

MYSTIC LIGHT

Christ Jesus and Initiation

AMONG THE CURRENT IDEAS shared by many liberated thinkers and intellectuals is that Jesus, called the Christ, was an illumined soul, a great Spirit, but by no means a unique phenomenon in the history of world religions. Each cult and race has its spiritual paragon and pathfinder, its most morally evolved member, or its avatar—a descent of God to mortal form. This is regarded as a periodic occurrence to redeem human error, revitalize energies, and rekindle holy aspiration.

This attitude bespeaks an emerging synthetic form of consciousness (fashionable as well as genuine) that cuts across race and cultural boundaries, identifying in the lives and teachings of founders of religions common elements in a recurring pattern: a highly developed Spirit, whose advent is heralded by Angels, prophets, and natural portents, is born to a couple of high estate (materially and/or spiritually), often by supernormal means (immaculate conception, parented by a God); he enjoys a privileged if protected youth, travels widely in pursuit of truth, eventually attains enlightenment, imparts wisdom, works wonders, such as, (transforming substances, healing, controlling elemental forces), trains disciples, may undergo sacrificial death, then is raised up into celestial realms, and becomes the continuing agency by which votaries of the cult he founded attain to a state of beatitude and immortality.

The eclectic school sees uniformity in diversity, identifies a formula that is applicable to most founders of religion. It is based on a valid observation: that mankind is one in essence, having a common origin, or Creator, a variable and yet broadly equivalent physiology, ineradicable yearnings for the divine (often disguised as discontent with life

and worldly things), and the conditional prospect of eternal fulfillment. Given these common features, one would expect that religious leaders and movements would make more of them.

Part of the difficulty in pursuing this approach is that the concepts tend to be blurred, seemingly incidental differences are glossed over. Religious syncretism relies heavily on what brain-bound thinking proposes rather than on what authentic revelation discloses.

Joseph Campbell, in his excellent three-volume compendium of myths, legends, sagas, and religious parables of the world (*The Masks of God*, Viking), traces the recurring themes and forms that the mind of man projects into the Cosmos as creation itself. Campbell's panoramic survey makes abundantly clear that man is the "hero with the thousand faces." Individual human consciousness is a complete cast of humanity, a vast assembly of all possible being and character. Although Campbell's work is scholarly and moderate, the casual syncretist confidently reduces all religious myths to a universal prototype of the world sage-saint-saviour and proceeds to regard Jesus, called Christ, one of many instances of this paradigm. This practice has its merits, but it fails at a crucial point.

In antiquity, man on the path of self-realization passed through a graded series of tests and ordeals that proved his readiness and ability to encounter yet more demanding trials and to reap benefits commensurate with his achievement. Each test mastered was accompanied by increased soul-powers and an extension of consciousness. Regardless of the time and land where these ritual procedures were conducted (India, Persia, Egypt, Greece), they were roughly analogous in composition and purpose. Until the time of Christ's ministry, these "rites

of passage” were contrived and conducted in secret by Initiates of the cult. The Schools of Initiation were known as Mysteries, in part because they were secret, in part because mystery, deriving from *myein* (to close the eyes), designates that what one experiences and understands is of an interior (mysterious) character, a result of inner or occult vision.

One of the radical achievements of Christ Jesus was an exposure or demystification of the mystery cults and an articulation of their content as history, as outward occurrence. Pre-Christian mysteries are transposed by Christ Jesus and writ large as public autobiography, as critical events marking his three-year ministry. As a result, spiritual aspirants now encounter tests and trials in the course of daily experience which mark and constitute the initiatory path. Life itself is the initiator.

A careful reading of the Gospels will give intimations of what students of the Western Wisdom Teachings and intuitive Christians know as a fact: that while Jesus

was a man ensouled by a highly evolved Ego, the Being known as the Christ is an Entity of exalted spirituality, the Regent of the Sun and highest Initiate of the Archangelic life-wave. Therefore the career of the Christ Ego in the mortal vehicles of Jesus (commencing with the Baptism in the Jordan) must be exempt from any reduction to the formula status that would normally apply to the process of human initiation. For Christ came to Earth as the Initiate, as One already knowing, doing, and being far beyond the attainment of any mortal, any Angel. Christ descended into the body of Jesus as an Initiator and began initiating His disciples. If Chapter 11 of John’s Gospel is read closely, contemplatively, it shall become evident that the narrator is describing an initiation, that Christ is raising Lazarus from the death of his former mundane consciousness.

