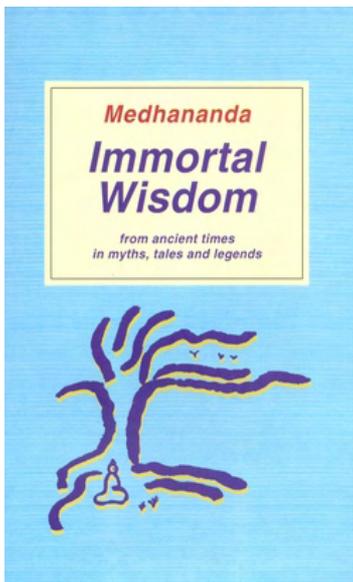


Buried in the Sands of Time: The Gospel according to Thomas¹

Medhananda

In 1945, an extensive anthology of the sayings of Jesus was found preserved in the dry sands of a tomb near Nag Hamadi, Egypt. Going back to a Greek text dating about 100 AD, this Coptic text begins with a prologue that attributes its recording to the apostle Thomas. Applying the psychological approach which has led Sri Aurobindo to re-discover the esoteric meaning of the Rig Veda, the author elucidates the inner meaning of the Gospel according to St. Thomas. A brief biography of the author is appended.

The Gospel that went underground



The question we have to consider in this essay is whether Jesus, regarded as the founder of the Christian religion, actually believed in the God of the Jews or in any God in Heaven and thus divided reality into two worlds. The writers of the four gospels seem to think he did, and the churches both Catholic and Protestant, deriving their doctrines largely from these gospels, follow this view. The gospel writers were naturally influenced by the popular Jewish religious sentiment of the time as well as by prevalent pagan Greek and Egyptian eschatological beliefs. Their writings reflect the feelings and mirror the beliefs of the ordinary man — the soldier, merchant, artisan, slave living in a world of differentiation, division, hostility and discord. To the simple man whose mental capacities denied him a wider, more penetrating vision, this division was the reality, the truth. Did Jesus also subscribe to this idea of the world, or is

there proof to the contrary? Was he a dualist, a believer in two realities and two worlds: this one here, and another above — or was he a monist, a man to whom reality was one unitary, organic whole?

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Jesus and the One

Naturally, for his listeners, he too had to express his knowledge in terms of that world. He had to use formulas and symbols familiar and acceptable to the peasants and fishermen around him, otherwise he could not hope to make any impact. Concepts had to be simple, arguments concrete; the truth had to be clothed in a recognisable form, adapted and limited to the capacities of his particular audience. But the consequence of his colloquial language was that his messages were interpreted in terms of a dualistic faith. Thus there may be a multitude of quotations which can be brought forward to support a dualistic view, but we cannot be sure that it is a correct or complete interpretation as long as there is a single example asserting a monistic faith, especially if this statement is made to a disciple sufficiently intelligent to grasp the unfamiliar “mystical” language of the Oneness thinker.

To be a true Christian one has to understand the complete truth that Jesus was, and for this one has to know the true man and his teachings. Jesus himself wrote nothing; we have to rely on the understanding of his contemporaries and their interpretation of his message. In this light it seems doubtful that the four gospels “received” by the churches, and the doctrines based upon them, could contain the whole truth that Jesus brought into the world.

Although in the popular gospels there are many quotations to indicate that Jesus was a monist, for the purpose of this essay we will comment only upon the Gospel according to Thomas. Most Christians are acquainted with those sayings in John’s gospel which explain reality from a monistic point of view, such as the famous John 17:22: “And the glory (of oneness) which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, as we are one.” But in addition to these famous words there is a whole collection of monistic sayings of Jesus which the church literally dropped under the table.

What kind of work is this Gospel according to Thomas, which is officially regarded as “apocryphal,” unauthentic, not admitted to the New Testament canon?

600 lost gospels

St. Luke in his preface declares specifically that his work is based on many earlier writings, and implies the existence of still others he has not been scrupulous enough to consider.

Today every gospel can be judged on its own merits, without any fear or favour derived from the decisions of church fathers during the intervening centuries. The formation of the canon, after all, was a process of elimination rather than of inclusion.

