man, otherwise spiritually inclined, who was attached to his worldly wealth and occupations, to realize God; and his disciples, who were gathered around, were somewhat disturbed by this, and asked, “Then, who *can* attain salvation?” And Jesus answered, “For man it is impossible; but for God it is possible.”

And Peter, understanding that Jesus is denying that any man, by his own efforts, can bring about that experience, but only God, by His grace, gives this enlightenment, objected: “But we here have left our belongings to become your followers!” And Jesus, wishing to assure them that any effort toward God-realization will bear its fruits in this life and in lives to come, said to them: “I tell you this; there is no one who has given up home, or wife, brothers, parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not be repaid many times over in this time, and in the time to come [will] know eternal Life.”<sup>20</sup> He could guarantee to no one the divinely-revealed knowledge of God; that was in the hands of God. But Jesus knew that whatever efforts one makes toward God must bear their fruits in this life, and in the lives to come.

And so, throughout the teachings of Jesus, one finds these two, apparently contradictory, attitudes intermingled: the attitude of the *jnani* (“I am the Light; I am above all that is manifest”); and the attitude of the *bhakta* (“Father, father, why hast Thou forsaken me?”). They are the two voices of the illumined man, for he is both, the transcendent Unity and the imaged soul; for he has “seen” this unity in the unitive mystical vision.

Jesus had experienced the ultimate Truth; he had clearly seen and known It beyond any doubt; and he knew that the consciousness that lived as him was the one Consciousness of all. He knew that he was, in fact, the living Awareness from which this entire universe is born. This was the certain, indubitable, truth; and yet Jesus found but few who could even comprehend it. For the most part, those to whom he spoke were well-meaning religionists who were dedicated to the exercises and rituals of their religion but were incapable of accepting the profound meaning of his words. The religious orthodoxy of his time, like all such orthodoxies, fostered a self-serving lip-service to spiritual ideals, and observed all sorts of symbolic rituals, but was entirely ignorant of the fact that the ultimate reality could be directly known by a pure and devout soul, and that this was the real purpose of all religious practice.

Jesus realized that despite the overwhelming influence of the orthodox religionists, still, in his own Judaic tradition, there had been other enlightened seers of God, who had known and taught this truth. “I come,” said Jesus, “not to destroy the law [of the Prophets], but to fulfill it.”<sup>21</sup> He knew also that any person who announced the fact that they had seen and known God would be persecuted and belittled and regarded as an infidel and a liar. In the *Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus is reported to have said, “He who knows the Father (the transcendent Absolute) and the Mother (the Creative Principle) will be called a son-of-a-bitch!”<sup>22</sup> It seems he was making a pun on the fact that one who does *not* know his father and mother is usually referred to in this fashion; but, in his case, he had known the Father of the universe, and knew the Power (of Mother Nature) behind the entire creation, and still he was called this derisive name.

Such is the common experience of all the great seers, from Lao Tze to Socrates and Heraclitus, from Plotinus and al-Hallaj to Meister Eckhart and St. John of the Cross. All were cruelly tortured and persecuted for their goodness and wisdom. Jesus too found the world of men wanting in understanding; he said:

I took my place in the midst of the world, and I went among the people. I found all of them intoxicated [with pride and ignorance]; I found none of them thirsty [for Truth]. And my soul became sorrowful for the sons of men, because they are blind in their hearts and do not have vision. Empty they came into the world, and empty they wish to leave the world. But, for

the moment, they are intoxicated; when they shake off their wine, then they will repent. <sup>23</sup>

## NOTES:

1. *John, Gospel Of*, 13:40.
2. *Ibid.*, 17:25.
3. *Ibid.*, 8:54.
4. *Thomas, Gospel Of*, 114; (trans. by Thomas O. Lambdin), Robinson, James M. (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library*; San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1977, p. 138.
5. *Ibid.*, 51, p. 132.
6. *Luke, Gospel Of*, 17:20.
7. *Thomas, Gospel Of*, 3; Robinson, James M. (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library*; San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1977, p. 126.
8. *Ibid.*, 83, p. 135.
9. *Ibid.*, 24, p. 129.
10. *John, Gospel Of*, 1:1.
11. *Thomas, Gospel Of*, 50, Robinson, James M. (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library*; San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1977, p. 132.
12. *Ibid.*, 77, p. 135.
13. *Matthew, Gospel Of*, 5:14-16.
14. *Mark, Gospel Of*, 9:1.
15. *Thomas Gospel Of*, 111; Robinson, 1977, p.138.
16. *Ibid.*, 59, p. 132.
17. *Ibid.*, 70, p. 134.
18. *Ibid.*, 17, p. 128.
19. *Luke, Gospel Of*, 18:18.
20. *Ibid.*, 18:18-30; *Matthew, Gospel Of*, 19:16.
21. *Matthew, Gospel Of*, 5:17.
22. *Thomas, Gospel Of*, 105, Robinson, 1977, p. 137.
23. *Ibid.*, 28, p. 130.

## A Seeing Man In A Blind World

Jesus stood up before the assembled crowd: “Greetings friends and neighbors,” he said. “On rare occasions, a fortunate person is granted clear vision, and sees into the very fabric of the reality in which we live. For

some reason, I have been granted such a vision, and I wish to share with you what I have seen:

“All that we perceive in this world is nothing but God’s glory! He has spread this feast before us of His own delight and joy; even we who enjoy this feast are born of His manifest delight. All is His dream-like production, born of the power of His own unfathomable mind. I saw that this very body, and this very awareness is His own, beyond this time and place that we see and relate to. We are made of eternal God and live within Him; and all that occurs within this world is His playful delight.