It is precisely because Christ Jesus made public, and in a sense exoteric (outside the priest caste jurisdiction), a high initiatory rite that the Pharisees resolved to terminate His activity, for He was sub-



Fresco, Giotto (1266/67-1337), Scrovegni Chapel, Padua, Italy

Baptism of Christ

For humans, the rite of Baptism can expand consciousness into the etheric realms. For Christ, Baptism signified the moment of His ingress into the physical and vital bodies of Jesus, which embodiment radically reduced his spiritual freedom.

verting their priestly monopoly and encroaching on their livelihood and power.

If we discern in the three-year narrative of Christ Jesus those crises or critical turning points that characterize the initiatory process, we cannot conclude (as reason urges) that the candidate is a mortal. The Baptism, Temptation, Transfiguration, the Agony, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension describe degrees which confer increasing measures of inner light, wisdom and power on the aspirant, until Earth itself in all respects is transcended. However, Christ came to Earth already transcendent, its victor, its once and present and its future King.

John the Baptist may be as high spiritually as any man born of woman (the first birth). But the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. Through self-purification, by repentance and reorientation, the candidate merits Baptism. But behold Christ, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world, Who washes clean the very planet, baptizing it with His Blood! How is it then that John baptizes

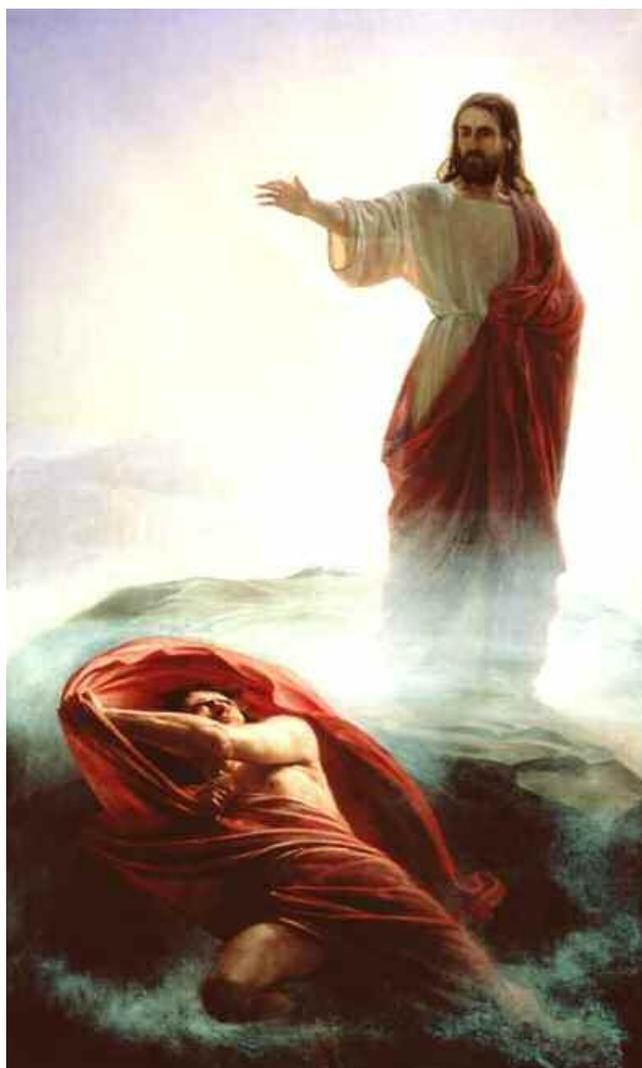
Christ, whose shoe latchet he is not worthy to unloose? Christ simply says to him, "Suffer it to be so now." Obviously the lesser does not initiate the greater. In fact, no initiation, as we understand the term, occurs here.

We cannot say that Christ directly benefited from His voluntary sacrifice, His passing through the seven "degrees." If anything, His cosmic consciousness suffers temporary contraction while the consciousness of the human aspirant expands as he walks the Christian path. Only for Christ does the path mark a process of gradually increasing Earth involvement and limitation.

By contrast, for Christians the path delineates a process of gradual liberation from the constraints of Earthly experience and the unfolding of supersensible consciousness.

Thus we see another facet of Christ's giving, His redemptive teaching. Obviously, for Himself, He need not have walked the mortal way. But in so doing, He stripped the veil from the exclusive initiatory path, sanctified it with His life, and with His Blood empowers man to follow in His steps.

The four gospels are familiar with the seven-phased process as outlined in pre-Christian mystery cult practices. In detailing the ministry of Christ Jesus, this process is interwoven into His biography. But it is, in one sense, academic. It is a structural, didactic device intended to benefit man, not Christ. Christ is not saying, I am being initiated. He is initiating mankind. He is saying: "I AM. I KNOW. If ye would know, if ye would be as I, do as I do. Follow thou Me." To be sure, the suffering is real, the death is a death. Yet we must understand that with the exception of the Temptation, no mention is made of Christ's contact with spiritual dimensions. He brings them with Him. They are an integral and conscious part of His Being. Yet it is precisely the spiritual dimension that the aspirant contacts with the onset of Baptism. The Resurrection of Christ Jesus is implicit in His Baptism. He needs no powers acquired on Earth to return to the Father. But the powers he does acquire are those that He can direct to Earth, can give to man that man in turn may raise himself above the Earthly sphere and return to the same Heavenly Father.



