

ENLIGHTENED CHRISTIANITY: THE STORY OF JESUS, THE MYSTIC

**(Articles from *The Mystic's Vision* by Swami Abhayananda,
Published August 12, 2018; last revised: 12-20-22)**

Once in a great while, someone comes along who advances human knowledge by leaps and bounds. A little over two thousand years ago, such a man, named Jesus, brought a revolutionary, all-revealing knowledge to light, and he attempted to explain it to the people of his time. But the people were not advanced enough to comprehend what he was telling them, and thinking him deluded, they turned the civil authorities upon him who had him cruelly slain by crucifixion.

The amazing new knowledge that he attempted to impart to the people had been revealed to him in a rare interior vision that occurred during his participation in a spiritual ceremony that was held on the banks of the Jordan river. That mystical vision revealed to him that we are not only made by God, but that we are made of God. It was shown to him that this flesh in which we live and move is a manifestation of God's own Creative Energy, and everything in this world is made of Him and consists of Him.

The mystical vision that came to Jesus revealed that the entire ocean of existence is one manifested Spirit, and that we are simply waves on that ocean. And as the ocean is contained within the waves, that one Spirit is within all of us. And likewise, since the waves exist within the ocean, all of us exist within that one Spirit. Each of us is therefore one with God, the Father—who is our one and only eternal identity. Clearly, all this is truly the Kingdom of God.

This divine knowledge revealed to Jesus holds the answer to every question that can be asked about the nature of this world and this life. But, although Jesus tried with all his might to explain his vision to the people, few believed him, and many assumed that he was suffering from mental delusion. Some orthodox religionists were even plotting violence against him, and some were inciting the authorities to arrest him on charges of sedition.

Try to imagine the state of Jesus' mind at this time: He had experienced an

undeniable revelation from God, an experience of the divine nature of his own being and of all that exists, and because it was an intimate personal experience, no one else was witness to it, and few were willing to believe him. He had been gifted by God with this amazing spiritual revelation! But he couldn't openly share this holy knowledge with others, nor could he honestly remain silent about it! Very few of us have ever experienced such a situation or such a level of frustration as that which Jesus must have experienced at that time. But due to the continued preponderance of human ignorance, it is a frustration that every mystic must experience—even in these current times.

Introduction

When a young person begins to search earnestly for spiritual truth, they usually follow the religious tradition that is prevalent in their own country. But, in my case, I was drawn to the spiritual tradition whose aim was not merely a faith in the divinity of a God/man who lived two thousand years ago, but to the spiritual tradition whose aim was the direct *personal realization* of God in my own soul. I was led to this aim through the reading of a number of books on the Indian spiritual tradition—in particular, Advaita Vedanta. This tradition emphasized the attainment of “enlightenment,” an experience of direct revelation in which the soul is uplifted to the eternal Consciousness and Source of all creation and is made aware of its identity with that eternal Source. I found many of the various spokesmen for this spiritual tradition to be very compelling, and eventually, at the age of twenty-eight, through intense dedication to my goal, I was blessed by God with that coveted spiritual enlightenment.

Over the course of time, my understanding of the tradition of Christianity also increased. It became clear to me that Jesus of Nazareth, who is the centerpiece of Christian faith, had experienced, as I had, the enlightening Grace of God, and had attempted to convey that fact to the people of Palestine those many years ago. It was only years after his death that a few of his followers established an independent religious cult with its own Church organization, called Christianity. The leadership of that Church declared that Jesus was the one and only Son of God, and that spiritual salvation could be obtained simply by believing in this tenet.

According to these Christian zealots, it was not incumbent upon man, or even possible for him, to attain personal enlightenment, as Jesus had done; one needed only to believe that Jesus was God's emissary to the world, and this simple act of faith would guarantee their entrance into heaven. To many, it seems, this made perfect sense. Therefore, most of what was actually taught by Jesus became largely forgotten, and this 'shortcut' religion spread throughout the lands. And today, many people in the Western world accept without question the story of Jesus, its founder, as it has been told for centuries by the representatives of Christianity—the Christian Church. It has become incumbent on us in the twenty-first century, however, to examine, in the light of repeated instances of mystical experience as well as common sense, some of the precepts of Christianity that we currently take so much for granted. I understand that these precepts have become, over time, deeply imbedded in our psyches, and if they are true, our examinations will not dislodge them, but will strengthen and reinforce their position.

