

OUT IN THE OPEN

Volume 7 of 8

(Featuring works written in 2009 – 2011)

(188 Pages)

By

Francis William Bessler

Featuring a Compilation

of

The Complete Written Works

of

Francis William Bessler

From 1963-2011

Compiled in June, 2011

**Featuring
Original essays, stories & songs
In
Chronological order.**

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Laramie, Wyoming
- 2011 -**

OUT IN THE OPEN

By Francis William Bessler

Written 4/8/2011

Refrain 1:

Out in the open – it's the best way to find God.

Out in the open – truth does not depend upon applause.

Out in the open – no devil can exist.

Out in the open – there's no room for sin.

Well, my friends, I'm no guru,
but I don't think I need to be.
When I simply look at life,
it's all I need to be free.
Let others read lots of books
if they believe that will help;
but I think that if that's all they know,
what they know will be more like Hell. **Refrain 1.**

I'm told I should fear Satan
and I say, why should I?
It's clear Satan can't exist
when I'm standing beneath a sky.
Just look out as far as you can see
and all devils disappear.
So just keep looking outward
and you'll never need to fear. **Refrain 1.**

I learned long time ago,
back when I was a child,
That the only truth anyone needs
is found in the wild.
To the degree, I can be
one with the deer and antelope
is the same degree I can find peace
and that wonderful thing called hope. **Refrain 1.**

I think it's good to know
that we're all the same.
I don't need you and you don't need me
to share a common fate.
The truth we both need
is out there in the universe.
Just become one with the All –
and let that be what we rehearse. **Refrain 1.**

And when I die what will happen
to this thing I call my soul?
It will just continue on
on the merry path I know.
Wherever my souls goes,
it will stay among the stars.
Freedom's only belonging to All
whether that All is near or far. **Refrain 1.**

Refrain 2 (several times):

Out in the open – it's my favorite phrase.
Out in the open – it lets my nights look to day.
Out in the open – it's the way I want to go.
Out in the open – it's the best way to know.

Introduction

Welcome to my 7th volume (of 8) of my *OUT IN THE OPEN* writings series. I will be presenting works that I wrote from 2009 through June of 2011 in this volume. Previous volumes featured works from varying spans of time – starting with Volume 1 which featured works from 1963 – 1984. Volume 2 covered the span of time from 1985 – 1994. Volume 3 featured works from 1995 – 2004. Volume 4 featured works from 2005. Volume 5 featured works from 2006. Volume 6 featured a two year span of 2007 & 2008. Now, this volume will complete the “**main**” series of volumes which feature all works written in a given period – including song, essay, and story. Again, the span of time for this volume is 2009 – 2011. One more volume will remain after this one – Volume 8 – which will feature only all of my songs (140 in number) in alphabetical order. So far, songs have been presented in the order in which they have been written – like all of the works in the previous volumes. This final “**main**” volume will do the same – present works in the order in which they were written.

This final “**main**” volume will be featuring quite a few works centering on the person of **Jesus - but without Satan**. You heard right – **without Satan** – or without a consideration of Satan. Let me explain.

It is perhaps a bit of a strange journey that I have taken in life, but I started out with a **faith of Satan** – not a **faith in Satan** – but a **faith of Satan**. That is to say that I believed that Satan exists – just as my traditional faith (Catholicism) taught me. In that light, I fit Jesus into a picture that saw him in battle with Satan. Again, I did that because that is what I was taught. There was this **foe of God** named **Satan** who basically opposed God. Part of that opposition ended in Satan “stealing” humankind from God. Jesus came into the picture as one from God who came to Earth to restore humankind to God – of course from the terrible hands of this one called Satan.

In time, however, I would come to believe that God can have no opposition because it is impossible that Infinity – which God is – could lose anything. If God cannot lose anything, then nothing can steal from God. If nothing can be stolen from God, then presto, **it is pure myth that one called Satan could even exist**.

Now what’s a guy to do with Jesus once he has “*thrown Satan out the door*”? Perhaps you can sense a bit of a predicament or dilemma that I faced earlier in life when I gave up a **faith of Satan**. **Did I have to throw Jesus out too?** It would seem so. If Jesus existed to **battle Satan**, but there is no Satan, **what does one do with Jesus?**

I must admit I found myself in quite a quandary. In 1973 – at the age of 31, I left the Church that taught that Satan is a real foe. I drifted without a religious home for a few years; and then in 1979, some friends turned me on to what I have come to believe is a **whole new Jesus** – one that may have found himself challenging the entire concept of Satan too. It was in 1979 that friends introduced me to an alternate gospel called **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS**. Now I had another story of Jesus that might aid me in **putting Christ in Perspective without a Satan**. Impossible, you say? Maybe! And then again, Maybe not too.

Without getting into much detail, before Emperor Constantine came to power in the 4th Century, there were quite a few different gospels about Jesus in the world. When Constantine made Christianity the state religion, he empowered the bishops of his “new church” to settle on a canon of books that would be included in what would become known as the **BIBLE**. Sadly, those books that were not chosen for the new **BIBLE** were supposed to be – not only banned – but destroyed. Many of the banned books were destroyed, but some survived too.

In 1945, a peasant stumbled on a big jar in a cave off the Nile River in Egypt. Out tumbled many ancient manuscripts – one of which was the aforementioned **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS**. It is speculated by experts that the “Thomas” of reference is none other than Thomas, one of the 12 Apostles of Jesus. It may or may not be so, but regardless of who the Thomas of reference is, at least one of the gospels banned by Constantine and his bishops has become known once again; and we can delight in taking a look – that is, those of us so inclined to do so.

In previous volumes, I have referred somewhat to the **Jesus without a Satan**, though I don’t think I have put it that way. Consider yourself in for a more in depth look at the issue of **Jesus without Satan** in this final main volume. I will begin my journey with a song I wrote in mid January of 2009 called **Sense of Belonging**. Then will come the first of a number of **Jesus without a Satan** essays. I wrote a 13 page essay called **THE MYSTERY OF JESUS** in later January of 2009. We will begin our search of a Jesus without a Satan in that one – though I do not define it as such.

Then it’s time to put the alleged foe – **Satan** – in true perspective. That is really needed if our **new Jesus** can no longer be defined in light of a Satan. Right? So I wrote a 3 page essay dealing with my old foe – **Satan** – who in 1973 I “cast out my door.” I call my essay: **SATAN**. For sure, I do believe “**Satans**” do exist in great numbers. It’s just that the traditional foe of one **Satan** in terms of the traditional definition of **one opposed to God** can’t exist because God, being necessarily Infinite, cannot have any opposition. I will go into it more in my little essay I call **SATAN**.

Following our **dethroning of Satan**, I offer an 18 page commentary about visions and dreams – especially in light of Jesus – new or old. I call that one **ON VISIONS & DREAMS**; and in that one I take a bit of a glance at one of the most famous visions of all time – the vision of John as offered in **The Book of Revelation** of the **BIBLE**.

Then I offer a more in depth look at one of the books that has helped put **Jesus without Satan** in perspective for me – **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS**. I offer a little of the history of that one, but only a little because I only know a little. Most importantly, however, I feature all 114 verses of **The Gospel of Thomas** – along with my interpretation of each of those verses. That is a long one, though. I call it **JESUS VIA THOMAS COMMENTARIES** – and it’s some 64 pages long.

Thomas is not alone, however, in offering a **Jesus without a Satan**. There also exists another gospel written by one called Mary – presumed to be **Mary Magdalene**. I first encountered **THE GOSPEL OF MARY** in December of 2004 – long after my first introduction to **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS** in 1979. Much of **The Gospel of Mary** is of no interest to me – for reasons I will offer in my interpretation of **The Gospel of Mary**; however the first verse practically confirms many of my own “**new beliefs**.” I call my interpretation of **The Gospel of Mary**: **JESUS VIA MARY COMMENTARIES** – and it is 28 pages long. This effort features the actual Gospel of

Mary – along with my interpretation of the first verse. I wrote both of my banned Gospel Commentaries in April of 2009.

Moving right along, I offer a bit of a discussion about the “real” and the “surreal” in a 19 page essay I call ***THE REAL & THE SURREAL*** – which I wrote in June of 2009. Most people do not know it, I think, but most people are not “realists” because their entire lives concentrate on the “surreal.” I am a realist; and I think Jesus was too in that both Jesus and I look at life itself as the prize – and do not attend much to what men think life should be. Well, anyway, that is the gist of this one. I conclude it with a song I wrote called – **Welcome To The Real World.**

That does it for the long essay type works, but there are a few short essays too. One I call ***LIFE & DEATH*** – that ponders life & death as response to news I received that a dear cousin of my youth had died and a niece was given 6 months to live. Before that, I feature a short essay I call ***AN INVITATION TO JOY*** – which I conclude with a song I wrote featured in Volume 6 – ***It's A Lovely Day Today.***

That pretty much covers it for this final “main” volume – except for quite a few songs (21 in total) and a final essay & song. My intent was to write one more song to somewhat finish the whole series, a song I call ***Life Is A Gift.*** I was undecided as to whether to write an accompanying essay, but I decided I could not pass up the chance. The idea is much too appealing to me to let it go with just a song. So I wrote a small two page essay I call ***LIFE IS A GIFT – NOT A LOAN.*** Along with offering that life itself is mostly a gift, this essay talks about a love affair of my life – between my body and my soul. Ideally, I think, my love affair should be your own as we are all the same.

Like I have concluded all of my volumes of my ***OUT IN THE OPEN*** writings series with an Epilog, so also do I conclude this one with an Epilog. I call it ***FORGIVE TO BE FORGIVEN.***

That’s it for a brief glimpse at the contents of this volume. For a detailed review, check out the **INDEX** below. Once again, I’d like to repeat that all of my ideas are strictly personal opinion. If you would, keep that in mind when reviewing my thoughts. OK?

As Always, Thanks for letting me share a few of my ideas about Life!