Oil on canvas, Carl Bloch, Chapel, Frederiksborg Castle, Denmark

The Temptation of Jesus

Christ had just entered the two lowest physical instruments of Jesus when he was "tempted" to abuse his power. His dominion already exceeded what Lucifer could offer Him, and while He would feed five thousand (indeed, His body feeds humanity), he would not "magically" feed himself.

While Christ in Resurrection and Ascension does not extend the upper limits of His former consciousness, He does blend the potent forces of His Being (as Love-Wisdom) more intimately downward into the dimension of man's fallen consciousness, thereby forming a vertical bridge of light, creating a presence at levels of awareness more accessible to man by which he may experience the updrawing glory of Christ.

Christ's encounter with Lucifer has a perfunctory ring to it because Christ was never intimidated by this fallen angel. And though Christ wears a

mortal form, the temptations, occurring in the desire world, cannot intrigue the Prince and Master of the desire world, the Lord of its light, whose densest vehicle in his “human” stage (during the Sun Period) was composed of desire matter. The relative ease with which Christ dismisses the Luciferic ploys does not detract from His achievement. But it does serve to more accurately gauge the supreme power with which He wills His intentions. Nor are we implying that Christ’s contribution to human evolution was anything less than superhuman, far beyond our present comprehension or adequate appreciation. Christ’s victory was for man, was man’s victory. As the Son of God, He could not have lived on Earth other than archetypally, according to the initiation sequence of the Mysteries. But this simply constitutes His life’s pattern. For Himself, He won nothing. For man, everything. While on Earth His great achievement was to live exclusively from out of the mortal perspective, as a man, resisting any impulse to live as the God He is. Rather, He directs his spiritual energies into the mortal Jesus vehicles to be fully assimilated by them. This permanently activates the infinite potential of human consciousness, spiritualizing the matter composing man’s denser bodies.

All that Christ does in Jesus is for man. Christ goes through death gratuitously. Man raises himself from the baptismal waters of an embracing love-consciousness to successively brighter spheres of life, with each initiation acquiring more God-like faculties (as amply illustrated by Corinne Helene in *Occult Anatomy and the Bible* and *The Mystery of the Christos*).

On the Mount of Transfiguration, Christ is not enlightened. But Peter, James and John most surely are. We know that Christ has, previous to the New Testament era, appeared to Moses and identified Himself as the “I AM.” He has inspired and informed numerous prophets, including Elijah. Therefore, when He appears before the astonished three, He is not raising Himself. He is raising His disciples. He is initiating. For Elijah prophesies the way to Christ. Moses proclaims the truth of Christ. And Jesus demonstrates the life of Christ. Again, man is the beneficiary.

MY WAY

Maker of all things, in all worlds and places,
Maker of seas and vast unfathomed spaces,
Maker of little me,
Help my dull eyes by inner sight to see
The hidden path marked out before my birth
Across the earth.
And let the light that shines through my own soul
Direct me to my goal.
Help me to turn a deaf, unlistening ear
To those who bid me wander there, or here,
Or yonder, in some trail their souls have blazed—
Nor let my mind grow dazed
By trying to accept another’s thought.
Through my own path let my own soul be brought
Back to the First Great Source.
Grant me thy force
To keep courageously upon my course,
However difficult the way may be.

—Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Being of Christ in Jesus, apprehended by men of Earth solely as Jesus, is unique and cannot be balanced against or made interchangeable with Buddha, Zarathustra, Mohammed, Lao-Tzu, or other spiritually precocious human Egos, or with gods (devas) who appear to man in the etheric (angels, the Greek Pantheon), or who, retaining their divine identity and magical practices, invest in human form (Krishna). In reading the *Koran* or Buddhist scriptures, we learn of Mohammed’s visions of higher worlds and of Buddha’s Enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. As they evolve, these great souls have revelations from and intercourse with superphysical realities. Christ comes replete with love and wisdom already acquired. He Himself is the Revelation, the super-sensible Reality to be experienced through initiation. His struggle, if we may so call it, was not to emancipate His Spirit from mortal consciousness but to enter ever more profoundly into it and endure its abysmal dullness.

The function and Being of Christ as historical fact is unprecedented. As we come to understand this truth, it greatly benefits us individually and collectively and brings us closer to Christ Himself. □

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