

THE STORY OF JESUS, THE MYSTIC

(Articles from *The Mystic's Vision* by Swami Abhayananda,
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The Story of Jesus

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 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. ¹

NOTE:

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*. Download it at: www.themysticsvision.com.

Realistic Religion

Current popular religious ideologies tend to idolize or deify one or another historical religious figure whose spiritual wisdom is attributed to their unique divine origin and status. But as our understanding evolves, we are learning that each of us is of divine origin and that we too are able to access the fountain of spiritual wisdom within ourselves. Today, we understand that a number of people throughout history have experienced a revelation on the psycho-spiritual level that transcends the spatio-temporal world, and essentially reveals the underlying identity of the individual consciousness and the all-embracing eternal Consciousness. This 'mystical' experience is still regarded as uncommon, and yet is estimated to occur to one person in every million, which amounts to around 7000 people in today's world population of seven billion. Perhaps that is a generous estimate, but certainly a great number of people throughout the world have experienced at least momentary breakthroughs in consciousness that revealed a deeper, spiritual, level of reality underlying this apparently concrete world of material phenomena.

A more realistic approach to our religious understanding, therefore, would be to reject the deification and worship of a few historical religious figures, to see them rather as inspirational exemplars; and to embrace the ever-present possibility that we and all men and women might experience in ourselves an awareness of our own divine source in this very lifetime, and know firsthand the certainty of our own Divinity. The willingness to follow this path will not appeal to everyone, of course; but only to those few who are called to it. For we are not able to seek or bring about the experience of the soul's 'union with God' of our own will; it is clearly the will of God Himself that sets us on the path and brings us to that ineffable experience.

Nor is it possible to know whom He will choose, but He seems to choose the very intelligent, the very compassionate, those selfless souls surrendered to His will; and He inevitably draws them within themselves through introspection and contemplation to His meeting place where those souls are merged in His eternal awareness. But this 'mystical' path is not without obstacles; it is a path that demands much courage and sacrifice, for the mystic will undoubtedly face much opposition from a skeptical world. Nor should he expect any worldly rewards, for the only rewards obtainable in the mystic's life are the seeds of hope, faith and joy that he is able to plant and blossom in the hearts of those whom his words touch.

And his greatest happiness and satisfaction comes from his lifelong service in the praise of God to His glory and to the benefit of all His children.

The Life And Revelation of Jesus

The life and revelation of Jesus announced 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 this belief was synonymous with 'salvation'. The true message of Jesus, the perennial message of 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.¹

Jesus had seen in an inner revelation that he was a manifestation of the Father, as was all that was created. He was not portraying 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 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 Egypt, Greece, and Rome. 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* often 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, but 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.

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 from among the strictly empirical sciences, today there is universal recognition of the factual occurrence of mystical experience to isolated individuals throughout recorded history, and it is clear that Jesus was 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 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 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 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’.”¹

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:

“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.’”²

“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.”³

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.’”⁴

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 lamp-stand, 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.”⁵

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 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.

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*.

Nondualism 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 life-styles are different. But their vision is one, and the path they teach to it 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. ¹

This is the truth that 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. Non-Dualism, the philosophy of absolute Unity, is the central teaching, not only of Vedanta, but of all genuine seers of Truth. This understanding is embodied in the Vedantic assertion, *tat twam asi*, “That thou art.”

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 Self, the one 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.”² And, as he sat among the orthodox religionists in the Jewish temple, he said, “You say that He is your God, yet you have not known Him. But I have known Him.”³ 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 entering into a realm beyond this world, a realm where only God is. 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.”⁴

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

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.”⁶

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].”⁷

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.”⁸

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.”⁹

These are terms which have been used since time immemorial to represent the Divine Consciousness in man and the hazy ignorance, 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.¹⁰

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, called “Brahman and Maya,” “Purusha and Prakrti,” “Shiva and Shakti,” or ”Jahveh and Chokmah.” It is the Godhead in us, which provides the Light in us; it is the manifestory 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.’”¹¹

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.”¹²

Here, Jesus identifies with the Eternal Light; but he seems never to have 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.¹³

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.”¹⁴

“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?’”¹⁵

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

“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.”¹⁷

“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 separate 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 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”).¹⁸ 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.”).¹⁹

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.”²⁰ He could guarantee to no one that 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; he has “seen” this unity in the “mystical experience.”

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 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 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, of course, that despite the overwhelming influence of the orthodox religionists, still, in his own Judaic tradition, there had been other 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.”²¹ 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!”²² 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.

It 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.²³

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.

Insights Into The Founding of A Religious Tradition

Let me tell you what I believe happened long ago in the land of Israel. When Jesus was baptized in his late twenties by the sage, John, he received the gift of God's grace. That grace 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. In the days to come, he would say to his comrades, "I am in God, and God is in me. I and the Father are one". 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.