The desires of the busy church organizers were not always compatible with a historical or semantic research for the true Jesus. The early gospels slowly disappeared, leaving only a few traces. Jesus’ actual words dropped out of circulation or were condemned as heretical, and in their place pagan, typically “unchristian” ideas — of God in heaven, of

Christ seated on the right hand of God — were accepted into the dogma. The sufferings of Jesus, sin and forgiveness of sin, happy immortality for every baptized person, the raising of the dead and the miraculous healings by Jesus, the wrath to come — all were more popular than the simple teaching:

When you make the two one, you shall become sons of man. [Log 106]

Obviously this simple, deep, but revolutionary kind of thinking demands too much of ordinary man, and a Mediterranean neolithic peasant culture was even less mentally or emotionally ready to accept it than, perhaps, their paleolithic forefathers. The best he could do was to admit that, yes, perhaps Jesus was one with God, but as for me, poor sinning mortal, how can I be the Almighty?

And so the Oneness teaching was buried in the sands of time.

Now, like a miracle, one of those lost gospels has again come to life. Has the time also come for mankind to find itself again in the great oneness of things? Or will some coming generation say about us what Jesus said about his disciples:

You have dismissed the living One and speak about the dead. [Log 52]

The Christian *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* comments: “The actual process by which ‘our’ four gospels arrived at their present rank of pre-eminence is quite obscure,” — so obscure indeed that only a miracle could illumine the obscurity. The time came when some 600 different gospels were in existence around the Mediterranean, and when every bishop with his gospels declared every other bishop with other gospels heretical. The Emperor Constantine II, who wanted peace in his empire, called a council. And thus as late as 692A.D. the Council of Constantinople had finally to “regulate which books might be read in the church.”

But in the process, the holy fathers almost came to blows and the Pretorian Guard had to be called in. Finally the choice of the gospels was left to the “Holy Ghost.” Each bishop laid his gospels on an altar, until it was heaped with some 500 rolls, then the centurion of the guard closed the room. The next morning, lo! the three synoptic gospels were found alone on the altar: the others had rolled on to the floor. Presumably to facilitate the action of the Holy Ghost, the windows had been left open.

The forbidden truth

The official gospels have great lacunae, and do not make it clear why Jesus was condemned by the Sanhedrin. Contrary to general belief, Jesus’ statement that he was the son of God was quite in the framework of Jewish mysticism. To call Jehovah father, for an orthodox Jew, was impertinent and presumptuous perhaps, but not something for which one might be condemned to death.

The Roman soldiers also spoke of father Zeus, Jupiter and Mars-Pitar, and the Teutonic legionaries spoke of the All-Father. Caesar himself was considered the son of Venus. No, the step which took him beyond the confines of Mediterranean religious feeling was a

thing which no Jewish mystic could do and still call himself a Jew: to claim direct union, existential identity, with God. Because he spoke of this absolute oneness of everything with himself and God, he had to die on the cross. If Jesus had told Pilate, "I am the son of God," the pragmatic Pilate, the nonmystic, would have smiled and exclaimed, "Another one! We have had so many sons of gods; every petty king, inside and outside the empire, claims to be one."

But if Jesus had told him what he said to Salome, "I am He, I am the All," then even the kindest Roman administrator would have concluded, "This man is mad," and washed his hands, and delivered him to the Sanhedrin. And for the Sanhedrin such a statement would go far beyond the permissible limits of Jewish piety. This was the one thing they could not allow without risking certain destruction of the Jewish Way, based, as it was (and still is), on the most extreme dualism: God and man forever two.

Islam, later inheriting this dualism, had to act in the same way. Any Sufi mystic with an experience similar to that of Jesus was crucified like him. The latest in a long series, estimated at 30,000, was the Bab, the founder of the Bahais, at Tabris in 1850.

The Gospel of Oneness according to Thomas

For more than a thousand years the churches of the Occident depended literally on the three stunted, maimed, corrupt and censored but "synoptic" gospels to which a fourth was added with some gnostic elements: the Gospel according to John.

Suddenly, a generation ago, there took place the most dramatic event in the history of western religion. When the shooting stopped for a moment in Egypt in 1945, an extensive anthology of the sayings of Jesus, which had been lost for sixteen centuries, was found preserved in the dry sands of a tomb near Nag Hamadi. Subject neither to the ravages of time nor to alterations by well-meaning copiers, commentators and translators, they are here today in all their splendour of authentic greatness for every one to read and appreciate.

