

# The Gnosis of Light

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Behold the light! . . . the true light which lighteth every one that cometh into the world.

- Gospel of John

## The Presence

Jesus taught the truth (*alétheia*) and the goodness/beauty (*agathos/charis/kalos*) of the ancient mysteries, the Primordial Wisdom Tradition of our species that was the radical nondual monistic teaching taught by all of the masters of antiquity, and by the great masters who founded the historical religions. This “innermost secret” or greater esoteric great tradition of humankind belongs equally to them all. Esoterically, there is a prior or transcendent unity at the heart of all of the traditions of our Great Wisdom Tradition. This unity is subtler or deeper than the exoteric moral, theological, epistemological and ontological similarities revealed by philosophy and religious studies. This unity is the inner esoteric pinnacle where the outer exoteric traditions merge. This unity is the very base or source or primordial ground in whom they all arise. Here lies the implicate, nondual primordial unity that transcends yet embraces the explicate realities of all our traditions. It is this prior ontic unity of ultimate *being* itself (Interbeing), by whatever name, that is invariant through the relative cognitive processional of *becoming*, the state and trait changes of the interdependent continuum of outer, inner, innermost secret and nondual religious and philosophical views and practices, albeit expressed through different metaphors, and differing levels of subtlety of understanding. This Base (*gzhi rigpa*) or “supreme source” (*Bathos, shunyata*) emptiness, the *Trikaya* of the Base, Absolute *Bodhicitta*) in whom everything arises is the nondual intrinsic “Primordial Awareness Wisdom,” the very Gnosis of Light (*jñāna/yeshe*<sup>2</sup>).

The nondual (no subject-object separation) view of the Gnosis of Light—Christ Consciousness, Buddha Nature, *Parabrahman*—is the essence of our wisdom traditions. This view is perhaps, best stated in the one Gnostic gospel that was included in the New Testament Canon, the *Gospel of John*: “Behold the light! ... the true light which lighteth every one that cometh into the world.” It is this light, this potential for enlightenment that is the bright, unrealized “presence that lives sleepwaiting within each human form” (Schofield 1973). It is this light that is the subject of the profound mystery, the subject of the esoteric transcendental aspect of our descent from the basal source or ground, and our ascending path of return. This luminous presence (*christos, vidya, rigpa*) is the very primordial light of *Genesis*, arising from the Depth (*Bathos, emptiness, dharmakaya*) and dwelling at the spiritual heart of every human being. This true Gnosis is more profound than the dualistic doctrines of the Gnostic Christian heretics. It is more profound than the transcendental theology of the great theologians Clement of Alexandria and his disciple Origen; more profound even than the nondual Valentinian and Gospel of Thomas teachings. Indeed, the true Gnosis of Light is utterly beyond the grasp of human concept

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<sup>2</sup> Our Wisdom Traditions tell that this subtlest Primordial Awareness Wisdom dimension is hidden from conceptual mind. It is revealed, step-by-step as the spiritual aspirant ascends through the practice of the path of gnosis. Paradoxically, it is given immediately, in this very moment now to the prepared aspirant who will open to receive it. This paradox of the hidden gnosis *vis-a-vis* its immediate presence at the spiritual heart is the “paradox of the Path.” It defines the “problem of gradualism.” The paradox of seeking happiness, whether relative or ultimate, is this: “We cannot *become* happy. We can only *be* happy”.

and belief, transcending dualistic concept-mind altogether for it is the eternal mystery of the actual clearlight nature of mind. "The clearlight nature of mind is the only hope for humankind" (H. H. The Dalai Lama).

It is this Gnosis of Light that arises from and opens into the very primordial ground of being. Therefore, this unity of love and wisdom (philosophy as *philos/sophia*) is the very essence or nature of mind itself (the Primordial Father, *Tao*, *Nirguna Brahman*, *Shunyata*, *Cittata/Sem nyid*). This Gnosis of Light is the primal creative utterance (*Logos*, the Word), remembrance (Plato's *anamnesis*), recognition and ultimate realization of our inherent primordial "supreme source." It is this Gnosis of Light that, according to our wisdom traditions, is the actual preconscious motive for all our seeking strategies for happiness. The great adepts and masters of the past and the present have taught and demonstrated this great truth. And, astonishingly, "It is already accomplished" (Garab Dorje). "What you seek is already present" (Jesus). "For those with ears to hear, let them hear." For those who will, surrender and receive this "always already present" presence of the Gnosis of Light. Why then is this great esoteric, even nondual wisdom teaching largely absent from Islamic, Jewish and Christian spiritual practice?

### **The Betrayal of the Gnosis of Light**

Our conventional religious institutions do not desire to transcend the self-sense that obstructs realization of the gnosis love/wisdom, but to serve it. Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche has termed this egoic motive "spiritual materialism." Our prevailing global massmind ideology is Scientific Materialism whose legacy conditions us to accept and cling to belief in a complex of separative conceptual and belief systems ("hang ups," *cathexes*, *samskaras*) that deny this supreme identity, this primordial light that we actually are. We are reduced by this radical objectivist materialism to "ghosts in a machine" (Koestler), and the deep subjective realities of God and spirit become no more than artifacts of purely physical brain activity. We feel guilty and unworthy of the love and the wisdom that is our birthright as "god-children" participants being/becoming the Gnosis of Light. Here, "the sins of the parents are visited upon the children" (Jesus of Nazareth), generation to generation.