Jesus' words were a true reflection of the divine revelation that occurred within him, and yet it is easy to see that they could be offensive to those with strongly held traditional religious beliefs. But Jesus was totally convinced that it was his God-given mission to relate to the people the knowledge that had been revealed in him. However, 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 by crucifixion.

After Jesus was cruelly killed at the insistence of the ignorant mob, his followers, having remembered his words but unable to fully comprehend their meaning, became convinced that he had not been a mere mortal, but was undoubtedly the very incarnation of God. It was probably a few of these followers who hastily hatched a plot: it was a simple matter to move Jesus' body under cover of dark to an undisclosed grave, and the imaginations of the superstitious villagers would do the rest. It was no doubt another of the group who served as a biographer who fashioned a lovely story of how God visited Jesus' mother, while she was still a virgin, and caused her to conceive him supernaturally (even though she had already had numerous children by the time of Jesus' birth).

It was not long before Jesus was officially declared by his followers to be the *bona fide* Son of God, and a suitable theology was constructed to reflect his divinity. However, by their counterfeit theology, the followers unwittingly put an end to the significance of Jesus' empirical observation of his spiritual nature, for obviously that observation applied only to God-men like him, and not to ordinary meat-bodied people like the rest of us.

Then, after a couple of centuries, along came another fellow who had the same revelation that all this is God's appearance in form, and he says: "I am in God, and God is in me. I and the Father are one." But this time it's apparent that he's just an ordinary person. No one claims that he is an incarnation of God—not even him. So, this casts a different light on what Jesus said. Here are two people saying the same thing, though one of them was definitely not a God, but just a man. 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 no one who had not experienced that revelation for themselves could understand what he was saying. 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? Only time will tell.

Religious Organizations

Periodically, in the course of history, an individual comes along who experiences the blessing of God whereby the divine nature of himself and of all reality is revealed to him. But, very quickly thereafter, following upon the life of that individual, there arises a cadre of individuals who, wishing to codify and institutionalize those revelations to suit their own inclinations and misinterpretations, set about founding a religious organization according to their own purposes. It is the revelations of the authentic mystics whose vision is granted by God who are the carriers and disseminators of God's truth in order to inspire the rest of us and to instill that God-given knowledge into our hearts and minds. But it is the work of their counterparts, the religious zealots, to distort and misinterpret those mystical revelations to form the chains in which to bind and imprison the weak and gullible souls who are willing to follow their mistaken paths.

Religious organizations founded and promulgated, not by the seers of God, but by the clerks and officers of a dogmatic club of the uninspired trolls who regularly make up such organizations, inevitably corrupt and tarnish the teachings of the true mystics, the seers, who give their lives and hearts to bring enlightenment to the people. After the Upanishadic rishis, came the ritual-laden priests; after the Buddha, came the monks and their monasteries; after Jesus, came the unenlightened preachers and church organizers. After every worthy teacher of truth, came the blind popularizers and their distorted tenets. So, it has always been and probably shall always be. But listen alone, my friends, to those who have truly *seen*, to those who are gifted by God to give expression to the true knowledge; and stubbornly ignore those who pretend to represent those genuine seers but who truly wish only to enslave you as a follower in the service of their pious, and lucrative, religious organization.

The Truth About Jesus

No one in their right mind would disparage Jesus, the great mystic-martyr of the 1st 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 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 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 duality 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.

What If Jesus Was Just Like You!

What if Jesus was just like you!

We all know that he was God's own son come down to save us—

But what if—just for the sake of imagining—

What if he was just a regular fellow like you,

And his mother was just a regular mother, like yours!

And what if, somehow, when he was being baptized by John,

He experienced a great opening of his consciousness,

And God's grace came pouring in

Revealing to his awakened mind that he was made

Of God's own being, that he was in God and God was in him!

I'm just saying, what if, you know.

If it was like that, wouldn't that mean that

All the things he said apply to you as well?

That you are in God and God is in you?

That you and the Father are in essence one?
That you, as well as Jesus, are the son of God,
His own manifestation,
And that you too can know His Grace and awake
To the truth that you are a divine being in a divine world?

We all believe, of course, that he was a special case,
A singular example for men to follow;
But just imagine for a moment
That in those ancient days his words were misconstrued
To mean that he alone was a being of God's light,
But that, in the greatness of his revelation,
He was really telling us of our own divine selves,
Born of the divine Father every one,
And destined to know Him in ourselves
And to give light in this world to honor the Father
And spread this blissful knowledge to every living soul.
Wouldn't that be great! Just think about it—
Wouldn't that be great!

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