These Coptic documents go back to a primitive Greek text dating about 100 A.D., one of the earliest related to the New Testament. The experts, of course, are still debating its exact age. The gospel begins with a prologue attributing its recording to the apostle Thomas.

Who was this Thomas?

His full name was Didymos Judas Thomas (*didymos* in Greek and *thomas* in Hebrew both mean "the twin"), the same Thomas mentioned in John 20:23 as not believing the materialistic resurrection account, because he knew the living One. Was he the only one among the apostles who did not know death? The following verse in John 20:24 is even more revealing:

"And he went inside and met him" — inside himself, of course, not into a house, as the scribes seem to believe.

This capacity to go inside explains why Thomas knew a Jesus of which the other gospel writers were not aware or which they present only in a mutilated, corrupt way.

Logion 13 introduces Thomas.

Jesus said to his disciples: "Make a comparison and tell me whom I am like." Simon Peter (the Galilean fisherman and the most orthodox Jew among them) said to him: "Thou art like an angel of righteousness." Matthew (the Greek-speaking civil servant) said to him: "Thou art like a wise man (*philosophos*)." Thomas (our Thomas, the only mystic among them) said to him: "Master, my mouth will not at all be capable of saying whom thou art like." And Jesus said gently,

I am not thy master, because thou hast drunk, thou hast become drunk from the bubbling spring which I have measured out. [Log 13]

The bubbling spring is the symbol of the gnosis, the knowledge. You drink from its very source, which is not at all like the knowledge you find in a book. The text continues:

And he took him and they withdrew. He spoke three words to him. . . [Log 13]

What these three words were, is not recorded in this gospel but they must have been very important, and as long as we don't know them we won't know Jesus. How paramount and radical they seemed to Thomas, however, is described in the following sentences:

When Thomas came back to his companions they asked him, "What did Jesus say to thee?" Thomas said to them: "If I tell you what he said to me, you will take up stones and throw them at me." [Log 13]

So the three words could hardly have been something about Jesus himself, like "I am the son of man," because that mysterious expression was simply the Aramaic way of saying "I am an ordinary man like everybody else," or "I am the son of God"; and in none of the gospels did Jesus say that, and nobody referred to him in that way during his lifetime. Likewise nowhere did Jesus say that he wanted to be the Jewish messiah, let alone the Saviour-God of the Roman Empire.

He said something to Thomas that followed the words: "I am not thy master. . ." It must have been something like the famous three words of the Vedanta: *Tat twam asi*: "This thou art," or "I am you," or "You and I are one," or "All is one," or "You are equal to me," three words, deeply offensive to the other disciples and to the later church, but which we can still find if we also drink from "the bubbling spring" of the living One.

It is not surprising that we can trace this same Thomas later preaching his gospel of oneness as far away as India, a country where he could speak of the oneness of God and man without being stoned, and could even be understood.

The kingdom

The 114 *logia* or sayings of Jesus collected by Thomas make very different reading from the later gospels adopted by the church as the foundation of its teaching. Here we have

the teachings of Jesus himself, who had no intention of being the founder of a popular church. Here is no father in heaven, here are no healings, no miracles, and above all no death on the cross, but a continuous record of Jesus' statements on oneness.

His disciples asked him: "When will the kingdom come?" and Jesus said: "It will not come by expecting it. It will not be a matter of saying: 'See, it is here!' or — 'Look, it is there!'. Rather, the Kingdom of the Father is spread over the earth and men do not see it." [Log 113]

What is this kingdom of which Jesus speaks so frequently? For the churches following the official gospels (or rather the gospels following the church founders) the kingdom is the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of Heaven. But in the gospel of Thomas it is still simply "the kingdom."

If those who lead you say to you: "See, the Kingdom is in heaven," then the birds will be before you. If they say to you: "It is in the sea," then the fish will be before you. But the Kingdom is within you, and it is outside of you. [Log 3]

And there is only one way to enter:

Know yourself! [Log 3]

Jesus said: Whoever knows the universe but fails to know himself lacks everything. [Log 67]

How can we know ourselves? Beautiful and clear comes the answer:

When you see your likeness in a mirror you rejoice; but when I show you your true image (ikon) which came into existence before you and which cannot die, can you bear it? [Log 84]

Who is the ruler of this kingdom? Some Wotan, Zeus or Jehovah? No, not in the oneness world. You yourself, as the all-including living One, are the king.