A great misfortune befell Christianity. The betrayal of the Mysteries by the false Gnostics - for the Gnostics, that is, those who know, were the Initiates of primitive Christianity - caused the Gnosis to be rejected and alienated the Church from the supreme truths of the Kaballa, which contain all the secrets of transcendental theology. (*Eliphas Levi, The Mysteries*, A.E. Waite, in Kingsland, 1970)

As we have seen, the esoteric understanding of the indwelling, intrinsic primordial wisdom gnosis became hardened into exoteric, conventional dogmas, and the "True Gnosis of Light" became heresy. The power of the Church became gradually vested in an ambitious, material priestly hierarchy who, from the earliest apostolic period, established a powerful Orthodoxy fanatically opposed to the esoteric mystery teaching descended from the prehistoric Christ/Buddhas, to Hermes and Moses, to Jesus, to Paul, to Theodius and his

disciple, the master Valentinus. This was the fanatical "Christ Cult" of the Christian Orthodox Church of the first and second centuries. This Orthodoxy included certain Gnostic initiates—Clement, Origen, even Augustine. It was the sworn goal of this group to destroy every trace of the Gnosis wisdom texts throughout all Christendom (Mack 1995). The result was that the monistic Gnosis of Light, the love-wisdom unity teaching of Jesus, was lost to the world until the discovery of the *Nag Hammadi* scriptures in 1945, and the Essene scriptures at Qumran in 1947.

### ***Christos, The Cosmic Christ: The Spirit of the Gnosis of Light***

The primordial wisdom mystery teaching of the "Gnosis of Light" is this: humankind has an inherent, indwelling divine nature or heart essence. "The Nature of Mind is primordially pure from the very beginning" (Garab Dorje). It is told that such realized beings incarnated and descended into the material world of flesh and ego to show the way. Yet first they must accomplish the Path that they realize, ascend and return to the spiritual perfection or wholeness that is, paradoxically, our actual design and identity from the very beginning. This return to, or realization of our original, inherently divine nature is the great esoteric truth of the perennial mythical archetype of "the eternal return". This truth of our apparent descent into material spacetime and the realization-return to essential, nondual spirit is present in the inner esoteric and greater esoteric nondual wisdom teachings in virtually all religious traditions.

This truth is descended to Christianity through the esoteric and innermost secret tradition of the Hebrews, Greeks and Romans (Pythagoras, Plotinus, Moses, Jesus and Paul). This teaching was present in the Hellenistic mysteries which were descended from the Hermetic/Orphic and Vedic mystery traditions and their prehistoric antecedents.

That which is called the Christian religion existed among the ancients, and never did not exist, from the beginning of the human race until Christ came in the flesh, at which time the true religion which already existed began to be called Christianity. - St. Augustine (Epis. Retrac., I, xiii, 3)

Thus it is the true nature and destiny of humanity, on the accord of the teaching of our primordial wisdom tradition as it is embodied in esoteric Christianity, that "in the beginning" humankind was spiritually divine and whole, unified with the primordial Father. Humanity descended from this Eden consciousness into matter, became clothed in "coats of skin," polarized into two sexes, and became cognitively separated and forgetful (*amnesia*) of our divine source. This theme is constant in the various creation mythologies of our species. This is the hell of *samsara*: the sin (*ignorance, hamartia, avidya, marigpa*), suffering (*pathos, duhkah*) and death (*thanatos*) that is the story of the Old Testament, and of the ancient *Vedas*. It is the indwelling presence of this divinity, realized through the *sadhana* of the yoga of the practice of the spiritual path (*marga, lam*) that develops our "paracletic faculty." The ripening of this seed of divine potential facilitates the reunion and

return to our primordial source, our nondual "groundless ground" that is the esoteric teaching of the New Testament, and of nondual Buddhism (Essence *Mahamudra*, *Dzogchen*), Hinduism (*Advaita Vedanta*), and Taoism (the yoga of the *Returning of the Light*). This inherent, primordial spiritual nature (Christ Nature, Buddha Nature), that "I Am" presence that is the heart-seed always already present at the spiritual heart of each human being, is esoterically, the old news and the good news of the teaching inherited and transmitted by Jesus the Christ and Gautama the Buddha. This is the ancient Gnosis of Light revealed and demonstrated through the historical person of Jesus as the Christ Principle, the divine seed *Christos* (*Logos*), and of Buddha Gautama Shakumuni as the *Tathagatagarbha* (the heart-seed of Buddhahood). This Christ-Buddha Nature is our actual "supreme identity." Who am I? "I Am That I Am." "*Tat Tvam Asi*/That I Am," without a single exception.