“Look at me, my friends: Do you not see that I am in God and God is in me? The same is true for you as well! I have seen it, and I swear it’s true. What else is this world but God’s delight? What else are we but His forms, produced by His will and formed of His substance? If you could see with my eyes, you would know the truth that all that *is* is God; He is in the clouds and in the gritty soil; He lives as every creature in the grass and as every creature in the air. He lives as you, and you are His own dear self. You can find Him therefore by turning within yourselves. There He lives and operates as you. Know Him, and your life will be blessed. You will see with His all-encompassing eye, and you will delight in His unfailing guidance. See Him in all, and love Him in all; and above all, know that you are His own, and live out your life in great joy and sweetness. Go now and remember my words.”

### **The Truth About Jesus**

No one in their right mind would disparage Jesus, the great mystic-martyr of the first century. I, for one, have often stated that, in my opinion, of all the enlightened men gifted by God's revelation, he is at the forefront as teacher and representative of God's truth. But, in the interest of truth, I must insist on pointing out the harmful fallacies perpetuated by the unilluminated organizers of what came to be called Christianity—harmful fallacies that are perpetuated to this day.

Those early followers of the teachings of Jesus may be excused their zealous intent to form an organization that spread and perpetuated those teachings, but, like many others before them, they mistakenly felt that it was necessary to deify their leader in order to guarantee his place in the eyes of the people

as a singular authority, and so he was designated as the sole progeny of God, being both God and man, worthy of being worshiped and adulated as Divinity itself. This strategy did indeed work very well for centuries, and the simple people wholeheartedly accepted this doctrine as Gospel. Having been passed down from generation to generation, today this imaginative notion has attained the status of an unassailable tradition.

But this tradition has also brought along with it a negative consequence as well: mere man was henceforth relegated to a world where he could only aspire to a divine status, but he could never attain it. That status was reserved for Jesus, 'the Son of God'. The Church had essentially declared that there were two kinds of beings: the divine and the human. Jesus is divine, and the rest of us are mere humans. And that doctrine tended to not only dampen but deaden the innate aspirations of man to know his own divine identity.

Nevertheless, throughout history, God continued to reveal to a few mere men the truth of their own divine nature. Like Jesus, so long ago, they experienced in clear vision that they are in God, and that God is in them, that they are truly made of God and one with Him. These men knew that they were not "sons of God" in any literally meaningful sense; they were not different in the manner of their paternity or their conception than any other men, and yet the revelation of their divinity had come to them. Therefore, it was readily apparent to them that Jesus, who had experienced what they had experienced, was not necessarily different in kind from them, but that, in fact, all men are manifestations of the one Divine Father of us all.

Today, we, as enlightened Christians, may no longer regard Jesus as the Son of God, or even as a special manifestation of God; but we must not, on this account, regard Jesus any the less, for, make no mistake: Jesus—like all who become illumined and who live to serve God as His spokesman—was chosen and empowered by the Father. The life and mission of Jesus—in fact *everything* that occurs in this world—is conceived, enacted, and accomplished by God. Jesus may no longer be hailed as the sole progeny of God, but he and all of his illumined brothers and sisters throughout the world stand as proof of the ability of every single person to know their own divinity by the gracious gift of God.

The distinction between human and divine does not exist; and yet there remains a distinction between those who, through divine revelation, *know*

the truth of their divinity and those who do not. Ultimately, your religion is not about the status of Jesus, nor about having faith in Jesus to save you; it's about you. It's about you becoming what Jesus was: A man illumined by God. And that will happen only by the bountiful Grace of God.

Your only spiritual task is to open your heart to Him. Seek Him in silence. Seek Him in the long dark night. If your heart is open and pure, He will come. He will illumine you as He illumined Jesus. Then you too will be a man illumined by God, and your life will be joyfully fulfilled. The enlightening truth is revealed by God to those whom He chooses, and only they know with utmost certainty the marvelous truth that He alone exists, that He is our very substance, that we are all contained in, sustained in, and united in Him.

**NOTE:**

1. An expanded understanding of the nature of the unitive mystical experience will most certainly be instrumental in revolutionizing the understanding of every religious institution in the near future. It will no doubt be especially instrumental in revolutionizing the Christian religion through the demythologizing of the human person of Jesus of Nazareth upon whom the Christian faith is founded, and a reconsideration of his stated message in the light of his mystical experience. This expanded understanding will have a revolutionizing effect upon Buddhism and Islam as well. But we should not anticipate the occurrence of a universally expanded understanding anytime soon. It will occur and become popular among a small group of scholars and thinkers at first, and only after an extended time will this understanding become universal.

If I may paraphrase something Max Planck said in referring to “a new scientific truth”: it is also true that “a new *spiritual truth* does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it.”

(Paraphrase of Max Planck, *Scientific Autobiography And Other Papers*, New York, Philosophical Library, 1949; pp. 33-39.)



**Jesus Was Not The Only One**

It's not necessary to be born of a virgin  
Or to be miraculously conceived  
In order to know that you're born of God's light,  
That you live within Him and consist of His being,  
To know that all this universe is made of Him.

God has revealed Himself in me as well.  
Do you think that I'm special? I'm sorry; you're wrong.  
Yet even a poor fool like me is able to realize God by His grace,  
And know oneness with Him.  
But how could that be—unless He lived within me,  
And lived within every other being as well?

Do you really want to hold onto the old stories  
Even though it's clear they're untrue?  
Know that each of us is made of His light.  
Know that you too can experience your divinity within,  
And come to know the truth of your oneness with Him.

Cast off superstition, the habits of the past!  
So many have known Him; this can't be denied.  
Wake up to the truth: we are each one of us  
Sons of the almighty God.  
Pray to Him who lives in your heart  
That He will reveal your oneness with Him,  
And enable you to reflect His light to the world.

\* \* \*