The founding principle of Christianity is the notion that Jesus was literally the son of God. Well, how do we know that Jesus was the son of God? Because we have been indoctrinated by the Church spokesmen to regard what is taught in the Gospels as unquestioned truth. One of those Gospel authors was named Matthew. Here is what Matthew, an anonymous Jew and self-appointed advocate of this tenet, said about the birth of Jesus in the following passage:

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” ...Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her [have sexual relations with her] till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.” 1

First of all, we have to wonder, ‘how did Matthew learn of this dream of Joseph’s? Matthew was a century removed from the time of Joseph. Was the story passed down to him? By whom? And is the two-thousand-year-old

tradition of the divinity of Jesus reliant solely upon a second-hand dream that comes to light only after the life of Jesus had passed? This had to have been a stretch, even for those living in the early historical period in which Matthew wrote. And yet, the story has persisted. Also, there is the ongoing question of whether Jesus was an only son, or had some older siblings, such as James—which would seriously compromise Matthew’s story.

Nearly everyone would agree to the premise that for God all things are certainly 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. To be sure, we find frequent examples of the mating of divine gods with mortals in the myths of the ancient Greeks. 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?

My dear gullible children, God doesn’t impregnate young married women in order to have a human son, nor does he resurrect people back to life after they’re dead. What He does do is He awakens devout young men to His presence within them and reveals to them that He lives within them and they in Him. In this mystical experience, He shows them that they are indeed one with Him. Throughout history, many have experienced this mystical vision, and so can you. There’s no need to be literally fathered by God or to believe in the absurdities that the Church authorities have taught you. Awake to your own common sense and the clear and apparent truth that is before you.

It must be emphatically stated that Christianity, the canon of Jesus’ teachings, is able to 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 God 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 surely more than enough to constitute an enduring spiritual legacy of which all Christians may be proud.

NOTE:

1. Matthew 1:18-25

Greek And Roman Mythology

In the Roman empire as well as in its colonies of the first century such as Israel, 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. Even in the first century, the whole panoply of myths borrowed from the Greeks was viewed as accepted doctrine throughout the Roman Empire. 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 that we accept what is evident through common sense: that Jesus was a normal human male, born of a normal human mother in the normal manner, 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 although the immense edifice of 'tradition' will stand against the emerging of this paradigm, it will

nonetheless prevail, because it is in the cause of truth and will be recognizable as such by the hearts and minds of coming generations.

In the two thousand years since Jesus lived, a great deal of knowledge concerning subsequent mystics of all religious affiliations and the nature of the unitive 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 shown to all who have experienced mystical vision is that all men are born of God and born in 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 this fairytale lineage not only puts him in a category that clearly does not biologically exist, but 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 is not only seen as he truly was, but he becomes someone to whom we can relate, someone we can genuinely admire and emulate. 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, and not just a figurative icon to worship as an impossible ideal. He was a man like you and me, and he became an authentic *seer*, through the experience of a God-given vision, wherein he clearly knew 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.

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 his bodily 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 an ethereal realm at the right hand of God, sitting in eternal judgment of the living and the dead.

For more than 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 life and exploits of one who had direct experience of the Divine was born of ignorance or deception 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.

The Life of Jesus

Little is known or has been related in scriptures about the life of Jesus prior to his great experience as a participant in a baptism by John the Baptist on the banks of the river Jordan.¹ 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, in his larger Spirit-Self, he was all-embracing, 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 personal and subjective experience, but he later told many people of it; and, because of that unmistakably Divine experience, Jesus initiated his mission by 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 which he felt obligated to share with everyone.

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,"² and "I and my Father are one."³ He was not boasting of a special status; 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, himself, existed and of which he 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 a distinctly 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.