Thus it is *Christos* — not the historical Jesus, and not Jesus as God — that is to be realized by each human being through the yoga or spiritual practice of the Gnosis of Light. It is this *Christos* that is the Cosmic Christ, the Christ *presence*, the Christ nature, "the living Jesus" that abides always within the heart-mind, at the spiritual heart (*hridayam*) of each human being. In due course and by grace, each one shall awaken to the full *bodhi* of this primordial wisdom. Each one participates as an instantiation of God the Father, the Depth, the vast unbounded whole itself. Thereby shall the collective whole of humanity be released, liberated and returned in spirit to the Eden consciousness of the nondual divine "That I Am" that is our supreme source. Thus is the great primordial wisdom mindstream of the Cosmic Christ been realized and actualized in the world by Jesus the Christ, and by each of the buddhas and great *mahasiddhas* of the past, and of the present, and will be realized by the avataric Christ/Buddhas yet to come.

The initiatory levels or degrees of depth of realization of this esoteric perennial mystery teaching remain of course, merely exoteric conceptual understanding until actually realized and demonstrated — step-by-step — by the disciple/devotee in the everyday lifeworld — from initiation and baptism, to enlightenment, to the realization of the *Christos* and its actualization in the world through the kind compassionate activity of love. Such a one, according to the *Gospel of Philip* (Gnostic), "is no longer a Christian, but a Christ."

### **The Resurrection of the Cosmic Christ**

Yes, it is the Cosmic Christ that is to be realized through the radical nondual Gnosis of Light, the promethean "clearlight" mind teaching of our wisdom traditions. The realization of this unity of the Cosmic Christ is the realization of Christ/God Consciousness, the in-dwelling Christ Nature, the Buddha Nature, Krishna Consciousness, that primordial presence that is, by whatever name, the divine original face of each human being, of all sentient beings, and indeed, of all relatively manifested spacetime conditional reality. Thus are the perennial "Two Truths": the implicate order of perfectly subjective "Big Mind," (Susuki Roshi), the mindstream of the *Christos*, the Buddha mind that transcends and embraces everything. And there is included and embraced within this the relative-conventional world of spacetime reality — "Small Mind" — the explicate order that is the

objective world of related things. It is this Christ-Buddha mindstream that is, according to our Great Tradition, the luminous *presence* (*christos, vidya, rigpa, atman*) of the primordial awareness wisdom of our supreme source—*Bathos*, the Depth in whom this all arises.

The realization of the Cosmic Christ, according to Paul, must be "found and brought to birth" as the "Christ in you" in order to be lifted up from "this ocean of incarnation and death"; for Buddhists, "this ocean of *samsara*". Jesus' resurrection is, for Paul, not a temporal "judgment day," but a timeless, transcendent gnostic/mystical awakening or enlightening: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee" (Ephesians).

Throughout the canonical New Testament and the non-canonical Gnostic Scriptures, Christ Consciousness—*Christos/logos*— as the potential realization of the Gnosis of Light is presented continuously in outer exoteric symbol and allegory as the fall and resurrection of each individual, and thereby of humanity collectively. *Humanity has been crucified upon the cross of material form*. Today we see this in scientific and spiritual materialism. Once again, our spiritual ascent—resurrection, liberation and return—is accomplished through the practice of the spiritual path, the yoga of the path to realization of Christ Consciousness, the indwelling *Christos* or Cosmic Christ that is and always shall be our original divine face, our actual self nature. From the Fifth Gospel, the *Gospel of Thomas* (Gnostic) Jesus speaks:

If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you.... There is light within a being of light, and it lights the whole world. If that being does not shine, that one is darkness.

### **"Christ is Risen"**

The great truth "Christ is Risen" is, esoterically, the personal realization that the conditional ego-I of every human being has already been resurrected into the Gnosis of Light that is the "I Am" presence, the *Christos (vidya, rig pa)* that is not other than, or in any way separate from our supreme source, *Abba* or God the Father, primordial spirit-being itself. "Christ is risen" is the truth that "it is already accomplished from the very beginning" (Garab Dorje); that each one is already resurrected into the light, here, now, at the heart, when we recognize, then realize *That (tat)* that we always actually are, this primordial Gnosis of Light. But we must first awaken (*bodhi*) to it. This recognition, this remembrance can occur at any moment, now. The realization and actualization of it through kind, compassionate acts takes a little longer. "The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step" (Lao Tzu).

### **The Gnostic Christian Nondual View: Kabbalah, Valentinus and Thomas**

Some contemporary scholars (Jonas, Rudolph, Churton) view the Christian Gnostic record of the first two centuries as theologically and ontologically dualistic

regarding the separation of matter and spirit, humanity and God. But it is not so. Well developed nondual (no subject/object separation), monistic (all of reality is one substance) teaching arises in the Valentinian, literature of the second century C.E. (Schoedel, Dawson, Layton). Of God the primordial Father: “He possessed the All dwelling within Him” (*Valentinian Exposition*). “In the Unbegotten One, all things exist at once” (Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*). According to Bentley Layton, this teaching assumes a nondual monistic cosmology characteristic of “Stoic pantheistic monism [where] all is enclosed by God and ultimately all is God” (Layton 1987). William Schoedel: “Such theology presupposes a non-dualistic cosmology. For it does not allow that the God who contains all things is limited by any other reality” (Schoedel, 1972).