If you bring forth that within yourselves, that which you have will save you. If you do not have that within yourselves, then that which you do not have within you will kill you. [Log 70]

Here again the "that" is the same as the Sanskrit *tat*, the great oneness of the Rig Veda (10.129.2). No other force can equal this simple awareness that all is one.

Jesus said: If two make peace with each other in this one house (the house of oneness, the kingdom) they shall say to the mountain: "Be moved," and it shall be moved. [Log 48]

Who has ears to hear, let him hear. [Log 8]

Thomas had those ears, and the words he received and preserved were those Jesus spoke to the mystics, the yogis of coming centuries, the oneness people, the *monachoi* as Jesus called them, or the gnostics, as theologians classify them derisively today, the "knowers." On which side did he stand when he spoke of the non-gnostics, the scribes, the *grammateis* as those who "forget the living Oneness, and speak about the dead," and described them as dogs sleeping in the manger, neither eating nor allowing the hungry to eat?

The way to this knowledge, or gnosis, Jesus says again and again, is *metanoia*. This beautiful and meaningful Greek word, from *meta*: above and beyond, and *nous*: mind — is no

longer accepted as “beyond mind” but is coolly translated as “Repent your sins.”

What place had the notion of sin in the oneness world of Jesus, as St. Thomas has preserved it for all time to come? It is simply non-existent. In the whole gospel sin is mentioned only a few times, and each time with irony.

But sin indeed has become the foundation stone of our established church, Catholic as well as Protestant. There is hardly a theological book without long dissertations on sin, but to the knowledge of the one and the *metanoia* of multiplicity of which Jesus speaks there is nowhere any reference. The importance of gnosis, of finding the One, Thomas emphasised right in the beginning.

Let him who seeks, not cease seeking until he finds, and when he finds he will reign over the all.
[Log 2]

The single fish

The early Christians had a symbol by which they recognised one another and with which they decorated their meeting places and tombs, and when they were not persecuted, even their houses. It was the fish.



A lot of learned nonsense has been written about the significance of the fish. We are told that the Greek word for fish is *ichthys* (in Greek capital letters, ΙΧΘΥΣ), and that this is an acronym for Ἰησοῦς Χριστός Θεοῦ Υἱός Σωτήρ — Jesus Christ, son of God, saviour. Obviously the acronym was invented later, and replaced the meaning of the fish after its true significance had already been forgotten, together with Thomas’ gospel.

In the four gospels of the church, fishes and fishermen are frequently mentioned, but there is no explanation as to how a single fish became the hallmark of a Christian. It is in this Gospel according to Thomas, and only here, that we find this fish and an explanation for it.

The man is like a wise fisherman who cast his net into the sea and drew it up from the sea full of small fish. Among them the wise fisherman found a fine large fish. He threw all the small fish back into the sea and took the large one without regret. [Log 8]

How to disregard the net of our sense perception full of small fishes and keep the single one, is a programme for mystics and yogis only. The early church tried hard to keep the single fish, and painted it on the walls of their pagan surroundings to proclaim that a fisherman had passed who kept the large one without regret. But later theologians threw the big one away and kept the multiplicity of small fry.

A variant of the single fish story is that of the single pearl.

Jesus said: The kingdom is like a merchant who possessed merchandise and saw a pearl. The merchant was wise. He sold the merchandise and bought the one pearl for himself. [Log 76]

Another variation of the fisherman with the single fish is the shepherd with the one sheep.

Jesus said: The kingdom is like a shepherd who had many sheep. One of them, the largest, went astray. The shepherd left all the others and sought for the one until he found it. Tired, he said to the one: "I love thee more than all the others." [Log 107]

Not only must we love the living Oneness more than all else, but also be ourself in our own being undivided, of one single piece: *monachos*. The word *monachos*, which appears many times in the Gospel of St. Thomas, is one of the key words for the understanding of Jesus' message.