NOTES:

1. *Matthew. 3:16, Mark. 1:10, Luke. 3:22, John.1:32.*
2. *John. 13:40.*
3. *John. 10:30.*

The Death, Entombment, And Resurrection of Jesus

The crucifixion and consequent death of Jesus of Nazareth was one of the most malignantly unjust, most unholy, and most unconscionable acts ever perpetrated upon a man to whom God had chosen to reveal Himself. Nevertheless, we cannot doubt that it occurred in accord with the inscrutable will of God.

What we know of that time and place we know from the scant historical documents passed down to us. In our modern times, there are recognized rules for formulating historical documents: generally, such documents

contain copious reference notes which attempt to substantiate the information contained therein. The author of the document is identified by first name, surname, and scholarly association; and the document is further identified and catalogued by publisher and date of publication. However, in the ancient days, this was not the case. At the time of the earliest recording of Christian ‘historical’ documents, the four books known as “the Gospels,” which describe the life, teachings, and death of Jesus, were attributed to four authors for whom absolutely nothing is known other than their first names. There was no additional information provided concerning these four authors, though later we learn that none of them were first-person witnesses of the events they describe, but were merely reporting hearsay, each of them having lived some thirty to fifty years after Jesus’ crucifixion.

The events of which each of these authors spoke are variously described, but they agree enough with one another to constitute a believable narrative overall. But, since religious narratives are notoriously replete with exaggerations, embellishments, and outright fabrications, we may be excused if we are suspicious of the veracity of certain passages within the ‘gospel’ accounts of these four revered authors in which some unnatural, and even ‘supernatural’ occurrences are described. Perhaps foremost among these questionable occurrences is the famous ‘resurrection’ of Jesus from his entombment, said to have been attested to by two female followers of Jesus.

This ‘resurrection’ is a central piece of the Christian church’s doctrine of the divinity of Jesus, who is hailed by them as ‘the only begotten Son of God.’ It is the centerpiece of the Christian holiday of Easter, a Springtime festival during which all the people of the West celebrate Jesus’ rising from the dead over twenty-one hundred years ago. Of course, no one believes in the possibility of ‘rising from the dead,’ except for that *one* exceptional time. Because why? Because in this instance he is believed to have been God’s only son! And though no one really believes that God begat a son on an innocent Palestinian woman, we are nevertheless quite willing to acknowledge and celebrate this one preposterously exceptional occurrence. Why? Because it has become a cultural tradition—a doctrine instigated by the founders of the Church, and long solidified in tradition. And you can’t argue against tradition, can you? A tradition is locked into the culture and installed and sealed into that culture by the acceptance and habit of the

millions of its willing citizens over a period of hundreds of years, and it is not to be questioned. And yet, as rational human beings, we must question it.

Let us go back to the moment of the occurrence of this very exceptional event: The story of Jesus' crucifixion, entombment, and resurrection is told in the Biblical New Testament book of Matthew, where the anonymous Matthew states that, after Jesus' body was entombed:

“The chief priests and Pharisees gathered together before Pontius Pilate, saying, ‘sir, we remember while he was alive, how that deceiver said, ‘after three days I will rise.’ Therefore, command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say to the people, ‘he has risen from the dead’. Pilate said to them, ‘You have a guard, go your way, make it as secure as you know how.’ So, they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.”¹

Then, according to this same author, it was on a Monday morning that Mary Magdalene and another Mary (not the mother of Jesus) went to Jesus' tomb to anoint his body, and they discovered that the large rock that had sealed the tomb had been rolled away, revealing an empty tomb. According to Matthew, these two women saw an angel sitting there who announced to them that ‘Jesus is not here, for he has risen.’ And the angel told them to go to Galilee where Jesus would meet them. And as the women made their way to Galilee, they came across the living Jesus, and they worshipped him.

This is the story told by Matthew, and it is evident that the accounts given by the authors of the other Gospels are not first-person accounts either but are merely embellishments on Matthew's original account. Nowhere, however, does the unidentified Matthew mention how he learned of these events, or of how and when the two women reported these occurrences to him. Also, he states that the risen Jesus thereafter met with a number of his former disciples, and dined with them, but this too is only hearsay, as there are no extant authentic first-person accounts of these meetings.