The Valentinian first principle, the supreme source of the All is this primordial Father, the Depth (Bythos or Bathos). From this masculine aspect of godhead emanates The Son that is “The Mind,” intrinsic primordial awareness wisdom itself descended into mental and physical form. Thus, from the nondual One arises plurality, multiplicity, The Many. This feminine aspect of godhead is called “The Silence,” the direct experience of the Primordial Awareness Wisdom that is utter equanimity or peace. Thus, this androgynous male/female dyad that is The Son descends as The Mind into spacetime as the dimensions (*Aeons*) of mental and material form. All together these entities, these “members of the All” constitute the *pleroma* or “fullness” of the Father that is nondual godhead itself (Layton 1980, Schoedel 1972, Thomassen in Meyer, 2007). Jesus is the physical embodiment of the Son (Mind), the *Christos*, the Cosmic Christ who incarnates into spacetime in order to teach to suffering, separated human beings the redeeming Gnosis of Light.

*Two of the great Nag Hammadi texts, Valentinus’ Gospel of Truth (Gnostic) and the Tripartite Tractate (Gnostic) explicate this profound, if fantasque, gnostic ontology. These pivotal texts represent a transition in Christian history from the outer exoteric Hellenistic-Platonic dualism of earlier Egypto-Greek and Gnostic teaching, and from the dualism—the essential separation of humanity and God, matter and spirit—of the Hebrew Tanakh (The Old Testament) and the developing Christian Orthodoxy, to the inner esoteric and then radical nondual experiential mysticism of the Kabbalistic, Valentinian and the Thomas Gospel teaching. Exemplars of this transition process include, as we have seen, the great Gnostic turned Orthodox theologians, Clement of Alexandria (Stromata, Book IV) and his disciple, Origen, and later, Augustine.*

Both the *Gospel of Truth* and the *Tripartite Tractate* emphasize the esoteric, mystical (*epinoia*, (*bhavana*, *dhyana*). *Epinoia* is the penetrating insight (*vipashyana*) of immediate contemplative or meditative, non-conceptual knowing (*gnosis*, *jnana*), *vis-a-vis* exoteric, conventional conceptual belief (*dianoia*, *doxa*) in the separate Platonic creator demiurge (*Timaeus*) and the exoteric dualistic creator-god of the Hebrews and Orthodox Christians. Both of these texts utilize the Kabbalistic mysticism of the ancient *Raza Rabba* (The Great Mystery), and the 2nd century mysticism of the *Zohar* of Simeon ber Yohai. (*Zohar* was probably completed in the 12th century by Moses de Leon.) These secret teachings are antedated by a thousand years in the Hebrew *hekalat*, and through the *logos/Christos* incarnation of Enoch. Valentinus’ *Gospel of Truth* speaks of redemption (*apolytrosis*,

release, liberation) as "revealed to be perfect through the mercies of the Father" as the great hidden mystery that is Jesus the Christ. "Through him he enlightened those who were in darkness because of forgetfulness " (Grant, 1961). This forgetfulness (*amnesia*) begets the ignorance (*hamartia/sin, avidya*) that perceives the phenomenal world of matter as objectively real and separate from the *pleroma*, the fullness of spirit, this All embraced by perfectly subjective *Bathos*, the great Depth that is godhead, the Primordial Father. Valentinus laments this condition in which we arise and dwell within God yet we do not know it. "The Kingdom of God is spread upon the face of the earth, yet you do not see it" (Jesus).

Through this fundamental ignorance (*hamartia, avidya*) of the nature of God or reality itself, and our place and participation in it we see, not the luminous primordial unbounded wholeness, the *Bathos* of the *pleroma*, but merely its illusory Platonic shadows that constitute the apparently separate material world that is Plato's cave. But for the Valentinians, God is the one reality. Indeed, there is only God. Gnosis is the light that dispels the darkness of ignorance that brings suffering and death, so that we may know there is no ultimate separation between humanity and God. The world of form arises, dwells and decays within the Depth of the Primordial Father God, who transcends yet embraces every participating fragment of this unbounded whole. Such a view is the antithesis of Gnostic dualism. This Valentinian narrative partakes in the very innermost secret nondual core of our primordial wisdom tradition, whether Buddhist *Dzogchen*, *Advaita Vedanta*, or *Kabbalah*.<sup>3</sup>

For the esoteric Christian *pneumatic* (not the *psychic*) Gnostic Jesus demonstrated the *logos-Christos* that is present as the divine Gnosis of Light *within* each human being, an inherent, already present *presence*, a spiritual potential awaiting recognition, then realization (*bodhi*). For these Christians neither the human Jesus, the great exemplar and master teacher of the Gnosis of Light, nor Jesus as the avataric Son of God was the object of worship. For the *nondual Gnostics* it is the *logos-Christos*, the Christ Nature, the very presence of God that always already abides at the human heart that Jesus' great realization exemplified.