Gently,

A Joyful Journeyman of Life,

Francis William Bessler

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June 14th, 2011

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SENSE OF BELONGING

By Francis William Bessler
Laramie, Wyoming
Written January 15-18, 2009

REFRAIN:

*I've a sense of belonging. Longing is not my verse.
I've a sense of belonging; and I belong to the Universe.
I've a sense of belonging. I've belonged since my birth.
I've a sense of belonging; and I belong to the Universe.*

I'm no different than anyone; but I admit to the truth.
Everyone here is equally dear – regardless of age or youth.
If love is only a sense of belonging, why is it that love we often evade
by deluding ourselves we must seek to belong
when we already belong to what's great? ***Refrain.***

We cannot make ourselves great by thinking we're better than sheep or dogs.
If we do fall into that trap, our penalty is a sense we don't belong.
I believe each part is wondrous, as wondrous as the whole
because whatever is in the whole must in each part also rule. ***Refrain.***

If I were to meet you in public and you were to slap me in the face,
it would be best for me to walk away and not repeat your mistake.
Today, someone died. Tomorrow, it may be me;
but it's good to keep in mind death does not lessen Divinity. ***Refrain.***

So, let us all be strong. There's no need to be weak
because, in fact, we all belong to Creation's Grand University.
Yes, in fact, we all belong to God's Grand University. ***Refrain.***

FINAL:

*I've a sense of belonging
and I'll belong even after this birth
because no matter where I may be,
I'll be within the Universe.
Yes, I've a sense of belonging
and I'll belong even after this birth
because no matter where I may be,
I'll be within the Universe.
Yes, I'll be within the Universe.
There's no escaping it –
I'll always belong – to and within –
the Universe.*

THE MYSTERY OF JESUS

(13 Pages)

An essay by
Francis William Bessler
Laramie, Wyoming
Written January 23, 2009;
modified somewhat on May 10, 2009.

Hi, Michele & Karyl,

(And Hello, Everyone! I had Michele and Karyl, living close by, to dinner a few days ago. One of my favorite subjects came up - Jesus. Michele and Karyl believe in a "Lord Jesus" whereas I believe in a "Master Jesus." With this essay, I am sharing my thoughts about why I think Jesus would prefer to be thought of more as a "master" than a "lord." Keep in mind, those thoughts are only my opinions. As I share them with you, consider yourself welcome to share them with others. FWB.)

Possibilities & Probabilities

About Life in general, I see it in terms of **possibilities and probabilities**. It's "possible" that it derives from some sinister source, but having lived mostly happy for 67 years now, I have lost all fear of that. I look at life and review wonder - and I do not relate wonder with sinister. I relate *wonder* with *Divine* or *Godly*. What is the possibility I am wrong? I think it's very low. What is the probability I am right? I think it's very high. Yes, it is minimally possible that life is not of the Divine, given that the Divine is just another expression for *Infinite*; but it is not probable that it lacks in Divinity.

Regardless of all the many opinions of the past and present that would define life in some sinister way as being imperfect, then, I see life itself as perfect. *If the "probability" is that it is Divine or of the Divine, then the "probability" is that it is perfect as well because in my mind, nothing Divine can be imperfect.* That perspective of life, then, holds life itself in tremendous esteem, disallowing any possibility of it being sinful. If there is sin in the world - or fault, which is another word for sin - it cannot be in

life itself. *It can only happen by virtue of conduct, not exist by virtue of some sinister source.*

That perspective leads me to live my life like the wondrous thing it is should be embraced. **I may not understand it - and for sure, I do not - but it is not for me to take my lack of understanding of it and translate that into accusation of imperfection.** Even death as part of the entire picture cannot be an expression of imperfection. I think we humans tend to see death as expressive of imperfection, but I do not see it that way. What is the possibility that death is an expression of imperfection? I would say, it's very low - though there is an extremely minimal possibility that it is. Maybe all life is supposed to live forever, but that maybe is so low as to be almost non-existent. What is the probability that death is an aspect of perfection? Look around and see for yourself. *Everything dies. So the probability that death is part of the wonder is extremely high.*

Now, take it from there. **What is the possibility that an Infinite God is going to damn me for embracing It's Creation? Almost zilch. What is the probability that I will be rewarded in some way for embracing God's Creation? Almost without a doubt.** I don't think God Itself will reward me, but just living my life aware of life as a blessing will reward me all I need to be rewarded. In other words, *Virtue is its own reward.* The reward for embracing life and loving it is happiness. There it is. It all comes down to possibility and probability.

As I see it, many - if not most - of my fellow human beings live life like the possibility of life being Divine and incorruptible is extremely low and the probability of life being sinful by nature is high. I find myself wondering why mankind is still holding onto notions about life that preceded Jesus and should have been dispelled with his life; but then with Jesus, we have to continue the discussion of possibility and probability.

What is the possibility of Jesus - or anyone - being a redeemer, sent by God to redeem us from a sin we do not, in fact, have - given the probability that life is Divine and perfect and incorruptible? You tell me. If, in fact, life has always been perfect, of what need would there be of what is called **redemption?** None! If Jesus did not live to redeem us, then why did he live? Good question, but the wise one will answer it in terms of possibility and probability - just like all issues of life. Never mind the stories of Jesus told by those trying to gain some attention and support for their own regimens. In pure mathematical terms, if such is possible, **what is the probability that Jesus really did exist as a redeemer when redemption is not needed?**

I know many - including yourselves, Michele & Karyl - have a view of Jesus as standing for actual ruling by Him over others - perhaps in some Celestial Kingdom or in some Later Kingdom on Earth or perhaps on a Jupiter; but I have since determined that it is highly likely - or highly probable - we misunderstood him when he offered "another kingdom." He said "*my kingdom is not of this world,*" but he "probably" meant *my rule is not of this world.* He was not about setting up an actual law bound kingdom, but offering that there is but one kingdom that is of any worth, a kingdom "not of this world" in terms of expecting a worldly type rule of one over the other - including a Jesus over anyone else. His was a *kingdom of kindness.* That's all. One who belongs to such a kingdom is a "king" or a "queen" no matter where he or she goes. *It is Kindness Itself that is "The Kingdom."* It is good to keep in mind that Jesus often used metaphors to

express an idea. A "kingdom" can be understood to represent "security," but security can exist entirely outside of an actual law bound kingdom. Can't it?

Rule – not Law

That is my take on Jesus. Jesus was - and is - not about **law**. He was about *rule* - but rule of yourself, not rule over another. Of course, it is to each his or her own, but it is really nice to be living in a "kingdom" and having peace now rather than anticipating a kingdom that will probably never be because the "real Jesus" will never be there - probably. Others claim he will be there, and expect it because they have been told it is so - or will be so - but I think they had - and have - Jesus wrong.

That is not to say, however, that there does not exist spiritual or soulful communities - or kingdoms - that actually believe in a redeemer Jesus. I suspect that many such communities - or kingdoms - do exist; and it is entirely possible - if not probable - that such kingdoms will acclaim their various believers in some way after life. I suspect that Peter is standing at some gate, waving for souls to come on in, but it is not probable that Jesus is in the company. Why? Because *it is improbable that a person who taught that his kingdom is not of an order of law will preside over a community that is law bound* with a law that requires acceptance of Jesus as a personal savior from a sin we do not, in fact have. What is the likelihood - or probability - of that? **Is it likely that Jesus - who preached we should be as children, implying belief in innocence - would preside over a community that rewards its obedient members for belief in guilt?** I doubt it. I could be wrong, but the probability of that is very low.

Reasonably, too, if souls do survive death to be entertained and accepted by other souls of like kind, it stands to reason that there could be an **actual community of Jesus** that is about collecting to itself Jesus like souls that imitated Jesus in life and practiced kindness to all for the sake of the virtue itself; but if such a community does exist, it is highly unlikely that interface and interaction with Jesus will happen. Why should it? Anyone who would be embraced by such a community would not be so embraced because of a need for a pat on the back from Jesus, but only because of being kindred spirits, so to speak. I might bump into Jesus - and I might not - but it wouldn't matter in the least. That which will matter is that I am together with kindred spirits. In any event, if I lived a kind life before death, I certainly would not be "collected" by mean souls. At least, it is not likely I will - though, admittedly, anything is possible. It's just not probable.

Many believe that Jesus lived to redeem us from sin because that is what they have been taught. Quite frankly, a variation of that is possible – if communities of souls collect kindred souls to themselves. What might be the temper or character of soul that represents the soulful community or “providence” of Jesus? Since Jesus accented kindness or forgiveness as a way of life, it is reasonable to assume that he and his “providence” would be interested in kind souls. Is it not? His way and his kingdom is a way of kindness – and, if so, all one would need to belong to the kingdom of Jesus is to be kind – or forgiving. I find that to be an interesting idea – and quite likely possible, and even probable.

In the light, then, that Jesus lived to **redeem us from sin**, change that to *rescue us from guilt* – and it might be true. We have no inherent sin because our natures are

inherently good, being within and of God, but we do have – or have had – guilt in terms of believing we have sin. Indeed, we have been **carefully taught** down through the ages that **we have sin**. Since false guilt drives unhappiness and meanness – often by virtue of law, commanding punishment for being what we are – to rid ourselves of false guilt is to rid ourselves of meanness or unkindness. So, if Jesus is seen as *release from guilt*, by virtue of advice, it may well be true that he lived to rescue unhappy or imprisoned souls from previous allegiance to ways of guilt.

In that light, then, it could well be true that Jesus lived to *harvest* Jesus type souls; but such a harvest could in no way be tied to fulfilling or completing any religious tradition based on guilt and belief in inherent sin. Again, it is a matter of possibility and probability; but in all probability, if Jesus represents freedom from guilt and belief in innocence, Jesus could not have lived to fulfill Jewish tradition because Jewish tradition was founded upon – and is entrenched in – a sense of guilt. If we are really inherently good – as is probably the case – there is no need for law to **force us to be good**. Is there?