Matthew acknowledges that the guards who had been appointed to watch the tomb overnight told quite a different story of the disappearance of Jesus: for when they returned from their assignment, they reported to the elders that

“the disciples came at night and stole Jesus’ body away while we slept.” But though Matthew writes that “this saying is commonly repeated to this day,” he believes that the guards reported this because they were bribed by some of the city elders to do so. ² So, the truth of the matter is wholly dependent upon your choice of which side appears most believable.

Easter egg hunts and chocolate Easter bunnies are certainly a lot of fun for the children, and therefore may constitute a valid justification for the holiday. But we shall never know with any real certainty what actually happened in the days following Jesus’ crucifixion and entombment. Was it a *miracle*? Or was it a drama staged by a few of Jesus’ zealous followers? Do we have faith in our common-sense intelligence or in the traditions handed down to us by the zealous founders of a Church organization?

Let us have a look at some of the religious traditions surrounding the passing of some other religious prophets and leaders:

It is stated in Islamic literature that, after the death of the great fifteenth century poet-saint, Kabir, his Hindu followers wished to cremate his body, while his Muslim followers wished to bury him, according to their separate customs. While thus arguing, one mourner lifted the shroud covering Kabir’s body, and behold! the body had disappeared; and in its place were two bouquets of flowers, one for the Hindus and one for the Muslims.

It is interesting to note that the early biographers of Nanak, the great sixteenth century saint and founder of Sikhism, tell a story of his corpse’s miraculous disappearance which is very similar to the one told of Kabir. In the version concerning Nanak, the Muslim and Hindu devotees had come to pay respects to Nanak on his deathbed, and they argued among themselves over whether his corpse was to be cremated or buried. Nanak, overhearing them, said, “If the bouquet of flowers brought by the Hindus remains fresh at my death, they may cremate my body; if the bouquet of the Muslims remains fresh, they may bury it.” And, after Nanak died, sure enough, when someone removed the shroud, Nanak’s body was gone, but there remained two bouquets, both of which were still fresh. These stories, along with the story of Jesus’ miraculous ‘resurrection,’ give rise to wonder at the

exaggerated claims and misguided zeal of religious disciples at every time and place.

It was not long after the 'resurrection' of Jesus that his followers, gathering together in his name, attempted to inculcate a new theology, outside of the ancient tradition of Judaism. Relying on Jesus' own declaration of oneness with God, and in opposition to the established Judaic authorities, these few followers officially recognized Jesus as 'the Son of God', and a suitable theology was constructed to establish that divinity. However, by their counterfeit theology, the followers unwittingly put an end to the universal significance of Jesus' declaration regarding his spiritual nature, for that declaration clearly applied only to special men of Spirit like him, who had been fathered by God, and not to ordinary people who were parented by mere mortals like the rest of us.

However, after a few centuries, and in various parts of the world, a few others came forward to announce that they too had experienced the same interior revelation that Jesus had experienced, the same mystical vision that all this world is God's appearance in form, and they too stated: "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, fathered by God. So, this cast a different light on what was popularly believed about Jesus. For, now, there were a number of people 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 could 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, our very identity?

I suggest that we look carefully at what young Jesus 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. They believed that Jesus was describing only his own nature as a unique manifestation of God. But 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 of an actual person—well, most of it anyway is true. 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 interior experience of his own divinity. The grace of God awoke in him, revealing the truth that he was indeed a manifestation of God. 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, the vast expanse of stars and planets and galaxies, and all the creatures, including himself, 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 to us in our souls the certain knowledge that we consist of God's own Being; that He is our foundation, our substance, and our eternal Self. God's revelation in the story of Jesus is a true 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. 3 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.

NOTES:

1. Matthew: 27:63-66

2. Matthew: 28:12-15

3. 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.

The Revelation of Jesus

Prior to my own mystical experience, 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 recognized or understood.