Jesus said: Many are standing at the door, but the monachoi are the ones who will enter the bridal chamber. [Log 75]

Who are these *monachoi*? Ordinarily the word is translated into English as "monk," which is without doubt the direct linear descendant of the Greek *monachos*. But when Jesus spoke of *monachos* did he mean the man who lived a solitary life, segregated in the desert, the hermit, the recluse?

We read in the same gospel Jesus' negative opinion about ascetic behaviour, about fasting and praying. And when we meet the first so-called Christian monks in the Egyptian desert, they were not *monachoi* in the accepted sense of solitary hermits, but *cœnobites* (from *koinobion*) with a well-organised community life and common devotional exercises.

Luckily, ancient Greek is a well-explored and marvellously clear language, against which the tortuous inventions of our Bible translations stand out awkwardly.

Monas (from the root, *monos*, one), used in Plato's *Phædo* (101e), means oneness, the unity of the cosmos, and the adjective *monachos* characterises someone or something which is undivided, of one piece. The feminine *monache* is the name of a garment woven in a single piece without a seam, such as, according to tradition, Jesus wore.

So *monachos* in Jesus' mouth certainly means not solitary, *monotropos*, but the simple, the unique, the undivided, the seamless one, the man who has attained to the summit of being, oneness of self, liberation.

Seeing this we can understand what Jesus meant when he said:

Blessed are the monachoi for you shall find the kingdom; because you come — from it and you shall go there again. [Log 49]

If you are still uncertain as to what *monachos* meant to Jesus, here is the next *logion*:

If they say to you: "From where have you originated?," say to them: "We have come from the Light, where the Light has originated through itself and reveals itself in our image." [Log 50]

Another key word of the Gospel according to Thomas is “the living One.”

What is the living One?

Obviously he is not dead. He did not die on a cross in Jerusalem 2000 years ago, even if his body hung there. He is not the one you see still hanging on that cross in Christian churches. Neither is he “resurrected,” because to be resurrected you have to die first — something not very likely for one who made this promise to his disciples:

Whoever knows will not taste death. [Log 19]

Also to be a living One he cannot be sitting in some heaven, he has to be alive.

To be alive one has to be embodied, to be incarnate, to breathe, eat, drink, and evacuate. We may think of ghosts, of course, but ghosts are not alive; they do not belong to the world of the living, they are not the living One. Jesus never said he was or would be a ghost but that he was a son of man and the living One. To be alive and to be the son of man there is only one place one can be, and that is on this planet, earth. There is only one condition one has to fulfill to be a Christian, and that is to be a son of man and a living One.

“I will be with you,” he promised. So don’t look for him among the dead. But that is what the church has done for 2000 years, discussing the historicity of Jesus as somebody who was born on a certain date and died on a certain date and is now dead. Obviously they were not looking for someone like Jesus, who said: “Before Adam was I was.” And mark well, he didn’t say, “I was disembodied” or “in a glorious body.” He simply said, “I was,” just like Adam, like a squirrel or a chicken or you.

There is only one way to be the living One forever and ever, and that is to be Life itself, to identify oneself with all Life, from the amoeba to that superamoeba, man. And that is why Jesus has said, “I am the Life.” He also told us what to do to be the Life, so that each one of us might be able to say, “I am the Life.” We have to get rid of the illusion of being a separate individual. But this teaching, how to be the living One, has disappeared among the childish miracles and sentimental prayers of the church, which can only emphasize your difference, your duality. Of the glory of oneness there remain only sad traces here and there that have to be searched out.

The first thing to do if you want to be the living One is to let the dead bury their dead in their churches. Then you must renounce supernatural godheads in favour of Life itself. Stop praying to imaginary divinities and search for the living oneness of all things, and once you have found it, be it.

To be the living One it is not sufficient to be alive as ordinary people are alive. They have ears and they hear not, they have eyes and they see not, and therefore they die. In the meantime they are neither dead nor awake nor alive.

To be the living One you have to put as much accent on the one as on the living: you have to be one. Once you have seen and felt this great living oneness of all things, then

it is not difficult to become it, because secretly and fundamentally you are it already. You are the living One, you who by error and lack of awareness have believed yourself to be separate from the whole. You thought you were a beggar in this world, you thought it belonged to somebody else, but in secret you are a king, a king in your kingdom.

Once you have discovered the living One, you have entered your kingdom, and then all you have to do is never again to divide anything into two.