The Kingdom of Jesus

I know it is fashionable to think that Jesus died for us, but I have gone through that so many times in my mind and heart to suspect that if Jesus were to tell me himself of what is important, he would tell me to look at his life - not his death. *Death is not important for any of us, but living right is*. I hear him telling me that. He would tell me that I should be thoughtful of life now and be impressed with life now, realizing that **OUR FATHER** is its Creator. Of what sense does it make to deny what the Creator is making and giving? That is what he would ask me. He'd tell me to *be aware of my blessings today and be satisfied with "daily bread" and not be greedy*. He would tell me that I *should forgive others in order to live in a state of forgiveness*. Imagine that? He would tell me that **OUR FATHER did not Create our world in order to use it to test us**. Imagine that too? He would say, Hey, *Life is a Gift*. Do you think you made it? Do you think one called "**Satan**" made it? Think Again! *You are Living in a Gift* - and it is for you to be mindful of that and thankful for that. And if you do these things, I hear him saying, **you will be "delivered from evil."**

So, where is the *Promised Kingdom of Jesus*? It is *Here and it is Now* (as well as "forever") - and it is "not of this world of law," but of the Rule of Kindness or Gentleness – which commands forgiveness. No one can be gentle if one is constantly holding a grudge. If there is no release from judgment and grudging, there can be no kindness. Thus, to achieve kindness, one must practice forgiveness.

The "Lord's" Prayer

Jesus did not call his summary of his thoughts "The Lord's Prayer." He simply said that when we pray, we should pray thus. Another labeled it **The Lord's Prayer**; but it is not the prayer of a lord, but rather the prayer of a master, one who rules him or herself with kindness to all - which is to say, being gentle with all, including yourself. **That is "likely" - or probably - the only kingdom Jesus was about**. That actual summary of life - not death - went something like this:

Our Father, Who are in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come and will be done - on earth as it is in heaven (In other words, God's presence is everywhere, on earth and in and beyond the skies, understood in the time of Jesus as "the heavens"). *Give us this day our daily bread* (in other words, don't be greedy) *and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us* (in other words, forgiveness and kindness we earn only by forgiving others in order to live in a "state of forgiveness"). *Lead us not into temptation* (as if to say, we understand that life is not intended as a temptation, but as a gift) *but deliver us from evil* (to say that to do these things, life lacks evil). *Amen!*

Death & Sacrifice

Really? **Doesn't that make a lot more sense? Where is "death" in that? And where is "sacrifice" in that? And where is "Satan" in that?** Jesus is portrayed as "fighting Satan" only because those who want war need an adversary. That is what war is all about - fighting an adversary; but Jesus was not about **fighting an adversary**, but rather **proclaiming a rule**. The Jews of the time believed in a Satan. Jesus did not. Anyone who knows life as a precious paradise does not "blame it on Satan," but knows it comes from God and cannot be defiled by anyone. We sadden ourselves by thinking that life can be defiled, but we fool ourselves in thinking we actually do it. We do not defile life by disclaiming it because no one has power to defile anything of God. We only fool ourselves; but in our self fraudulence, we become sad and sick and unhappy.

No, Michele & Karyl, I do not think Jesus died for us. **He died because of our rejection of him and his counsel, but he did not die to restore us to a God we have never left.** Jesus was turned into a sacrifice by those who want a kingdom of law and have been led to believe that Jesus preached such a kingdom; but the Jesus I see did not preach sacrifice, but simple ordinary kindness. Again, where do you see "sacrifice to protect or improve life" in the so called *Lord's Prayer*? It isn't there, is it? And neither should we be mistaken to think that any death - that of Jesus or any other - can substitute for the one rule that matters - *the rule of kindness*.

I think it is good to keep in mind, My Friends, that the Jews of the origin of Jesus believed in sacrifice. Sacrifice was the mainstay of their religion. They believed in sacrifice because they believed that there is a god outside of life that needs to be pleased. Theirs was a history of offering sacrifice to please their god. In that light, it is **probable** that good Jews like Peter and Paul saw Jesus in the light of their mainstay - **sacrifice. And that is "probably" why early Christians like Peter and Paul saw Jesus as a sacrifice.** It was their way of life - and if Jesus was seen as the fulfillment of that way of life - then he had to be seen in the order of sacrifice. Thus - Jesus had to die to be offered to their god because all their sacrifices had to die. It was a way of life because it follows when one puts the real God outside of life; but *when one - like me - believes that God is "inside of life," then sacrifice or appeal to God becomes meaningless. Doesn't it?*

Will we ever realize the truth of what we did to Jesus - and with Jesus? Probably, if we survive long enough to do it - if we don't kill each other off in meaningless sacrifice before it can happen. In the meantime, it is not for me to live my life like it is probably not - like it is sinful with need of redemption. Yes, it is possible I

was born in sin, but the probability of that is so low as to almost be impossible. **And what wise person will live his or her life like the improbable is probable?**

Inspiration – from God or another?

People are bound to ask: where are you getting this Jesus - certainly not the **BIBLE**? And I would say, you are right - not the **BIBLE** - at least not entirely. I think it is good to keep in mind that what we call the **BIBLE** offers one view of Jesus - that of necessary redeemer; but since when has any one "reporter" told everything exactly correct? **Bias of reporting is bound to exist in any report** - and that must include any artificially bound collection of books that is called the **BIBLE**. People lose sight that every book ever written by mankind and for mankind has been written by mankind - or by humans. Just claiming inspiration from God does not prove it; and the likelihood of a God inside of us all speaking to one of us as if God is only outside of us is very low. Back to my world of possibility and probability, yes, it is possible God might inspire some writing, but the probability of that is so low as to be almost non-existent.

That is not to say that certain works could not have been inspired. It is only to say that all works probably could not have been inspired by God - though they could have been inspired by paranormal entities presenting themselves as God or agents of God. Who is to know about that? I suppose some humans have heard voices and maybe those voices have declared themselves as God - or of God - but that doesn't make them of God just because they claim it. Does it?

Why would a paranormal entity claim to be God when it is not so? For the rather obvious motive of gaining control of a subject - and perhaps a people through that subject. That would be my guess. Why not? There are people everywhere in bodies that have no problem with lying to manipulate or control others. So, if paranormal (or outside of body) entities do exist and somehow can communicate with certain willing subjects, why wouldn't they lie to gain control? Normal entities lie. Why wouldn't paranormal entities lie? I am not saying all paranormal entities *do* lie - only that some of them *might* just as some of us within bodies *do*.

It is worthwhile to keep in mind, too, that we will all become **paranormal** entities when we die because "paranormal" is only "outside the body." It is not so far fetched to believe in paranormal entities if we also believe that souls can exist outside of bodies. Is it? Thus, it is entirely possible that those who speak to some of us from outside of us and seem to be **angels or devils** may be others of us who have lived before and are now simply outside of us to continue on. Beware of those who "reveal" then - because it may only be Great Grandpa or Great Grandma, still intent on staying in control. I am not saying it's so. I am only saying it might be so; and quite frankly since I do believe the soul continues after death as a paranormal entity - at least until it *reincarnates* - my thinking is that it is *probably so*.

What's Fact? What's Fiction?

Anyway, without a probability of God inspiring any one author, we are left with the obvious - the story we have been told is not exactly right. ***How do you sift the right from the wrong? By perception.*** If a tale seems right, it might be; and if it might be, accept it

as true unless demonstrated later as wrong. If a tale seems implausible, then assume it is false unless demonstrated somehow as right; but it makes no sense to base your life on tales as absolutely right when the probability is that much about them is wrong - or told for another reason other than just to tell the truth.

Was Jesus God – or of God – in a different way than we all are? It is unlikely Jesus was any different than any of us. If God is truly in everything – and not standing outside of us like an old fashioned “god,” why would God need to be sent to us by God – as is claimed by much “orthodox” tradition – Jewish, Islamic, and Christian?

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John would have us believe Jesus was “Godly” in a way different than the rest of us, but consider the reason for that. The reason for believing that Jesus was God – or of God – was belief that the rest of us are not. Thus, that is the basis of their tale - to tell stories that seem to impress us that Jesus was God; but the reasonable person can tell some fact from fiction - not all fact from fiction - but at least some fact from some fiction; and watch out when some alleged fact is demonstrated as quite probably, fiction. Then the whole story becomes undermined because no one can be sure of what is fact and what is fiction.

Example: The raising of Lazarus from the dead. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all emphasized miracles of Jesus to prove that Jesus was more powerful than us - but not one of them "reported" the greatest miracle of all time - the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Why did they not report it? Going forward with possibility and probability again, they probably did not report it because they did not know of it; and they probably did not know of it or about it because it did not happen. Why did John report it? Probably because he thought it would impress people to follow his lord, Jesus. Could it have been true? Not likely. If it had happened, a miracle of that stretch would have definitely been reported by the others - all of whom reported their stories long before John delivered his. Can you imagine it possible that three reporters knew of a miracle of such stupendous degree as the raising of Lazarus and did not report it? I cannot. And how could they have not known about it if it really happened? Again, the "probability" is that it didn't happen, thus making the reporting of it a lie. Right? So much for absolute truth in the **BIBLE**.

That is but one example; and it should "prove" that no one should believe everything as claimed in any book - be it a **BIBLE** or any claimed biography. **That leaves "being reasonable" as the standard of belief.** I believe what seems reasonable. Contrary to those who would have me believe without evidence, I believe only on the basis of what I can see - or what seems reasonable. Like Jesus offers in another gospel, *THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS* banned by the church by the 4th Century, Jesus said: *Know what is in thy sight and what is hidden will be revealed to thee.* Understandably, that is missing from the acclaimed gospels of the **BIBLE** because it does not support a need for believing without seeing. Does it? **But which Jesus is right? Good question; but in the end, one has to decide that for him or herself based on overall perception of life.**

Peter – or Mary Magdalene?