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 pure-hearted, 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 uniquely identical with God, and that for men and women 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.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 representing himself as a special manifestation of God, but he was revealing the universal truth of human existence: that each one of us is born in God and consists 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,' as Jesus teaches us. Even today, there are only a few Western scholars and academics familiar with the pancultural and pan-historic occurrence of the nondual Mystical experience, and fewer still who have actually experienced it.

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. Jesus had travelled all over the region, teaching the people that we are divine creatures, manifestations of God, contained in God, and that our divine origin could be known and experienced in this world; but some vicious religious representatives spread the rumor that he was saying that he alone was divine, that he alone was

born of God

The Roman authorities took the word of those religious representatives, and as punishment for this blasphemy, the authorities nailed Jesus on a cross to die. The great irony is that today the very same lie is told about Jesus by the authorities of the Christian religion. These so-called “Christians” proudly announce that Jesus, and Jesus alone, was the Son of God, the only one who could rightly say “I and the Father are one.” And today, two thousand years after his martyrdom, there are many, under the banner of his name, who promulgate the same erroneous message that Jesus was the one and only 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 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.’”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 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 true because it *must* be true if, indeed, everywhere only the One exists. It 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 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.”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 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. 6

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 single 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.¹

Man's unity with the Divine Spirit is the truth that the Indian philosophy of

Vedanta speaks of as “Nondualism.” 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 one of the most perfect expressions 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 (the *Atman*) 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, putting aside 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 in themselves the one all-pervasive Spirit 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. And perhaps it is to 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 to them, “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 it was that experience that had separated him and effectively isolated him from his brothers, because he alone among his contemporaries possessed this rare knowledge of the truth of 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. 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 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." 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 (*Theos*) and Its Power of manifestation (*Logos*). 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.'" 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 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." 13

Frequently Jesus 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 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 clearly see this 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 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.”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.

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. 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.

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 unflinching 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 has 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; all is in fact divine. 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 through the purification of your heart and 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 storys
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: the truth is that each of us is
The son of the almighty God.
Pray to Him who lives in your heart:
Ask Him to reveal your oneness with Him,
And enable you to reflect His light to the world.

* * *

THE Gnostics

(Excerpted from *History of Mysticism* by Swami Abhayananda)

Contemporary with the growth of the Christian movement, during the first few centuries of the Current Era, there existed throughout the Mediterranean world a number of religious sects referred to as *Gnostics*. Up until recent times, the bulk of our knowledge about the Gnostics was derived from the anti-Gnostic writings of the early Church Fathers, especially Ireneus and Hippolytus (d. ca. 235). But since the find of fifty-two Gnostic books at Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1945, and their belated publication thirty years later, we possess numerous first-hand accounts of the Gnostic views during the 2nd and 3rd centuries.

The Gnostics claimed to represent the esoteric tradition of mystical knowledge (*gnosis*), and while many of them embraced and infiltrated the Christian community, they stood opposed to the authority of the orthodox (Catholic) Church, regarding themselves as representative of the “true” interpretation of Jesus and his teachings. It must be understood that, during those first few centuries of the Christian Era, Christianity was not yet a coherent body, but rather consisted of a wide variety of disparate groups, each dedicated to their own opinions regarding Jesus, the Christ. Their opinions were embodied in the works they wrote in order to promote their own particular view.

Many of these works, written and distributed by various authors shortly after the death of Jesus, took the form of “Gospels” (*good news*), purporting to be the authentic reminiscences of the life and teachings of Jesus. The ones that were eventually adopted by the Church authorities as Christian scripture in 367 C.E. are the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, known thereafter as “the canonical Gospels.” There were other books of this type, however, that circulated during those first few centuries; one of them, *The Gospel According to Thomas*, was purported to be the work of Didymos Judas Thomas, i.e., Thomas, “the twin brother of Jesus” [which may be either a literal or a figurative designation]. It told nothing of the activities of Jesus and mentioned nothing of Jesus’ status as ‘Son of God,’ or his resurrection, but restricted itself to a collection of 114 mystical sayings attributed to him. It began, “These are the secret sayings which the living Jesus spoke, and which Didymos Judas Thomas wrote down.”¹

One group of Christians, the so-called “Thomas Christians”, who adopted *The Gospel of Thomas* as representative of their views, believed that “salvation” lay not merely in accepting that Jesus had direct knowledge of God, but by following his directions, in obtaining that direct knowledge of God for themselves. Others, who adopted the “canonical” Gospels, and who later became known as the “orthodox” (*straight-thinking*) Church, believed that such knowledge was beyond the reach of mere mortals; they believed in the Divinity of Jesus as a unique and special manifestation of God, and held that it was this very faith in his unique Divinity that by itself constituted “salvation”.