Throughout the gospel the whole emphasis is on the one. The cosmic oneness we have to attain, and in which Jesus lived, is beautifully illustrated in *logion 77*:

I am the All, the All came forth from Me and the All returns into Me. Cleave a piece of wood, I am there: lift up the stone and you will find Me. [Log 77]

And Jesus emphasises that He does not make this claim for himself alone, exclusively, as the church wants us to believe, but for everyone. So *logion 80* continues:

Whoever knows the world (cosmos) has found the body (soma) and whoever has found the body, of him the world is not worthy. [Log 80]

Monos

The single one, *monos*, the same, the undivided, is the constant theme of the Gospel according to Thomas. In endless variation, in saying after saying, we come back to this same message of Jesus: the One.

Jesus saw little children were being suckled. He said to his disciples: These children are like those who enter the kingdom. They said to him: Shall we then become children, to enter the kingdom? When you make the two one, and when you make the inner world as the outer and the outer as the inner and the above as the below, and when you make the male and the female into a single one so that the male will not be anymore a male, and the female a female, when you put a single eye in the place of the many and a single hand in the place of hands and one foot in the place of feet, and a single image in the place of all the images, then you shall enter. [Log 22]

And in case we have not yet understood what Jesus means, he continues:

On the day when you were one, you became two. But when you have become two, what will you do? [Log 11]

Yes, what will you do when you have separated matter and spirit, man and god, body and soul, good and evil, heaven and earth, yourself and others? What will you do?

Jesus said: It is impossible for a man to mount two horses and to stretch two bows and it is impossible for a servant to serve two masters. [Log 47]

What did Jesus think about the popular ideas of the religious people around him?

They said to him: "Come and let us fast and pray today." Jesus said: Which then is the sin that I have committed and in what way have I been divided? [Log 104]

Jesus said: If you fast you will commit a sin against yourselves, and if you pray you will condemn yourselves, and if you give alms, you will also hurt yourselves [Log 14]

. . . because each time you do one of these things you leave the kingdom, the world of oneness, and assume duality. There is only one sin and that is to divide oneself!

What Jesus proposes is a new awareness of the oneness “so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be made perfect.” [John 15:11]

Salome said: “Who are you, and who is your father?” Jesus said to her: “I am he. We are the same. What belonged to my father was also given to me.” Salome said: “I am thy disciple.” Jesus said to her: “If you are one and undivided you will be filled with light but if you divide (yourself) you will be filled with darkness.” [Log 61]

This total oneness is again taken up in *logion* 108:

Whoever drinks my words from me shall become as I am and I myself will become he and that which is hidden will be revealed. [Log 108]

But only when we forget everything the churches told us and simply drink in the words of Jesus without prejudice can we discover their authentic greatness, their saving grace, their liberating force.

Here again Jesus says clearly that he means the oneness solution not only for himself exclusively — that would have little meaning for the world — but for everybody who drinks his words. In *logion* 112 we find a warning against duality:

Woe to the flesh which depends upon the soul: woe to the soul which depends on the flesh. [Log 112]

And what about the pious dualists, the believers in two? Only by duality could those “holy” men market the “holy” scriptures so successfully.

And successful they were. By the year 337 the gentle oneness teacher had become the acknowledged “Theos Soter,” the official god-saviour of the mightiest slave empire of all time. Duality, tribalism, racism, ignorance had triumphed again. Christianity under Constantine had become the official state religion, and from then on the kingdom and Jesus were safe in heaven and anybody who spoke of the oneness was declared to be agnostic or heretical and wiped out by fire and sword.

For the founders of the first churches the Gospel according to Thomas was of course a continuous painful reminder of the real personality of Jesus, and together with the Gospel of James, also one of the earlier Gospels, was still quoted by the church fathers Origen, Justinus, and Clement of Alexandria, as well as by Irenaeus, Eusebius and Hippolytus. And it was mentioned in the catalogue of Nicephoras (599) as one of the holy books. But it had to disappear if a popular religion was to be the aim.

Under the inexorable pressure of the administrators of the state religion, the Gospel of Thomas was buried, and later known only by name, like the Gospel of Mathias, the Gospel of Andrew, the Gospel of Thaddeus, etc. etc. And perhaps we will never know if

those other forbidden and lost Gospels' were likewise Oneness Gospels. Very likely they were.