There are other gospels of Jesus too, banned by the church by the 4th Century - gospels like *THE GOSPEL OF MARY MAGDALENE*. Is it authentic? I do not know; but neither do I know that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are authentic. Who knows for

sure about any of them? I don't. I was not there. So, how can I be sure? I can't, but I can believe what I want based upon previous perception of life; and, in the end, that is all any reasonable person can do.

In *THE GOSPEL OF MARY MAGDALENE*, it is said that Peter asked Jesus about sin. What did Jesus reply? He said: *There is no such thing as sin, but you create sin when you mingle as in adultery.* Did Jesus really say that? I don't know, but I suspect he did because it is "probable" that he did, given his emphasis in the other gospels on the necessity of virtue. *Virtue, I think, is practiced, not to overcome sin, but to express belief in the inherent goodness of life.*

Anyway, there it is - Jesus denying the whole concept of sin of which the entire **BIBLE** is about. We "*create sin.*" We are not "**born with it.**" That is what Mary Magdalene has Jesus telling Peter; and yet Peter would have us to believe in the gospels of the **BIBLE** that he was given the authority by Jesus to start a church whose mission was to baptize members so they could be released of their birth sins. What a contradiction! Who is right? It is for each of us to decide that for ourselves. If you think it is sensible to believe that we are born with sin, then believe Peter - and in Peter - as offered in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. If you believe that we are not born in sin, but can create sin by our actions, then believe in the Jesus of Mary Magdalene. To each, his or her own, **but I choose Mary because it tells it more like I believe it.**

The Resurrection of Jesus

Did Jesus appear to his apostles after his death – as is claimed by the gospels of the **BIBLE**? I do not know, but I suspect it was a tale in the order of the raising of Lazarus from the dead in order to command a following. The “John” who offered that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead may have seen the event in a dream and imagined it into reality. Who is to say? All sort of people dream a vision and are sure they have seen reality. It happens. So, who's to say that John did not see Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead in a dream – and then proceed to claim he had seen it in reality? And who's to say that a friend of Jesus did not dream of Jesus after his death and consider it was a real event?

I don't know what happened after the death of Jesus anymore than I know what really happened before his death; however, more than likely if people got Jesus wrong in life, they probably got him wrong in death too. It seems to me that most people who believe that Jesus rose from the dead, or after his death, in bodily form also believe that Jesus was a messiah sent by God to somehow release us from a sin we do not have. It is the tale of such believers that offer that Jesus rose from the dead. **If they got Jesus wrong in life, how could it be wise to believe they got his death and assumed resurrection correct?**

In truth, we can't really know if Jesus really did rise from the dead because his story was told by those having a belief that death is a punishment for sin. If death is seen as a punishment for sin, then it follows that no one telling the story of Jesus as a Jewish Messiah could have allowed for death to stop Jesus. Death would have had to be climaxed with a story of resurrection – even if one did not really take place. Otherwise, salvation could not have been finished, as it were. There would have had to be a story of a resurrection just to complete the story of life as Jews saw it. There would have had to

be some *triumph over death* by *re-life*, as it were, if sin was to be defeated. As long as one relates death to sin, then in the end, a true savior seen as sinless, would have to prove he was sinless by showing that death could not stop him. Thus, a *true messiah* would have to rise from the dead.

It is at least partly because a resurrection would have been “expected” of a Jesus that personally I am drawn to suspect any story that would offer a resurrection. On the other hand, I strongly believe in the immortality of the soul and I strongly believe in reincarnation as a likely process. I believe that souls use bodies to express themselves and define truth for themselves; and when a soul finishes with one body and leaves that body, upon death of body, then it is only natural to assume that it would take upon itself another body and continue its own personal drama.

In truth, reincarnation may only be a matter of timing. Normally, a soul would take a baby’s body for itself; but there is nothing to say that a soul might choose to take an adult body as well – given that such a body is empty of a soul. If Jesus died and his soul left his body for a time, then from my perspective, I accept the possibility of Jesus being able to enter his former body all over again. I can see that as a possibility; and thus I cannot deny a resurrection – or the possibility of one. Mystery clouds the whole process for me, however, and I admit I do not know any of the details. *I don’t even know how a soul can take a baby body – let alone take an adult body; however, given that a soul can take any body at all pretty much assures me that a soul might be able to take an adult body for itself rather than a baby body – or embryo.* So, in that light, I am a definite believer that Jesus may have risen from the dead; however I differ from most believers in the interpretation of such a resurrection.

If Jesus did rise from the dead and take – or retake – his former body, it was not to prove he had power over life. It was only to continue with another incarnation. In that, I am personally comforted because the very idea of reincarnation is of my belief; and it suggests that I am right in my belief in the immortality of the soul. If Jesus continued after death, then there is every reason for me to believe that I will too; and that is what the resurrection story does for me.

But if Jesus did rise from the dead, I doubt that he “rose into heaven” after some period of time, as is reported by gospel writers of the **BIBLE**. For what reason would he have done that if he was only continuing his soulful journey? And if he did rise from the dead, he would have likely had the same physical body too – and not just some *spirit body*.

Where would have Jesus gone after spending a few days with his friends if not “into heaven”? Who knows? Maybe he left with Thomas or someone and headed to Egypt. I do not know. In *THE GOSPEL OF MARY MAGDALENE*, Mary simply states that after offering his blessing, *he left them*. She does not say where he went – just simply that he *left* them. Personally, I do not need to know where he went because I think it does not matter where he went. Wherever it was, he would have taken his light with him while leaving that same light behind for souls like me.

Belief and Good Sense

Am I to believe what I am told without requirement of good sense? Am I to believe that God is in some Heaven someplace waiting for me to come to Him via obedience to

Peter and Paul? *Or am I to believe that Heaven is everyplace because God is everyplace?* Am I to believe that Hell without God waits for me should I deny the authority of Peter and Paul? *Or am I to believe that no Hell without God can exist because no place can exist without God?*

Show me, Hell. Maybe I will believe. Show me, Heaven. Maybe I will believe; but show me nothing and I would be a fool to accept your Heaven or your Hell, leaving me only wise to decide for myself what is Heaven and what is Hell. What is the basis of Hell? A place where God will give me over to Satan and let His rival pour fire over me? Where is such a place? What is the basis of Heaven? A place where God Himself will serve me and wait on me? I don't think so. *Heaven is only knowing that wherever I am, God is; and Hell is only believing that where I am, God is not. You can inspire me with Heaven, but you cannot threaten me with Hell.*

Some “Missing” Verses Some “Added” Errors

I have alluded to two somewhat unknown gospels – *THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS* and *THE GOSPEL OF MARY MAGDALENE*. Both were banned by the “orthodox” side of what has become **Christianity**. Though their rejection was probably due to several factors, I think the overriding factor causing their dismissal was the idea in them that in all likelihood, *Jesus was not an “orthodox” Jew*. In brief, he probably did not believe in Jewish Law, nor did he believe in the god called **Jehovah**. Jesus was about *rule of heart*. Jehovah was about **command by law**.

In my opinion, Jesus should have started and ended with Jesus. He was not about fulfilling any prophecy that had been initiated within Judaism; and yet to read the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, no such non-intention can be gained. To hear from these four is to hear that Jesus was an orthodox Jew intent on fulfilling orthodox Jewish schemes – namely in providing the world with a **Jewish messiah**. To be a Jewish messiah, Jesus would have had to believe in the basic standard of Judaism – that all men and women are born in sin; and yet, as I have pointed out, *THE GOSPEL OF MARY MAGDALENE* has Jesus denying belief in such sin. How, then, could he have been a Jewish messiah intent on ridding the world of a sin in which he did not believe?

Still, there is something missing from *THE GOSPEL OF MARY MAGDALENE* – and that same something is also missing from *THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS*. In neither of the verses that remain of either of these gospels is there the standard Christian precept of *love one another* and the equally important precept of *forgive one another*. Why are such precepts missing from *THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS* and *THE GOSPEL OF MARY MAGDALENE* when it would seem they are as important as any that need to be fulfilled by a true *Christian soul*?

I do not know the answer to that – and I must admit that I have found the apparent omission somewhat perplexing – believing so strongly in them as I do. The four “orthodox” gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all embrace love and forgiveness as ideals, but the gospels of Thomas and Mary do not – at least not literally. Why? I think the answer to that may be in the word *apparent*. Indeed, those precepts may have been embraced within the original Thomas and Mary gospels, but are only missing from

the surviving gospels of Thomas and Mary because they were found in verses that have not survived.

We now have a gospel of Thomas that includes 114 verses, however, quite likely, there were more than that in the original. Whether through deletion by translators or through corruption by age, only 114 verses remain. Likewise, with *THE GOSPEL OF MARY MAGDALENE*, we have a gospel that now contains 5 verses, however, it is speculated by so called experts that six verses are missing from the front end and another four are missing from the middle. Perhaps, these missing verses contain the missing precepts of *love & forgiveness* that the four gospels of the **BIBLE** contain. I suspect so.

On the other hand, the four gospels of the **BIBLE** diminish the need for love & forgiveness as virtues that within themselves amount to *salvation of soul*. They do offer that Jesus claimed them as essential, but they also stop short of saying that even if one does practice love and forgiveness, it might not be sufficient. *THE GOSPEL OF JOHN*, for instance, has Jesus telling the apostles after his resurrection and before leaving them to carry on his ministry that they should preach the gospel to all but **what sins they will retain will be retained and what sins they forgive will be forgiven** – at least implying that the retention or forgiveness of sin is not a matter of individual propriety, but up to God and those whom God might choose as His representatives.

It is this confusion, I think, that has lent itself down through the ages of stripping the individual from believing that love and forgiveness on its own merits salvation. This is, perhaps, the greatest disservice of the four gospels of the **BIBLE**. The very idea that forgiveness on my own part may not be enough has never set well within me. The very idea that someone else can **override** my own forgiving heart with some **judgment** by another has, indeed, caused me some very anxious times in life; but having other gospels – even though incomplete – has aided me considerably in recognizing that it is folly that love and forgiveness on my part may not be enough.