In the first century after Jesus’ death, *The Gospel According To Thomas* was widely circulated in its original Greek edition among some groups of early Christians; then it was translated into Sahidic Coptic (ancient Egyptian) in the third or fourth century C.E. A copy of this Coptic version found its way to the Christian monastery of St. Pachomius in Upper Egypt at the foot of Jabal al Tarif mountain near a village called Nag Hammadi. When, in the late fourth century, the order went out from the Christian authorities to burn all non-canonical books that might be suspect in doctrine, some monks from the monastery loaded a number of such books, including *The Gospel of Thomas*, into a large earthen jar and hid them away in a nearby cave for safekeeping.

For some reason, the books stored in that cave remained undiscovered for fifteen hundred years, when in 1945, a Bedouin peasant, searching for fertilizer, uncovered the jar and discovered its contents. Prior to his dawning awareness of the value of his find, a portion of the books were burned as fuel, leaving intact only thirteen of the long-lost leather-bound manuscripts, containing fifty-two tractates of early Gnostic writings, among them *The Gospel of Thomas*. It would be another eleven years before this document was translated and published in English. Due to the bickering of the scholars in charge of the lost Gnostic books, many of them would wait even longer to see the light of day. When, in 1956, *The Gospel According To Thomas* made its appearance upon the world stage once more, it was hailed as one of the most important scholarly finds to appear in centuries, one that would greatly influence the study of the teachings of Jesus for all time.

Many of the mystical sayings contained in *The Gospel Of Thomas* may appear to us to be merely rewordings of the sayings in the canonical

Gospels, but scholars agree that this text is at least as old as those more familiar Gospels. Some even assert that it is a precursor or source of the sayings found in the canonical Gospels. The sayings in *Thomas*, however, are declared “secret,” and appear to be addressed exclusively to Jesus’ sincere disciples rather than to an uninitiated public.

Jesus said, “It is to those [who are worthy of my] mysteries that I tell my mysteries.”²

When Jesus was 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.”³ Jesus had known God directly during a time of deep prayer, following his initiation by his “guru,” John the Baptist, probably during his time in the wilderness; and that experience had separated him and effectively isolated him from his brothers, because he alone seemed to possess this rare knowledge of the truth of all existence. Unfortunately, this mystical experience, known as “the mystic marriage”, “the vision of God”, or simply “enlightenment”, is an extremely rare occurrence, occurring only to devout, intelligent young men with a lifelong inclination to philosophy and fearless in the pursuit of Truth. Drawn on by the sweet caresses of Grace, they come to realize God only during a prolonged solitary meditation entered upon in the search to know Him.

The soul, seeking to draw nearer to God in prayer, enters into a deep state of contemplation. The inner gaze is fixed, the breath is suspended, and suddenly the veil of ignorance dissolves. Suddenly, there is no longer a soul, no longer a God; no longer an “I” or “Thou”. The devotee, in the depth of contemplation of God, experiences an unprecedented clarity of awareness, and his consciousness is utterly transformed. No longer seeing as a soul apart, he “sees” from the vantage point of Eternity. No longer aware of his individual identity or the world about him, he knows himself to be the sole Existence and revels in the bliss and perfection of the One. The devotee is enlightened, and knows his true, eternal, Identity.

After such an experience, even though the devotee knows that His true Self is none other than the eternal One, he may still on occasion retain his relationship to God. 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.” 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 the appearance of hubris, instructing them to avoid offending others (“If they ask you, ‘Are you It?’ say ‘We are Its children...”).