Where to find the true Jesus?

Wherever the two are one I am with them. [Log 30]

He who lives in the living Oneness shall not see death; and the heaven and the earth will be rolled out in his presence. [Log 111]

Once we have read the Gospel according to Thomas we realise, perhaps with a shock, how different Jesus was from the pompous "Only begotten Son," and how different the true Christian has to be from the typical *homo religiosus* whom Jesus called the *gram-mateus*, the man with the holy book, the holy mien, full of holy words: The Lord, the Law, Wrath, Repentance, Paradise, Hell, the Devil, Damnation, Sin, Redemption, etc. — all things utterly foreign to Jesus as he appears to us in the St. Thomas gospel. He was no Galilean Billy Graham talking to the multitudes, no ascetic saint macerating himself and his disciples by penances, not the popular preacher of hell-fire and brimstone nor the sentimental sweet Jesus of the "Now let's all be nice to each other and everything will be all right."

If what he says is shocking, what he does not say in this most ancient of all gospels is even more shocking. We realise how perverted those words were which the busy church fathers invented in their eagerness to convert the crowds in the Agora.

Of course they had to be careful not to scandalize the aristocratic Roman administrators with what he really said. When those public relations specialists took over, the first thing they did was to create an entirely new Jesus, and then they invented a Jerusalem Madison Avenue lingo to sell him to their customers: The Anointed, the Saviour, the Redeemer, the Mediator, the Intercessor, the Judge, the Only Begotten, the Man of Sorrows, the Prince of Peace, the True Vine — all sales slogans. These ancestors of our automobile and soap advertisers created Jesus as the only son of God, the founder of a new religion, a new duality, a new way to separate God from man and man from man. Which is the genuine Jesus? The hero of the popular stories, of the miracles? The messiah of the Jewish people? Or the luminous teacher of oneness whom Thomas presents? Each one of us has to decide for himself.

Jesus the lover of the One as we meet him in the gospel of Thomas, and Jesus "the divider," of the Christian churches, are too different for this difference to be overcome by nice facile arguments. It cannot be the same Jesus who says of himself, "I am the all," and about others, "You come from the light," and who then threatens his listeners with a coming judgment: "Depart from me you cursed into everlasting fire" (Matthew 25:41), or "The wrath of God abideth on you."

Of course the man of oneness cannot be understood by the man who lives in duality. Which Jesus you are finally going to choose depends exclusively on your evolutionary status, whether you are only a man or already a son of man. He who chooses the one-

ness has already been chosen by the oneness.

Perhaps the pure miracle which has brought the Gospel according to Thomas back to life is a sign that the time has come for a new beginning, for a new age of oneness; perhaps it signifies this final coming of Jesus, the living One, a retelling of his true mission, by the simple awareness that the living One was always with us.

A man said to Him: "Tell my brethren to divide my father's possessions with me." He said to him: "O man, who made me divider?" He turned to his disciples, and he said to them: "I am not a divider, am I?" [Log 72]

If the world around Jesus had listened to his message of oneness it would have been spared its cultural schizophrenia, its thousand year long neurosis leading practically to the end of civilisation, its splitting into innumerable sects and churches, tribes and nations, the long nightmare of the dark ages with their religious wars and their persecutions of thinkers and scientists. The time may finally have come to get rid of our paleolithic gods, together with our bloody, sickening, disabling duality!

Ancient Palestine had always been the meeting place of Occident and Orient, where the religions of Africa and Egypt, Greece and Rome, Persia, India and the Far East melted into one. Jesus, although naturally knowing about the popular religious feelings of duality, belonged rather to that Oriental minority of thinkers, mystics and yogis who had penetrated behind the veil of multiplicity into the shining oneness of things and beings which he called the kingdom, the light, the fire — words used thousands of years before in the ancient Vedas of India to speak about the world of the living One.

I have cast fire upon the world, and see, I guard it until the world is afire. [Log 10]

The day will come when the churches of the Occident will be forced to recognize this world and withdraw their condemnation of the gnostics as unchristian and heretical, and by withdrawing it abolish the dividing line between East and West, the wall of dualism between themselves and God, and accept the gnosis of the heart, the living One.