I think it is good to recognize that there is folly in the four gospels of the **BIBLE**, but it is also good to recognize that there are some very valuable instructions within them too. Even if Mark did copy from Thomas originally, at least Mark does entail the need for love and forgiveness. Perhaps Mark copied that idea from Thomas from verses of Thomas that have subsequently been lost, but regardless of source, I do believe that Mark got that right. That is just one example of “right thinking” to be found in the four gospels of the **BIBLE**.

Speaking for myself, of course, I will continue to review the gospels of the **BIBLE** for bits of wisdom lacking in my favorite gospels of Thomas and Mary; however, it is good to know that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were only four of many who wrote about Jesus. In the end, it will have to be me who will have to discern truth from folly; but, personally, I consider that quite a privilege.

A Different World

We live in a different world in our 21st Century than that of Jesus and his friends. We have now been to that Moon that could only have been an amazement to those in the times of Jesus. We know now that it is much like our Earth - just smaller and without any life. We know now that the Sun is the center of our universe and we know that our light comes from our Sun and not from the god of the Old Testament. We know now that

the world of heavenly bodies probably never ends; and there is that word "probably" again. We can't prove it doesn't end, but our science can leave us with no other conclusion than that it "probably" is infinite. Wow! It seems that galaxy after galaxy after galaxy extends and extends and extends from where we are on Earth. So, where can it end?

What should that tell us? For one, it should emphasize even more that there can be no Hell and no Heaven in terms of God being absent in one and present in the other. It makes no sense. ***How can there be a single spot in all of existence where God is absent?*** And if God is without absence anywhere in the entire span of our wonderful Creation, then maybe it is time we woke up and realized that ***Heaven is Here*** - and started acting like ***we are really in Paradise and always have been.***

To quote the **Jesus** from ***THE GOSPEL OF MARY MAGDALENE***:

***Peace be with you. Receive my peace.
Be careful that no one leads you astray by saying,
'Look here' or 'Look there'.
The child of humanity is within you. Follow that.
Those who seek it will find it.
Go and preach the good news of the kingdom.
Do not lay down any rules other than what I have given you,
and do not establish law, as the law giver did, or
you will be bound by it.***

When he said this, he left them.

So, what do you think? Which Jesus is right? And what is the real kingdom of Jesus - and where is it? I think it's here; and that is how I choose to live my life, looking for the child of humanity within me, abiding by the rule of kindness or gentleness and imposing no law on others. There are kingdoms of law; and there are kingdoms of rule; but they are not the same. Law says, ***thou shall not***; but if you do, you will be punished. Rule says, ***thou shall***; but if you don't, neither will you belong. ***There is no law that can command kindness, gentleness, and forgiveness. It's entirely "rule of the heart."*** It is up to each to choose and have to live with the choice - at least until another choice is made.

Or so, I Believe!

Note: At about the same time I wrote this essay, I wrote another offering my opinion about the validity of vision as a standard of belief. That essay is 18 pages in length and is called ON VISIONS & DREAMS. It, too, is written in sections and offers some greater commentary on unknown gospels such as THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS and THE GOSPEL OF MARY MAGDALENE. It is at least partly due to the existence of such additional gospels that one might begin to suspect that the four gospels of the BIBLE may be not only incomplete, but also misleading. For what it's worth, I highly recommend considering this essay and the essay I call ON VISIONS & DREAMS to be a complementary set of two essays on Jesus; but please do keep in mind that anything I offer is strictly personal opinion.

THE MYSTERY OF JESUS

THE END

TWO WAYS

By Francis William Bessler
Laramie, Wyoming
Written 1/29/09 – 2/4/09

REFRAIN:

*There's a road leading downward.
There's another leading up.
These are the two ways.
But the road leading downward
is only sensing you're out of luck
and the road leading up
is knowing you're blessed in every way.*

Everyone of us is lucky
because everyone of us has life.
But how many of us know we're lucky
for being caught up in strife?
But what is strife, my friend,
but battling with life –
like taking the day out of time
and leaving only the night? **Refrain.**

So long ago, he said it
where your treasure is, your heart is there.
That's to say, find your pleasure
in that which does not decay or wear.
For me, that's the Natural
because the Natural goes on and on.
That makes it infinite
and like the God to which I belong. **Refrain.**

There are two ways of going
through this life we have at hand.
We can love our lives as they are
or listen to some outside command.
Well, I believe life is precious
and a miracle that satisfies
while others see life as a convenience
to make others cry. **Refrain.**

Repeat first verse – then Refrain several times.

SATAN

(3 Pages)

By

Francis William Bessler

February 25th, 2009

I am asked what I think about **Satan** – in light of my belief that I do not see Jesus as a Jewish messiah intent on restoring us to God from sin. Many think it is impossible to believe in Jesus without accepting that there is a real Satan because Jesus is supposed to have lived to defeat a real Satan. **I do believe there is a real Satan; however, I do not believe that Satan is a real person. In my view of things, Satan is only a collective for feared opposition.** In the light that some opposition is real, Satan is real. In the light that some opposition is only imaginary, Satan is only imaginary.

To distinguish between what is real and what is imaginary can be difficult, however. I know this from personal experience. In 1973, at the age of 31, I had a rather liberating experience, but that liberating experience was preceded by a rather horrible time of conflict. At the time, I was challenging my faith – my Catholic faith – in the belief in sin. Growing up Catholic, I believed much of what I was taught that there can be a struggle between Good and Evil, between God and Satan, between the holy and the unholy. Much of that made no sense to me, but because so many who were family and friends believed in those struggles, I found myself following their trail. Eventually, however, I made the move of heart to follow my own sense of things – and that was to deny that sin is even possible in terms of opposition to God.

It was not an easy challenge for me, by any means. It actually took years to drum up the courage, so to speak, but eventually in 1973, I made the break. I left my Catholicism behind in order to embrace an idea that made much more sense to me. I have since labeled that idea *Divine Naturism* for believing that God must be in everything if God is Infinite, but in making the break from Catholicism, I feared death a great deal because of the possibility of being wrong.

Then one night, I had that liberating experience I mentioned. I was lying in bed next to my wife, Dee, half asleep. Looking over to the window, which was slightly open to allow a gentle breeze, I saw this dark image that almost looked like a demon. My first reaction was fear that it was a demon, perhaps to come and take me away for having challenged my faith. My faith had taught me that **outside the church, there is no salvation.** Though I was challenging that idea with my recent departure from Catholicism, I had not yet become free of fear of being wrong. If I were to die in that state of doubt, I could be lost forever; and at this time of the **demon in the window**, I was not near as certain about things as I have become.

As I watched the window, however, and the dark image seemed to stay in the window, after a few minutes, I found the courage to approach the window and resolve the mystery. It turned out to be the curtain, fluttering in the breeze. From that moment on, no longer did I fear the unknown. The **thing in the window** had turned out to be nothing – and yet, I had spent several minutes almost literally fearing I would be lost forever before I discovered the truth.

That incident, however, taught me that we probably *fear what is not there*. I think it is that way with our *fear of Satan*. We actually fear what is not there – because lingering in our mind is some tale that led us to fear. In my case, I had been taught to fear that my soul would be forever lost to Satan if I were to doubt Jesus. It was one or the other – acceptance of Jesus or surrender to Satan. In refusing that I had been lost in sin to need a Jesus, I was choosing the default – surrender to Satan. It took an incident to show me that a curtain fluttering in the breeze was not Satan to demonstrate to me the likelihood that Satan is probably myth.

But, let's analyze this thing called **Satan**. I am not sure where the term **Satan** originated, but I think it came about as perceived **opposition to God**. In that light, *I do not believe Satan is real because I think opposition to God is impossible*. Since real opposition to God is impossible, fear of one who might oppose God is, needless to say, somewhat inane – or perhaps, insane. My God is Infinite – and nothing Infinite can have opposition because nothing truly infinite can be challenged. Infinite, in my mind, means, in effect – *Everywhere*. **How can something that is everywhere be challenged as if it is possible to be displaced? Thus, as some perceived opposition to God, Satan is nonsense.**

Understood as ruling some kind of evil empire, yes, I suppose it is possible there is a Satan; however, it should be clearly understood that such evil cannot be defined as **absence of God** because God cannot be absent from anything. Satan cannot actually be a threat to God or Goodness because nothing that is everywhere can be threatened. Right? *Does it make any sense that a real entity called Satan could really be a threat to a God that cannot be displaced?*

But what are people really arguing when they claim that one can belong to Satan? In effect, they are only arguing that one can belong to their opposition. In that light, an **opposing camp** can be **Satan** – or **Satanic**. In that light, Christians can be the Satan of the Moslems. In that light, Moslems can be the Satan of the Jews. In that light, Industrialists can be the Satan of the General Welfare – and the General Welfare of the Industrialists. In that light, yes, there can be a Satan; but never in the light of actual **opposition** to God – because God can have no opposition.

Can there be a Satan in Hell – or of Hell? Of course – because there can be opposition camps that can make Hell for others. I can be your Satan if you see me as a threat to your well being – and you can be a Satan to me if I see you as a threat to my well being.

Again, in effect, Satan is only collective for feared opposition.

Did Jesus battle with Satan? I suppose it could be so argued in that there was opposition to his life and his principles. In that light, Satan won and Jesus lost – momentarily. Jesus lost his life to Satan for a moment, but only for a moment; but it might be argued that Jesus never lost to a Satan at all because there may have never been a moment when Jesus actually felt threatened by those who could take his mortal life from him. Jesus died, but did not stay dead – anymore than any of us probably **stay dead**. A soul probably continues with the same attitude with which it lived before it died - or before its body died. **Thus, unless a Satan could have altered the attitude of Jesus before he died, there could have been no Satan for Jesus.**

Can Satan threaten me? It's possible. I would not claim it is not possible because I may be vulnerable to threatened opposition. I hope I would not allow any faction to

threaten my confidence in life; however, to be honest, I might be vulnerable to some opposition. **So, yes, a Satan might be able to threaten me.** I do not think it is probable that I will be threatened because I believe I am strong enough to withstand potential opposition, but it is possible I would not withstand pressure well at all.