At times, identifying with the One, Jesus 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...”) ⁴ 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.”) ⁵ And so, throughout the teachings of Jesus, one finds these two, apparently contradictory, attitudes intermingled: the attitude of the *jnani*, or knower (“I am the Light; I am above all that is manifest...”); and the attitude of the *bhakta*, or devotee (“Father, Father, why hast Thou forsaken me?”). He speaks now as the transcendent Unity and now as the imaged soul; they are the two voices of the illumined man, for he is both—now one, now the other.

Once we begin to look at the teachings of Jesus in the light of his mystical experience of Unity, and the extraordinary powers accompanying that experience, 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 sages of all religious traditions 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. Jesus had realized that God was masquerading as him, and that it is God who masquerades as every form, revealing Himself within those whom He chooses.

Because the vision of God is 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 in terms of 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

language it was *basileia*. In English, it is usually rendered as “The kingdom of God”.

The Pharisees [who believed “the kingdom of God” to be a coming event in time] 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

In *the Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus said,

“If those who lead you say to you, ‘See, the kingdom [of God] 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 [of God] is inside of you, and it is outside of you [as well]. When you come to know your Self, then 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, and you *are* that poverty.”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

Here, these two terms, “Light” and “darkness” indicate the Divine Identity within and the ignorance concealing it, but they 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”, “Tao and Teh”, or “the Father and the Mother.” It is the Godhead, which provides the Light in us; it is the manifestory Power which, in the process of creating a body, brain, and nervous system, provides us with all the obscuration necessary to keep us (temporarily) in the dark as to our true 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. [i.e., ‘who, but God, is capable of producing the miracle of animate life?’]”¹⁰

In the “mystical experience,” one learns of his identity with The Divine Reality and realizes that all of the substance of this world is contained in that one Self. Identifying with the transcendent Spirit, which is manifest as the phenomenal universe, Jesus said,

“It is I who am the Light which is above all. It is [also] I who am the All. From me did the All come forth, and unto me does all return. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there.”¹¹

While Jesus here identifies with the eternal Light; 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, and that, if they knew the Truth, they would identify with that eternal Spirit:

“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.”¹²

To know the Eternal is to know the one Source of all that is; it is to know that there is no one else in all of existence but that One. When, in contemplation of God, the apparent small self has vanished, the soul is no more; and only this immense Identity, in whom there is no division at all, breathes alone. Jesus 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 Existence, the Lord and Father of all. For the God-realized man, there is no longer a separation between the “I” and “the Father”; to distinguish the one from the other is to lapse once more into the universal illusion of duality. For while the mind is elevated and concentrated at the highest level, there is no other “I” besides the one transcendent Reality, the eternal Self. In *the Gospel of John*, Jesus attempts to convey this understanding when he asks his disciples:

“...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.”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 he 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 Light, your Divine Identity. “That which you do not have” refers to the false identity of separate individuality, which is simply a lie. It is 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 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. *Gnosis* (Self-knowledge) is superior to *pistis* (faith), for faith is still subject to doubt and error; but direct God-revealed Knowledge is unassailable. A person with direct Knowledge becomes fearless, unperturbed. He is not troubled for the body and is not ruffled by the vagaries of the mind; he remains calm, insightful, knowing with the utmost certainty that he is the deathless Self.

In many instances throughout the canonical Gospels, as well as in *The Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus’ disciples question him on how they too might attain that direct Knowledge, how they too might enter that “kingdom of God”; and he gives them instructions on the practice they are to undertake:

“Jesus said, ‘Let him who seeks [the eternal Truth] continue seeking until he finds [It]. When he finds [It], he will become troubled. When he becomes troubled, he will be astonished, and he will rule over all.’”