Thus, in Valentinus' *Gospel of Truth* and the *Tripartite Tractate* we see a fully developed nondual, monistic transcendence of the persistent dualism of matter and spirit, humanity and God, soul and the divine of exoteric Hellenism, the dualistic Gnostics, Orthodox Judaism and Orthodox Christianity. Through the Valentinian texts, and also in the Thomas literature we discover the "Gnosis of Light" that is nothing less than the nondual wisdom teaching found at the esoteric and nondual heart of all of the traditions of our Great Tradition, as we have seen. This is the great innermost secret spiritual teaching that was descended to Jesus from Moses, Enoch and the *hekalot*, to the mystical Zohar and Kabbalah, and from the ancient Orphic/Hermetic mystery religions, and passed forward through the

<sup>3</sup> When speculating about the "highest" or most subtle nondual "innermost secret" teaching of any tradition it may be useful to note that there are levels of depth of understanding of this greatest teaching, from the subtlest conceptual understanding, through the penetrating insight of the union of *shamatha/vapashyana* (*ennoia/epinoia*), to the omniscient understanding of a Christ/Buddha. Such levels or dimensions of understanding are functions of the psychospiritual lifestage development of the individual. Moreover, with the exception of a Christ/Buddha, the interpreter introduces a personal subjectivity into the objective unpacking of the teaching. There seems to be a profound impulse, even a *prima facie* moral imperative to share our innate Primordial Wisdom with one another. Yet there exists an apparent protean abyss between our view, and our conduct. We will not be taken seriously until we practice our praxis.

esoteric mystical Gnostic teaching of the Apostle Paul, and on to Paracelsus, Meister Eckhart, Saint John of the Cross and Saint Teresa of Avila. Some of these initiates realized, then actualized through the Gnosis of Light the actual *Christos*, (*logos*), the Cosmic Christ, Buddhahood, that abides, according to the *Gospel of Thomas*, in every human being.

Clearly, the authors of the Valentinian texts, the *Gospel of Thomas*, and other incipient nondual Gnostic texts (e.g. the non-Christian Hermetic *Nag Hammadi texts: Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth*, *Asklepios* and the *Prayer of Thanksgiving*) perceived and perhaps even realized in the lifeworld the esoteric “innermost secret” nature of mind that is nondual God the Primordial Father, the ultimate source and ground of all arising spacetime phenomena. Clement of Alexandria speaks of the “Monadic Gnosis,” and the metaphysical unity of all relative spacetime being in God. Valentinus tells of the “source of the All, the Ineffable One liveth in the Monad ... alone, in the silence ... and none was before him (*A Valentinian Exposition- Nag Hammadi*).” “Your Father in Heaven is One” (*Interpretation of Knowledge - Nag Hammadi*). *The view of the Valentinians and the Thomas Christian Gnostics then, was that God—Abba, the Primordial Father—was the nondual supreme source of all phenomenal being, and that Jesus the Christos was a mortal avatar who, during his human life “overcame the world,” that is, he realized, then demonstrated through compassionate wisdom, the truth of our inherent indwelling Christ Nature, our divine human potential and prior actual identity as “Children of the Light.”*

### **The Three Aspects of Knowledge: Gnosis, Sophia, Dianoina**

Gnosis (*jnana/yeshe*) is the “primordially pure” clearlight mind that opens into the very ground or source of being. Gnosis is our innate, indwelling nondual noetic (mind/spirit) primordial wisdom accessed through trans-conceptual contemplative experience. Gnosis is not mere belief or conceptual or empirical knowledge (*dianoia, episteme*). Nor is it the discriminating penetrating wisdom (*sophia, prajna, sherab*) that consumes the *kleshas* (obstructive negative emotions) and prepares the mind to open and receive Gnosis. Gnosis is direct, penetrating nondual meditative or contemplative spiritual insight/intuition (*epinoia, vapashyana*) of the naked Primordial Awareness Wisdom (*jnana/vidya, yeshe/rig pa*) of our Supreme Source (Tao, *Nirguna Brahman, Mahashunyata, Dharmakaya, Samantabhadra*) in whom arises all spacetime phenomena.<sup>4</sup> Again, this ultimate sourceground—“Big Mind” (*paramartha*)—transcends yet embraces “Small Mind” (*samvriti*), relative, perceptual and conceptual knowledge and discursive thinking about arising spacetime phenomena.<sup>5</sup> Gnosis is the knowing aspect (*buddhi, jna/shepa*,

<sup>4</sup> “Awareness” translates *ennoia*; “mindfulness” translates *aponnoia*; concept/belief translates *dianoia*; “empirical experience” translates “*episteme*”; “relative discriminating wisdom” translates *sophia*; “nondual primordial awareness wisdom” (*jnana/yeshe*) translates *gnosis*, “*primordial presence*” translates *vidya/rigpa*; Supreme Source”/“Depth” translates *Bathos*.