People tell me I am going to Hell if I do not believe I am sinful and call upon Jesus to save me from my sin – but keep in mind, they often define sin as **opposition to God** – which I think is impossible. Then they tell me that I will **belong to Satan** for denying I need Jesus as a savior – but keep in mind, they believe that I am apart from God in order to need restoration to God – which, of course, I do not believe.

On the other hand, If I believe that I am sinful and believe I need saved from my sin – and then do not take care to relieve myself of my perceived sin, then, yes, I will be on my way to Hell and to the terrible camp of Satan – or some Satan. I will belong to Satan then because I believe I should belong to it; but if I do not believe I am sinful and believe only in Goodness, then no Hell can have me. **Only those who believe in sin and believe they can belong to evil can so belong.**

Can one go to Satan who defies him? If such defiance is an expression of hatred, yes. I doubt that anyone who really loves can upset their lives with hate because for one who loves, hate is non-existent – in terms of being a controlling factor of life. **If I am controlled by hate, though I would claim to despise Satan, in my hate, I would belong to Satan – because in my perceived *real opposition to Satan*, I would belong to Satan – since Satan is only *collective for feared opposition*.**

Make no mistake about it, however. Satan does exist and there are lots of Satans ready to grab hold of anyone who wants to believe in them – but only in **opposition to personal welfare – not opposition to God.** **No one needs to fear a *real Satan* if he or she understands that no Satan can actually oppose that which is necessary for true health of soul – which is true belief in God – or belief that all is sacred because of the presence of God within it.**

**Be not deceived. Instead Believe!
Believe that God is in Everything.
It's up to each the things to know -
but only those need feared who can control.
In truth, Satan belongs only to those
who believe there are ones who can oppose
their welfare and their dignity
and deprive them of being free.
Do not fear Satan unless you wish
to give your soul to a myth.**

**Begone,
Satan!
You are dismissed!**

On VISIONS & DREAMS

(18 Pages)

An Essay

by

Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

March 15, 2009; modified a bit May 10, 2009.

PREFACE

Leading up to John of Revelations

This is somewhat about how I see visions and dreams – and it refers to a rather notorious vision – one that is found in **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS (OR REVELATION)** – the last book of the orthodox Christian **BIBLE**; however, it is largely a mini-debate about Jesus.

My view of visions and dreams is that they are largely a product from within a subject – or of a subject. It is only an opinion, but my guess is that visionaries and dreamers really only “see” what is consistent with their perceived outlook on life. Some are tremendously imaginative – as is the case with the visionary who wrote **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS** - but regardless of degree of imagination, a visionary or dreamer probably always sees only that which is consistent with his own perception of life. That is to say, of course, that *visions are totally subjective*. They may have something to say related to the objective – or general truth of things – but essentially they are subjective.

I think it is good to realize that when trying to make sense of any dream or any vision. One must first interrogate the subject to be able to put a dream or vision in perspective. Without such interrogation, one can only guess as to what any dreamer or visionary is calculating in his mind that comes out as a vision dealing with images seemingly seen as real. None of the images of a dream or vision are real, however, in terms of existing or being able to exist independent of a subject. **The subject probably manufactures his own images and then sees what he has manufactured – though it is possible that some paranormal entity might assist a subject in the manufacture of images.** If so, a subject will still only dream or view consistent with outlook on life. Thus, even if there is assistance from some paranormal entity, that assistance will not override a subject. It will only cooperate with a subject – meaning that the dream or vision still belongs to a subject.

I find it rather amazing that anyone would put any stock in someone else’s dream or vision; and yet it seems that **orthodox Christianity** has done just that. It has considered

the vision of a single person – one called **John** – to be some kind of objective statement about life, the meaning of life, and the possible end of life. If I had a vision – or a dream – I might consider it important as an expression of myself, but I would never offer it as some dogmatic statement of life. It seems, however, that the John of **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS** considered his vision to be far more than just personal. He was intended to share it with the rest of the world; and the rest of the world ought to believe it.

Before continuing, let me clarify my impression of what orthodox means. I think the term **orthodox** is Greek for **right thinking**. Those who think of themselves as orthodox, then, consider themselves right thinking people – as they consider anyone who doesn't agree with them as wrong thinking. I suppose everyone is orthodox from their own point of view, but **history seems to classify one side of a story as orthodox and the other side as heretical**. In light of this essay, there are orthodox Jews and heretical Jews. There are orthodox Christians and heretical Christians – and it seems that battles have ensued between the various orthodox and heretical sides of an issue since Adam took that apple that Eve offered him. Adam started out orthodox until being tempted by the heretic, Eve; and the orthodox and heretics of history have been battling ever since. Enough said about that.

Anyway, back to John of **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS**, we have had one visionary stating as some absolute truth a whole series of ideas manufactured in his mind as somehow an expression of objective or general truth. John's idea of Jesus becomes some kind of dogmatic imperative – or a Jesus we must believe is just the way John dreamed him to be. But I can assure you, if I had a dream of Jesus – and my dream or vision would be just as authentic as was that of John – I would not see a Jesus even remotely close to what John saw.

I won't go into the differences between John and me now, but I will touch on those differences later. **Suffice it to say here that one man's dream or vision should never be taken as any more or less authentic than another man's**. That we have canonized John's vision as some kind of dogmatic rule of life is almost beyond astounding. It is nothing – absolutely nothing – that anyone should put any kind of faith into. It is a fantasy – one man's fantasy – that has manufactured a **Heaven of Place for Christians** and **Hell of Place for Heathens** that probably do not exist. Sadly, by offering credence to one man's foolish vision, multitudes of believers live their lives as if that foolish vision is fact.

It is good to keep in mind, however, that John's foolish vision was partly a contract with his times. John had no idea of *Infinite* because when he looked up into the sky, he saw only a world that looked like it ended just beyond that highest cloud. In seeing an end of the world where none really existed, he could only imagine a God that might be peering down beyond that end. In that light, John's vision was not so foolish – because it was based on the perception of his day; and the perception of his day was that God has to be outside of the world simply because the idea of infinity was probably not perceived at that time – at least, not widely so.

When you do take in the idea of infinity, however, then the *physical end of a world* goes away and there is no longer a need to imagine a God outside the world. **With embrace of the concept of infinity, placement of God goes away because it becomes impossible to deny that a true God must be everywhere**. Take away the idea of God being able to be one place and not another – and presto, there goes Judgment of God and

the division of existence into good and evil. **Where there is infinity and no separation between God and reality, there can only be Good.** Why? Because if infinity is equated with God – which equation I have made – and *infinity* reflects *endless*, meaning without boundary, then God must be everywhere and there can be no separation between God and anything.

But John did not know that. John did not know of the idea of infinity – though Jesus may have. Some of the day of Jesus had some idea of infinity, however, and among those that did were the Greeks – or at least, some Greeks. Because of what I see as ideas of Greek thinking on the part of Jesus – like the ultimate Divinity and Questioning of Everything - I think it is highly possible that Jesus actually originated among the Alexandrian Jews located in Egypt when King Herod was ruling Israel.

Jews were dispersed throughout many lands at that time – and Egypt may have been one site where many Jews chose exile from their native Israel. Alexandria, Egypt was known for its Greek scholars; and Jesus may well have been schooled by such scholars. Thus, Jesus may have become introduced to the idea of *infinity* – which would have allowed him to realize that **Jehovah** – supposed **God of Israel** – was only **Jehovah, god of Israel**.

The difference between a **god** and a **God**, as I see it, is that **a god relates only to some whereas a God must relate to all equally**, given that a true God must be in all. Jehovah was not a God that is present in all, but rather a god that favors some over others. Gods that favor some over others are really pagan gods. Thus, **Jehovah could have only been one of the many pagan gods of the time** – even though the Jews acknowledged only one god whereas other nations may have acknowledged multiple gods.

I realize that Jews and Christians (and Moslems) resent being called pagan, but according to my definition of pagan, they were – and are. For me – and I think, for Jesus, too – **anyone who believes that God is outside of them and there is need to appeal to that God outside of them is really what pagan is all about.** People of old believed they had to sacrifice to pagan gods because they believed they had to gain the favor of a given god. **One of the certain proofs that Jews were really pagan is that their law actually commanded them to sacrifice – or offer a sacrifice – to their god – Jehovah.**

Did Jesus believe in **Jehovah**? I don't think so. **I don't think Jesus was a pagan – though others may have seen him in that light because they were pagans.** Personally, I am not a pagan because I do not believe that God can favor one over another simply because God, being infinite, must be IN all things. **If God is really in all things, then nothing need to appeal to God to become one with them.** God is already one with everything if God is infinite.

I think that some thinkers, like Socrates of the Greeks, had concluded to the same thinking long before Christ – even though many in authority did not agree with that thinking. I think it is likely that almost all of the Greeks of the time of Socrates – who lived about 400 years before Christ – were pagan. Perhaps even Socrates struggled to overcome the notion – but I do get a sense that he did struggle with it. And in struggling with it, he was condemned by the pagan authority of his day just as Christ would be condemned by the pagan authority of his day – 400 years later.

One of the real ironies of history, however, is that Jesus himself would be made a pagan god by subsequent pagans in need of a god to which they could appeal for favors. At least, I see it as ironic. I think Jesus really taught that virtue is not in appealing to God

for favors or sacrificing to God to gain some favor; however, Jesus has been made a god who has become the object of continuing sacrifice. **Many orthodox Christians do not think they are pagan and resent the entire notion, but I think they are pagan in that they hold Jesus as an object before them that they must please in order to gain salvation.** That is exactly the definition of a pagan – one who obeys something or someone outside of themselves in order to attain salvation. I believe that Jesus objected to that kind of thinking – just as Socrates had 400 years before Jesus – and yet he has become in the eyes of many – **a god to be worshipped rather than simply a teacher of ethics.**

Be that as it may, I think it is reasonable to conjecture that later after King Herod had died and things may have seemed to have simmered down in Israel, Jesus could have made his way from Egypt to Israel, taking with him Greek concepts that would have definitely angered “orthodox Jews.” Also, Jesus may not have traveled alone. A fellow “Greek Jew” like a Thomas could have traveled with him. In that light, such a Thomas could well have known Jesus as a much closer companion than some of the Jews of Israel who may have eventually chosen to become disciples of Jesus.