“Jesus [said], ‘He who seeks will find, and [he who knocks] will be let in.’”¹⁹

“His disciples questioned him and said to him, ‘Do you want us to fast? How shall we pray? Shall we give alms? What diet shall we observe?’”²⁰

Jesus said, “If you fast, you will give rise to sin for yourselves; and if you pray, you will be condemned [by others]; and if you give alms, you will do harm to your [own] spirits. When you go into any land and walk about in the districts, if they receive you, eat what they will set before you, and heal the sick among them. For what goes into your mouth will not defile you, but that which issues from your mouth it is that which will defile you.”²¹

Jesus said to them, “When you make the two [“I” and “Thou”] one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female [the transcendent and the immanent] one and the same, so that the male not be male nor the

female [be] female; ...then you will enter the kingdom...”²²

[Jesus said,] “If you do not fast as regards the world [i.e., if you do not leave aside worldly desires], you will not find the kingdom...”²³
 “Become passers-by”²⁴

Jesus said, “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 [i.e., he will know his deathless Self]. Have I not said, ‘Whoever find his Self is superior to the world?’”²⁵

Jesus said, “Many are standing at the door, but it is the solitary who will enter the bridal chamber [of union]”²⁶

Jesus said, “Blessed are the solitary and elect, for you will find the kingdom [of God]. You are from it, and you will [thereby] return to it.”²⁷

Spiritual instructions such as these point the way and indicate the rare and difficult life of one-pointed devotion to God, which leads to enlightenment. Solitude must be procured, and the mind must be freed from the distractions of worldly desire, in order to give one’s heart and mind to the contemplation of God. Yet who could be expected to follow such a life? Only those drawn to it by Grace are inclined to give their lives entirely to interior contemplation. And these are always but few. Of the many others, Jesus asked only that they believe what he told them; that they have faith in his words and live as best they were able to in accordance with the truth. Perhaps they were not among the “elect”; perhaps they would not “see” God in this lifetime, but still, they could live fruitfully and joyfully in the love of God, and trust by their actions to win His Grace.

There is an interesting story that appears in both Matthew and Luke which illustrates that the realization of God comes, not by any deed of one's own, but solely by the Grace of God, and that we are all journeying toward that goal: Jesus had just commented upon how difficult it would be for a young man, otherwise spiritually inclined, who was yet 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 (i.e., enlightenment)? And Jesus answered, "For man it is impossible; but for God all things are 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 awakening, 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 [attaining] the kingdom of God, who will not be repaid many times over in this time, and in the time to come know eternal Life." ²⁸

The knowledge of one's eternal Life is liberation from the darkness of ignorance forever; but Jesus realized, of course, the impossibility of conveying this knowledge to those who were incapable of accepting it, and the price to be paid for attempting to share it. He knew that any person who announced the fact that they had seen and known God would be persecuted and belittled and regarded as a blasphemer and a liar. In *the Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus, who was heir to the mystical tradition of Judaism which recognized *Chokmah* as the creative aspect of *Jehovah*, the transcendent Father God, is reported to have said, "He who knows the Father and the Mother will be called a son-of-a-bitch!" ²⁹ 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 by this derisive name.

This is the common experience of all the great seers, from Lao Tze to Heraclitus and Socrates, from Plotinus and al-Hallaj to Meister Eckhart and Saint John of the Cross; all were cruelly tortured and persecuted for their transcendent knowledge. 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.”³⁰

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.

NOTES:

1. *The Gospel of Thomas*, 62
2. *The Gospel of John*: 17:25
3. *Ibid.*, 8:54
4. *The Gospel of Thomas*, 17
5. *The Gospel of Luke*, 18:18
6. *Ibid.*, 17:20
7. *The Gospel of Thomas*, 3
8. *Ibid.*, 83
9. *Ibid.*, 24
10. *Ibid.*, 50
11. *Ibid.*, 77
12. *The Gospel of Matthew*, 5:14-16

13. *The Gospel of John*, 13:40
14. *The Gospel of Mark*, 9:1
15. *The Gospel of Thomas*, 111
16. *Ibid.*, 59
17. *Ibid.*, 70
18. *Ibid.*, 2
19. *Ibid.*, 94
20. *Ibid.*, 14
21. *Ibid.*, 14
21. *Ibid.*, 27
22. *Ibid.*, 22
23. *Ibid.*, 27
24. *Ibid.*, 42
25. *Ibid.*, 111
26. *Ibid.*, 75
27. *Ibid.*, 49
28. *The Gospel of Luke*, 18:18
29. *The Gospel of Thomas*, 105
30. *Ibid.*, 28.

* * *