<sup>5</sup> Our perennial wisdom Great Tradition teaches of the dialectic of the “Two Truths”: Relative Truth (*samvriti satya*), the finite objective relative-conventional empirical reality with its physical and mental phenomena, and Ultimate Truth (*paramartha satya*), the infinite, nondual perfectly subjective unbounded whole, the Ultimate Reality that transcends yet embraces the phenomenal world of Relative Truth. This world of Relative Truth includes the dyad of outer exoteric and inner esoteric reality dimensions. This esoteric realm then includes yet deeper, subtler strata, the “innermost secret”, and finally the nondual, which is ultimate reality itself. Again, the realization of these ascending levels of inner esoteric reality dimensions. This esoteric dimension then includes yet deeper or subtler strata of hidden dimensions,



*vidya*) of the nondual essence of mind, beyond the duality of subject and object, prior to the discursive and emotive function of mind (*manas, namshe, vijnana*). Thus Gnosis is primordial (*yenas*) wisdom in that it transcends, yet includes, temporal relative knowledge (*samvriti satya*) of spacetime phenomena. "To know oneself at the deepest level is to know God" (Monoimus). Here, knower (*gnostikos*) and known (*gnosis*), subject and object, spirit and matter are not separate but participate together as the unbounded whole, in a relationship of identity. Exoterically oriented Jews and Christians have assumed a dualistic separation of humanity and God for centuries. Again, such a view represents the ignorance (*avidya*) that is *hamartia* (sin), literally "missing the mark." The Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas* speaks not of sin and repentance but of ignorance (*hamartia/sin, avidya, alogos, marigpa*) and enlightenment (*vidya, rigpa, logos, liberation, bodhi, moksha, apolytrosis*). It is this liberation/enlightenment that is, according to the pith teachings of our Great Wisdom Tradition, the end of all our seeking, ultimate "HappinessItself."

### **Jesus and Paul: The Outer, Inner and Nondual Teaching**

The obscurity and contradictions of the canonical New Testament *Gospels, Acts* and *Epistles* clearly show that they have been over-written, re-written, interpolated and revised with the anti-mystical Orthodox intent to de-mystify, de-spiritualize and conceptualize the teaching of Jesus (Pagels, Koester, Robinson, Mack, Funk, Meyer). To further complicate matters, Jesus (and Paul), like all great spiritual adepts, transmitted the ancient nondual Gnosis mystery teaching both exoterically (outer) to those less well prepared to receive, and esoterically (inner) to those whose *karma* and spiritual practice had prepared them for the "mysteries of the Kingdom."

"I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.... These things have I spoken unto you in parables: the time cometh when I shall ... tell you plainly of the Father" (*John xvi 12, 25*).

To the spiritually uninitiated, the mystery of the nondual Gnosis of Light can be transmitted only through allegory and metaphor. For priest or scholar, the true Gnosis of Light is transmitted directly, through the mindstream of an

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knowledge is a function of the psychospiritual lifestage development of the spiritual aspirant. As to the experience of these hidden dimensions, whether conceptual *dianoia* or trans-conceptual, direct contemplative *epinoia/gnosis*, it is most important to maintain the understanding awareness that these dimensional reality realms—these "many mansions of the Father's house"—arise in a relationship of interdependence with one another, and with the whole in whom this all arises, and therefore possess no inherent, independent existence in themselves; not even nondual Ultimate Reality itself. I have elsewhere referred to the great prior unity of these none too tidy epistemological dualities as the "Principle of Ontological Interdependence." Indeed, the *Madhyamaka* Buddhist view sees all objective and subjective entities as ultimately empty of inherent existence (*shunyata/emptiness*). This does not however deny them their reality status as objectively real objects in the realm of Relative Truth that is this empirical, relative-conventional spacetime reality. This principle of the Two Truths is the key to understanding the emerging paradigm shift that is the resolution of the "explanatory gap" between mind and matter (the "mind-body problem"), and between science and spirituality that is the "hard problem" of consciousness with its urgent need of an integrative principle between the third person methodologies of Western science and the first person modes of inquiry of Vedic/Buddhist contemplative science.

adept master to the prepared mind of the disciple/devotee. The ego-I cannot deconstruct and transcend itself without intervention. The nature of mind cannot come to know itself alone. This is a vital truth of the metanarrative of our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition, whatever the individual tradition narrative may be.

As to the great Gnosis of Light teaching as it arises in the metaphors and allegories of the canonical and non-canonical *Gospels*, *Acts* and *Epistles*, it is urgent to distinguish the outer, materialistic exoteric view from the inner esoteric (secret and innermost secret) view of the *Christos*, the *Logos*, Christ Principle or Cosmic Christ. While the exoteric truth of Jesus is God incarnate, the esoteric truth is Jesus as the historical human being who "overcame the world" to become Jesus the liberated Christ (the *Christos*, the initiate adept and anointed one), a fully realized human avatar who, like Moses, Shankara, Buddha Gautama, Longchenpa, Padmasambhava, incarnated to fully realize the indwelling primordial wisdom, the Gnosis of Light that is the *Christos* (*Logos*), Buddhahood itself, and further, to demonstrate this great truth that the Cosmic Christ or Christ Nature (or Buddha Nature) is the actual design of humanity. Each human being is a *kosmic*<sup>6</sup> being, a potential *Kosmic* Christ or Buddha, and may, in due course, realize the potential of that primordial Christ/Buddha nature within.