It is, however, much more likely that Thomas and Jesus did not travel together to Israel, but rather “shared” an origin from Alexandria – or some area of Greek influence. I say that because from various descriptions I get from various gospels, I see Thomas as a student of Jesus. If Jesus and Thomas had traveled together, they would have probably traveled as companions and not as master and student. I do believe that Jesus and Thomas became companions in time, but I do not get the sense that they started out as companions – but rather as master or teacher and student. Jesus and Thomas may have become close, however, partly due to a common origin – and that could have been as “Greek oriented Jews” from a land outside of Israel.

Thomas & Jesus

For what it’s worth, there were other gospels written about Jesus other than those eventually selected to fit within the canon of the **BIBLE**. Among those written but eventually banned was a **Gospel according to Thomas** – which I will subsequently refer to as **THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS**. Though lost for over 1,600 years and only recently in 1945 discovered, **THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS** seems to indicate just what I have maintained – that Thomas may have been a much closer companion to Jesus than were Peter or Matthew or any of the others. Who knows how all of that transpired? **But it is entirely possible that THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS was the first gospel written** and that all other gospels selected from that first gospel and then expounded their own tales.

THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS is comprised of 114 **Jesus said** sayings. It is not a narrative form of writing that tells a story of what Jesus supposedly did – like the stories of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John of the **BIBLE**. It only offers what Jesus supposedly said in terms of bits of wisdom. For instance, Verse 5: **Jesus said: Know what is in thy sight, and what is hidden from thee will be revealed to thee. For there is nothing hidden that will not be manifest.** Or, Verse 9: **Jesus said: See, the sower went out, he filled his hand, he threw. Some (seeds) fell on the road; the birds came, they gathered them. Others fell on the rock and did not strike root in the earth and did not produce ears. And others fell on the thorns; they choked the seed and the worm ate them. And**

others fell on the good earth; and it brought forth good fruit; it bore sixty per measure and one hundred twenty per measure. Or, Verse 21: Mary said to Jesus: Whom are thy disciples like? He said: They are like little children who have installed themselves in a field which is not theirs. When the owners of the field come, they will say: "Release to us our field." They take off their clothes before them to release it (the field) to them and to give back their field to them. Therefore I say: If the lord of the house knows that the thief is coming, he will stay awake before he comes and will not let him dig through into his house of his kingdom to carry away his goods. You then must watch for the world, gird up your loins with great strength lest the brigands find a way to come to you, because they will find the advantage which you expect. Let there be among you a man of understanding; when the fruit ripened, he came quickly with his sickle in his hand, he reaped it. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear.

Any student of the various gospels of Jesus should be able to see similarities. It is my opinion that **THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS** may have been written first – and then the other gospel writers of the **BIBLE** may have copied from **THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS** and fitted narrative stories around the various **Jesus said** statements. In the process of doing that, they may have retained much of what is in Thomas, but may have also discarded and confused things too. It is difficult to say. Isn't it? **Who came first? Who came second? Who copied from who? Who fabricated tales? Who stuck to the truth? Etc.**

THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS is lacking any stories of miracles. From that point of view, too, it would seem that **THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS** was first because subsequent stories tend to exaggerate from earlier stories. Thus, in all probability, the version that exaggerates the least is probably the first. All subsequent versions, then, probably copy from a first where there seems to be much similarity; but it stands to reason that subsequent copies are offered in order to establish some different point of view. I think it highly likely that the gospel writers included in the **BIBLE** wrote their various stories in order to **supplement** the story of Jesus with fabrications. I think that it is highly probable that Peter was behind much of this exaggeration because he had the most to gain and wanted stories to be told to make Jesus look like a **Jewish messiah** and not just a **morality philosopher** – as one might conclude if the only source of information about Jesus was **THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS**.

Thus, Mark and Matthew and Luke and John could have been encouraged to tell tales of Jesus to make him look bigger than he was so that Peter – and any successors of Peter in the **rite of authority** - could look bigger than they were (and are) – as associates or friends of Jesus. Keep in mind, all gospels were written many years after the death of Jesus. Much could have transpired from the time of his death to the writing of the gospels; and in that period of time, **Peter could have persuaded much of the following of Jesus that Jesus had truly been a Jewish messiah – and much more importantly to Peter, that Jesus had chosen Peter as his successor.**

It is now almost impossible to distinguish truth from fable because once fable is established, truth become much more difficult to know. One example of almost sure fable: In their order of writing, Mark first, then Matthew, then Luke – none of these three report the raising of Lazarus from the dead – and yet the final story from John reports the story. How likely is it that three reporters could tell a story about a man who is supposedly superhuman with all three offering tales of miracles performed by that man to

make him look superhuman – and not report a miracle as outstanding as raising a man from the dead? So, why did Mark, then Matthew, then Luke all omit a story so huge as the raising of Lazarus from the dead? Why did only the last story report it? The obvious answer to that is that Mark, Matthew, and Luke were unaware of it. Why were they unaware of it? **Probably because it never happened.** And that suggests a fable on the part of at least one of the gospel writers. Now, we are faced with the question: **what is fable and what is truth?**

Now, add to the fable aspect of the gospels of the **BIBLE** one common story of all four that is completely missing in what may have been the first gospel – **that of Thomas: a claim by Peter that he was chosen by Jesus to head a church.** Not only is Peter largely ignored in *THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS*, Peter is defined by Thomas as one who didn't seem to get it. Peter was often presented as **outside the confidence** of Jesus, not inside of it as he claims in the probable four subsequent gospels. From *THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS*, no one can find any evidence that Peter could have even remotely been considered a **confidant of Jesus** – nor in another of the banned gospels, *THE GOSPEL OF MARY MAGDALENE*, is there any evidence that Peter may have been a **confidant of Jesus** – and yet in **Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John**, Peter is established as a **confidant of Jesus and one chosen by Jesus to lead.** I don't think so.

For example, let me present Verse 13 of *THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS*: *Jesus said to His disciples: Make a comparison to me and tell me whom I am like. Simon Peter said to Him: Thou art like a righteous angel. Matthew said to Him: Thou art like a wise man of understanding. Thomas said to Him: Master, my mouth will not at all be capable of saying whom Thou art like. Jesus said: I am not thy Master because thou has drunk, thou has become drunk from the bubbling spring which I have measured out. And He took him, he withdrew, he spoke three words to him. Now when Thomas came to his companions, they asked him: What did Jesus say to thee? Thomas said to them: If I tell you one of the words which He said to me, you will take up stones and throw at me; and the fire will come from the stones and burn you up.*

This one is found in various form in the other gospels too, but for the most part, they have Peter answering Jesus – **Thou art the son of God or the messiah** – or some such. From that, Jesus replies in effect: You have spoken correctly, Simon - and because you have, thou art Peter – meaning the rock or my rock – and upon this rock, I will build my church. In the above quote, however, Peter answers: *Thou art like a righteous angel.* Notice that Thomas does not have Peter answering with you are the messiah. **And later, it is Thomas that Jesus takes aside to confide in – not Peter.** When Peter asks Thomas what Jesus confided to him, Thomas says that Peter would not be able to understand and that if Thomas were to tell Peter what Jesus told him that Peter would get mad and throw stones at Thomas. This scene hardly suggests confidence in Peter by Jesus. Does it?

Also, it is worth noting from the above verse of **THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS**, Jesus denied being the “master” or “lord” of Thomas, stating that because Thomas had drunk from the bubbling spring of Jesus that Thomas had become equal to Jesus. It implies that wisdom is the hallmark of virtue – not obedience. It also flatly states that Jesus did not – and does not – want to be seen as the lord of anyone. *His desire is that people “understand” the truth and thereby become their own masters.* This idea is in complete defiance of what might be called Peter Principle that all must go through Jesus on a personal basis – and, of course, Peter - to find wisdom, grace and salvation.

Anyway, if **THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS** was the first gospel, or even if it came later, there is no indication within it that Jesus considered himself an **orthodox Jew**. If so, he could hardly have been a messiah for an orthodoxy that he rejected. That could be the true story of Jesus – that he was not an orthodox Jew and that he actually defied the so called **Law of the Old Testament**, knowing as he might have that Jehovah could not be God because God has to be inside of all, being infinite.

I think it worthwhile, too, to repeat that Christianity has not always been strictly what is called **orthodox**. As early as the 1st and 2nd Centuries, there were many who saw Jesus as mostly Greek philosopher; *but their movement did not have as much strength as the orthodox movement had – simply because it lacked any need for authority*. Greek philosopher Christian types believed much of what **THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS** has declared that *salvation is strictly a personal matter and that no authority is needed to access God or attain peace*. The notion was there and there was a significant following of it, but being individual oriented, there was no real need to form organization. Without organization on the part of Greek philosopher types, orthodox Christians eventually took command – and eventually commanded their views. Then by the 4th Century, a Roman emperor, **Constantine**, made it official. Only **orthodox Christian** churches were permitted and even the books of the former Greek philosopher Christians were commanded to be destroyed.

Some monks, however, disobeyed the command to destroy non orthodox sources and hid some of them away in various places to avoid their being found and destroyed by officials. Among books that were stashed away was a Coptic (or Egyptian) copy of **THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS**. In 1945, a peasant in Egypt stumbled on a jar in a cave off the Nile River. That jar would contain the long lost **THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS** and many other non orthodox Christian sources that were supposed to have been destroyed in the 4th Century, but were not.