Search for the living One as long as you live, lest you die and be unable to see. [Log 59]

Blessed he who was before he came into being. [Log 19]

Medhananda (1908–1994) — A brief biography

Despite his early interest in ancient cultures, their symbols, and their spirituality, Fritz Winkelstroeter fulfilled his father's wish and studied law at Munich, Heidelberg, and Paris. During this time he was privileged to also study Chinese under the distinguished scholar Richard Wilhelm, translator of the Chinese I Ching, Tao Te Ching and many other ancient texts. In 1933 he left his position as Junior Judge at the High Court of Frankfurt. The following year he left Germany with his French wife to escape the rise of Nazism. They went to Tahiti in French Polynesia, settled on Tahiti's sister island Moorea, where they bought 200 hectares of virgin forest, built a small house, and established themselves as farmers, cultivating vanilla and coffee.



During World War II, Fritz was interned near Tahiti as an enemy alien. After his release in 1946 he came across the writings of Sri Aurobindo, and in 1952 he joined the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, India. There The Mother, Sri Aurobindo's spiritual collaborator, gave him the name "Medhananda"² and put him in charge of the Ashram's Library. (In 1926, Sri Aurobindo had entrusted to The Mother both the spiritual and the physical welfare of his disciples.)

For many years Medhananda taught History of Religion at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. In 1965 he became editor of the quarterly journal *Equals One*, for which he wrote numerous articles. In about 1970 he began an in-depth study of the symbology of the hieroglyphs and imagery of ancient Egypt, using the same psychological approach by which Sri Aurobindo discovered the esoteric sense of the Vedas of ancient India.³ In 1978, together with his collaborator Yvonne Artaud, he founded the Identity Research Institute, a non-profit foundation for psychological research.

2 Sanskrit: *medhā* = intelligence, *ānanda* = bliss.

3 See Satprem, *The Secret of the Veda*, *AntiMatters* 1 (2) — this issue.

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- published quarterly by Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, India.

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Focus and Scope

Materialism, in one form or another, is still widely accepted as the overarching framework for discussing issues not only in science but also in the humanities. *AntiMatters* is dedicated to illuminating these issues from non-materialistic perspectives.

Materialism is by nature pluralistic. It assigns ultimate reality to a multitude (particles, spacetime points, monads, actual occasions, q-bits, etc.). It models reality “from the bottom up.” Its principal explanatory concepts are composition and interaction, to which modern field theories have added the concept of instantiation (usually of physical properties by spacetime points).

AntiMatters encourages the exploration of ontologies that are essentially monistic, not because they aim to reduce reality to a single category such as matter or mind, but because they assign ultimate reality to an entity or principle that is intrinsically one. Such ontologies model reality “from the top down,” using novel explanatory concepts such as differentiation, manifestation, emanation, or emergence (and probably others that nobody has thought of yet).

AntiMatters is for those who are uncomfortable with (or unconvinced of) materialism, or who favor a non-materialistic world view. Such persons are oftentimes unaware of how much of what is claimed to have been scientifically established is actually spurious. For their benefit, the Journal aims to critically examine the alleged scientific evidence for materialism. While authors are expected to respect and take account of all relevant empirical data, they should bear in mind that empirical data are inevitably theory-laden and paradigm-dependent, and that theories and paradigms, being to a considerable extent social constructions, are relative.

Science operates within an interpretative framework that formulates questions and interprets answers. This framework is itself not testable. *AntiMatters* wants to serve as a platform for the comparative study of alternative interpretative frameworks. The Journal emphasizes the following criteria for the evaluation of such frameworks:

(i) Consistency with all empirical data, not only the quantifiable ones but also those obtained through phenomenological methods, altered states of consciousness, and mystical or spiritual experience.

(ii) An appropriate ontological status for what we value most, such as happiness, self-fulfillment, excellence — the Platonic trinity of beauty, good, and truth.

The Journal wants to set high intellectual standards without sacrificing substance. Style is important, but more so is content. Positive thinking is as essential as clarity of exposition. Deconstruction for its own sake qualifies as little as religious dogma.

It is not the (primary) aim of *AntiMatters* to “convert” die-hard materialists. Instead, the Journal offers non-materialists the opportunity of a stimulating exchange of views.

Discussions of “anomalies,” which are neglected or ignored by mainstream science, also fall within the scope of the Journal.

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