"The only difference between a Buddha and an ordinary person is that one realizes it, the other does not" (Zen patriarch Hui-neng). Although the wisdom gnosis is fully awake and present at every moment within each human being, we do not see it, so the master reveals it through the stages of the spiritual path as the disciple grows, step-by-step into the Gnosis of Light. This ostensible paradox I have elsewhere termed "the paradox of the Path." For Paul, the great initiate of the Gnosis of light,

I came unto you not with the excellence of wisdom (*Gnosis*, *Sophia*) proclaiming to you the mystery of God... howbeit we speak wisdom among the full-grown.... I fed you milk, not with meat; for ye were not yet able to bear it .... The *psychic* does not discern *pneumatic* things.

-Paul, I Corinthians

The Gnosis of Light (nondual wisdom, jnana, yeshe) received by faith/pistis (surrender of the ego) is then, the great mystery of the ages. The Gnosis of Light is the Tao that cannot be named. It is the unity of luminous emptiness, awareness and appearance of Buddhist *shunyata*. This Gnosis of Light is the direct nondual experience of the divine inner wisdom presence (*Christos*, *vidya*, *rig pa*) of the Cosmic Christ, not separate from the Primordial Father, the very base, or ground or source in whom energy (*spiritus*, *pneuma*, *ch'i*, *lung*, *prana*) arises in space and time as light, mind, matter, breath, voice and all the manifested things of relative, conditional existence. This great mystery cannot be told. It cannot be grasped by the mind. It is profound. It utterly transcends the conceptual

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<sup>6</sup>*Kosmic* here denotes the unbounded whole of the Pythagorean *Kosmos* (physical, mental, causal, nondual spirit) that transcends yet embraces the merely physical cosmos.

understanding. Yet, from such a ground, through the mind, upon the breath, the Gnosis of Light arises, shines at the heart of all beings.

This is the "Gospel that has been given in all creation under heaven" (*Colossians*). This is the teaching that has "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." (2 *Timothy*). This is the truth that "existed among the ancients, and never did not exist, from the beginning of the human race until Christ came in the flesh...(St. Augustine)

Again, such a teaching refers not to the historical human person of Jesus, nor to Jesus as God, but to the *Christos*, the Gnosis of Light that he realized and demonstrated, not by his death but by his life. For Paul, as for the Gnostic authors of *John* and *Thomas*, the teaching is the esoteric "Gnosis of Light that passeth all understanding." It is indeed, the *Christos*, the Christ Nature that is that very "light which lighteth every one that cometh into the world." "The lamp of the body is the mind" (*Gnostic Dialog of the Savior*). "Enlighten your mind . . . light the lamp within you" (*Gnostic Teaching of Silvanus*). Alas, even though this *Christos* dwells now, awake, at the heart within each human form, yet we know it not. "It is spread upon the face of the earth, but you do not see it." Thus it abides in "The Silence" awaiting the surrender of opening (*pistis*/faith) that is the constant *sadhana* of the spiritual path.

On the road to Damascus, "when it was the good pleasure of God ... to reveal his son in me" (not to me), Paul was initiated (*teleosis*, anointed) by the *Christos*, the "Christ that liveth in me," "the mind of Christ," not by the God Jesus, and not by the man Jesus (Paul never met Jesus in the flesh). "For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ" (*Galatians*). In *Ephesians* Paul states, "How that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery of the Christ."

Clearly, Paul understood the urgent distinction between the great manifestation of the *Christos-Logos* in Jesus the great human teacher, and Jesus as a unique singular god. Paul loved the great man Jesus for his demonstration of the realization of the Gnosis of Light. But Paul praised and attempted to realize in himself the nondual divine *Logos*, the *Christos* realized by the mortal human Jesus in order to reveal to each one of us our own divine potential or capacity for this ultimate happiness that is liberation/enlightenment. Christ is within, and throughout.

Exoterically viewed then, the great man Jesus of Nazareth has been molded by our human "web of belief" to be worshipped as the one and "only begotten Son of God," a separate, (though immanent) transcendent god, a unique spiritual singularity in the history of the world. In a less parochial, esoteric view, Jesus was one of many historical and pre-historical avatars and Christ-Buddhas, the indwelling, unseparate *logos* incarnated from the very source of All-That-Is, the "I Am," to teach and to demonstrate to self-conscious beings that greatest truth: that "No longer I, but Christ liveth in me", and "Wonder of wonders, all beings are Buddhas... Everything is Buddha from the beginning." It is through this great realization that "*Christ shall shine upon thee.*"

### **The Solar Logos: The Descent and Ascent of All-Embracing Spirit**

*Who am I?* As far into antiquity as we may go, it is told of "that One that dwelleth in the sun." The various mythic sun gods are the logoc expressions for us of that bright One who

is the very source or base of everything that is, whose luminous body is of pure clear light, and in whom an avataric "son" is incarnated into spacetime physical form. ("Logos" is a Greek translation of the Hebrew *dabar*, "that which lies behind, or prior to.") The *Christos* or Cosmic Christ in whom the great avatars descend is the Solar Logos aspect or expression of this Primordial Father (*Abba* in Jesus' Aramaic tongue), our very source or ground, nondual primordial Spirit Itself.

For the Vedic tradition this primordial "groundless ground", *Kham Brahm*, "The Bright" is *Nirguna Brahman*, in whom Krishna and Shankara incarnate. For Taoists it is the ineffable stillness of the *Tao* that cannot be told; in Egypt it was *Osiris* in whom appears the divine son Horus; in Greece it was *Apollo*; for Kabbalists it is the unspeakable *En Sof* (one point); in Persia it was *Ahura-Mazda* (*Ormazd*); for the Buddhist tradition it is *mahashunyata* or *dharmakaya*, the union of phenomenal appearance and primordially pure luminous emptiness/boundlessness in whom everything arises and participates, embodied as *Samantabhadra* (Tib. *Kuntuzangpo*, Jap. *Fugen*) the primordial Adi Buddha. For the Hebrews it is the unspeakable nondual God of Abraham and Moses, *El'elyôn*, the "I Am That I Am," in whom Jesus incarnates. (*Yahweh-Elohim* is its outer, exoteric, creator aspect just as *Ishvara* and *Suguna Brahman* are the relative, creator aspects of *Nirguna Brahman*, the nondual "empty of attributes", unqualified Absolute.) "And God said unto Moses, I Am That I Am ('*eh yeh aser 'eh yeh*): and he said, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you" (*Exodus*). That "I Am" is always already present as the Solar Logos, the Gnosis of Light, *Christos* presence that abides as potential to be realized at the spiritual heart of each human being. Thus Jesus spoke to the Pharisees: "Before Abraham was, I Am." From *El*, the perfectly subjective, utterly ineffable, primordial unbounded whole has now come *Yahweh-Elohim*, trans-rational nondual ultimate godhead in whom arises all of phenomenal reality, and the utterly unified sentient beings who instantiate it, and in whom incarnates all of the Christ-Buddhas and great avatars and *mahasiddhas* of the "three times", past, present, and future.

According to our esoteric wisdom traditions, the liberation of humanity from our seeming descent into the suffering of this material world requires nothing less than the periodic manifestation and intervention of the Solar Logos into an avataric incarnation, as a human being, who then "overcomes the world" and realizes, then demonstrates the wisdom and compassion of the way and the path to return. "The Word (*logos/Christos*) was made flesh and dwelt among us... full of grace and truth" (*The Gospel of John*, a Gnostic Gospel).

Thus it is, the Solar Logos manifests through countless incarnations throughout human history: Jesus the Christ, Shakyamuni the Buddha (and all the Buddhas of prehistory), Padmasambhava, Longchen Rabjam, Tsongkapa, Bodhidharma, Dogen, Ramakrishna, Shankara, Lao Tzu, and many others, all incarnations of nondual timeless Spirit descended into this spacetime material dimension of form. From its primordial source the *Logos* incarnates again and again into human form to realize, then teach the true Gnosis of Light, our indwelling Christ/Buddha Nature in order to enlighten and liberate all who will listen, surrender (*pistis*-faith, *wu wei*) and follow. This "true Gnosis of light" is the peace and equanimity of *samadhi*, *moksha*, *satori/kensho*, *apolytrosis*, the realization of that

luminous interior immediate presence of the *Logos-Christos* (*vidya, gzhi rig pa*) that is our actual "supreme identity" and that is not other than, or separate from the all embracing vast expanse of the supreme source itself: the unbounded whole, *Tao, Parabrahman, Shunyata, Dharmakaya, Abba* the Primordial Father that is That "I Am That I Am," of Moses and Jesus. Esoterically, the teaching is about the same. Buddha emphasized love/compassion and wisdom. Jesus emphasized love/compassion and wisdom. Esoterically understood, the truth of Gnosis has its wisdom aspect; it has its love aspect. Wisdom is manifested as Love—kindness and compassionate service to others. Love and Wisdom are a prior unity.

The dialectic of the subtlest primordial wisdom teaching appears differently in different times, for different peoples, through different metaphors, but the heart essence of the teaching is always the same. At the apex, where exoteric and esoteric differences merge into trans-conceptual greater esoteric or innermost secret identity, all differences are transcended in their nondual primordial source, a prior metaphysical unity.

Who am I?

Something lives within you that lives longer than the suns. It resides at the place in the heart. . . What that subtle Being is, from which all that is arises, that is the Real, that is Spirit, that thou art (*Tat tvam Asi*). . ."

- Chandogya Upanishad (*Samaveda*)

A billion stars spin through the night  
blazing high above your head.  
Deep within you is the presence that  
will be, when all the stars are dead.

-Rilke

It is "That I Am" (*Tat tvam Asi*) that is the great "I Am" of Israel, of Moses and of Jesus, and of all the buddhas and *mahasiddhas* of the past, and of the present, and of those avatars yet to come. It is That I Am that is the presence of the Gnosis of Light abiding at the heart of each human form, without a single exception.

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