Peter & Jesus

Why would a legend develop that would assign Jesus as an orthodox Jew as a faithful son of Jehovah if it were not the belief of the day? I think I have already alluded to the answer to that – **it may have been because of advantage to one called Peter**. Supposing, as I think is credible, that those who knew different could have departed Israel after the death of Jesus, it could have been open season for Peter. If Thomas had been an Alexandrian Jew, it is entirely feasible he could have returned to Alexandria – and from Alexandria – extended further into Asia and beyond. In fact, Indians lay claim to just such a story. They claim Thomas came to them and was missionary to them in the name of Jesus.

Anyway, if such was so and Thomas (and maybe others, like **Mary Magdalene**) departed Israel after the death of Jesus, there was nothing to keep someone like Peter from taking over and establishing the view that would become **orthodox Christian** that **Jesus was a messiah of the Jews**. With Thomas gone – and perhaps others who may have sympathized with Thomas gone – the coast could have been clear for Peter to claim head of church privileges. The truly sad thing about that is Jesus may not have desired to start a church. Thomas probably knew that; but with Thomas out of the picture, Peter could have taken over.

As I see it, having no real ties to **orthodox Judaism**, I doubt that Jesus wanted any part of it – let alone become its messiah. In *THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS*, there is clear indication that when it was suggested that he was some kind of prophet, he flatly denied it. According to Verse 52 of *THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS: His disciples said to Him: Twenty-four prophets spoke in Israel and they all spoke about Thee. He said to them: You have dismissed the Living (One) who is before you and you have spoken about the dead.* In essence, they had him wrong; and one of the reasons they could have had him wrong could have been Peter – who may have seen Jesus as some kind of stepping stone to authority – as I have already stated.

There is so much we do not know about what really happened in the story of Jesus; but it is my opinion that Peter does not seem to have taken to the rule of forgiveness that Jesus preached. I get the impression that Peter wanted to rule whereas I see no such thing in Jesus. I do not see any compatibility at all between a Jesus who taught forgiveness and a Peter who claimed authority. The two do not mesh. **That leads me to believe that Peter made Christianity a thing of obedience to authority in the very name of one who forbid it – once rival Thomas was out of the picture.**

What happened to Thomas once Jesus died according to stories in the **BIBLE**? No one knows. It is like he was here today and gone the next day; and that may well have been the case too. Also, what happened to **Mary Magdalene** after Jesus died? Again, no one knows. **Mary** could have departed Israel with **Thomas**. Given that neither Thomas nor Mary Magdalene seem to be part of the Christian drama that ensues in Israel after the assumed **resurrection of Jesus**, I think it is reasonable to assume that they simply did not stick around. If they had, you can bet they would have been part of the drama – which seemingly, they weren't.

Importantly, however, with Thomas (and maybe other rivals) out of the way, Peter could have been free to take over – and take over he probably did. In the process, I think he made the tale of Jesus his own – teaching that Jesus had been a messiah. With few around who may have known otherwise, eventually many Jews could have swallowed Peter's tale hook, line, and sinker. With Peter being a very confirmed **orthodox Jew**, as self-proclaimed head of the church, it is quite easy to see how Jesus could have been turned into a messiah when he had not been – with the willing cooperation of ones like John who may have shared Peter's conviction of the need for a messiah to resolve sin and make the way straight for a lord to truly unify man with God.

John & Jesus

What has this got to do with the eventual vision of John that is proclaimed in **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS**? Tales of **rule of Messiah** could have overridden the real Jesus tale of *Love and Forgiveness*. What is significant about that is that Jesus was not likely about rule over others in any way. By making him a messiah when he had no such inclination, the door was open to expanding the tale of a messiah to include eventual victory over all enemies – including **Satan**. After all, **orthodox Jews** lived in expectation of their god eventually letting them have a real kingdom. With the idea of a real kingdom comes warfare with enemies; and so that is what becomes the Jesus tale in **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS**. The use of **Satan** may well be only a **figurative** expression to state the idea of **opposition**. For sure, **orthodox Jews** and **orthodox**

Christians love the concept of opposition because, in fact, that is what they are all about. Without an enemy to fight, it seems they would be lost. So, they create an enemy – and call it **Satan**.

Under the influence of Peter, then, Jesus could have been turned into a messiah – and turned away from being simply a teacher of **Greek wisdom** – including that a real kingdom of peace is not physical, but mental. *The real kingdom of peace resides anywhere and everywhere because it resides in the individual and not a nation*; but Peter may not have understood that – and then took his ignorance to literally corrupt the Jesus message of love and forgiveness – overriding all of that with tales of judgment and victory of good over evil. That is essentially the story told in **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS**. John may have been told in a vision all about war and victory and all of that because that is what he believed Jesus was about.

However, based at least partly on banned gospels like that of **Thomas & Mary Magdalene**, I do not see a Jesus that was about anything but individual peace and independence. I see a Jesus who even challenged the entire concept of sin upon which Peter would base his right of authority to lead a church. In *THE GOSPEL OF MARY MAGDALENE*, Peter asked Jesus about sin; and Jesus told Peter that *there is no such thing as sin, except that you create it*. That is in direct conflict with the idea that mankind inherits sin. The only reason Peter could claim authority was because a church was needed to overcome sin; but in *THE GOSPEL OF MARY MAGDALENE*, Peter was told there is no sin. **Why, then, was their need of a church to overcome sin if there is no sin?**

For whatever reason, however, it seems Peter did not believe that – and so he took control and taught that we do have sin and that the only way we can dissolve that sin is to override our sin with grace from Jesus – who had been turned into **son of Jehovah**. It is not what Jesus probably taught – and there is clear evidence of that in both of the banned gospels – that of **Thomas** and that of **Mary Magdalene**. Why did Peter believe it? In the end, I think he believed it because he wanted to believe it. Without such a belief, there was no room for a **Pope Peter**; and I think Peter was so vain and wanted power so much that he was just plain blind to the real teachings of Jesus. **The real teaching of Jesus is that we command our own peace with love of others and forgiveness of others**. No authority needed. No special grace needed. Just do it. That, I think, is what Jesus really taught.

But by the time John wrote **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS** toward the end of the 1st century, over 50 years after Jesus passed, the real truth of Jesus had probably become lost. Because of the corruption of the Jesus idea by Peter (and willing cohorts), the church that existed was almost entirely authority oriented. No one could find peace on their own. As the **Peter dictum** went – and still goes: **Outside the church, there is no salvation**. All have to go through the church – and Peter. Peter stands at the very doors of Heaven – and only those he might allow in can get in; **and nothing could be further from the truth**.

Salvation has never been other oriented. It has always been of individual mind. **It has always been what the Jesus of Thomas would call a “solitary” matter**. No one needs to depend on any other – including a Jesus – to make peace with God because peace is only recognizing that we are all of and in that same God. Peace is all about

knowing that each soul can and must attain salvation by him or herself. It has never been about having to go through another.

When John wrote **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS**, however, the very identity of Jesus had been changed from *Greek philosopher* to **Jewish messiah** – and probably at least greatly encouraged by Peter. In all likelihood, John had only inherited visions of battle between good and evil from his own personal conviction that life is corruptible and was corrupted – thus requiring some additional grace from without to resolve that corruption and to allow unification with God. With that in mind, John probably projected a tale that would define battles between good and evil, between God and Satan, between damnation and salvation that the **Peter Church** had come to teach.

Or so I believe.

Jessica & Jesus

Yesterday, I had quite a day. I attended a local soup kitchen here in Laramie during the day and attended a brief discussion of **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS** – the last book of the **BIBLE** - during the evening. At the soup kitchen, I dined with lovely **Jessica**, probably around my youngest daughter, **Melissa's**, age – about 30 or so. I have known **Jessica** for a few years. We met initially in 2003 when we both attended a local Christian church for a time. When we met again – several years later – **Jessica** remembered where we had met years before – though I only remembered her face and not where we met.

When we met again years later, though, we had both moved on to new churches and we were both helping out at the local soup kitchen; and I was taken by the spirit of this fine wonderful lady. As I commented to Jerry, a cook of the soup kitchen, yesterday (3/10/2009) - when **Jessica** walks into a room where I am, it is as if the whole room lights up. Her smile dismisses any sadness I might be feeling; and *little Jessica, warm Jessica, lovely Jessica, wonderful Jessica becomes my savior*. I am 67 and I have a 30 year old as a **savior**. And every time **Jessica & I** meet, it's the same. She was a **light** when we met in 2003; and though we have only encountered each other a half dozen times since then, she remains a **light** to me.

Jessica is a teacher at a local school. She teaches a class she calls a character class – as well as Spanish – to young kids, maybe 10 or so. I'd like to draw a parallel at this time. *I think Jessica is a lot like Jesus*; and though she may not like me drawing the comparison and may even see my portrait as somewhat heretical, I believe it is so.

I think Jesus was a light that enthused too – just like Jessica. That's why I see them as the same. They both teach, but their main teaching is their character. They do not preach; they teach; and neither one of them will punish a student who chooses not to learn. I guess you could say that anyone who teaches character can only offer example in the end; and it's that example that is really the text of their course.

Will Jessica change tomorrow – and maybe become a harsh ruler of a classroom, willing to whack a student who falls asleep in her class or whip a kid who doesn't learn his or her Spanish verbs? Not likely, is it? It is no more likely that Jessica will change to turn out her light tomorrow than it is likely that Jesus could ever change from being the person he was, is, and always will be. No! Jessica will not change tomorrow. Her light

will still be the same. She will still teach that forgiveness is an ideal of a soul to avoid the burden of a grudge and not a commandment risking punishment for disbelief; and so it will be for Jesus too. *Like Jessica, Jesus is not likely to change to become tomorrow what he was not yesterday.*

THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS

Then came the evening. Some friends and I met to look at another Jesus, one whom I can never recognize as one of **true character**. This is a Jesus that is offered in what is called **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS** that changes and does not remain constant. It is the inconstancy of this Jesus that lets me know for sure that the Jesus of **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS** is a fake. I don't think that one who is given many different masks is genuine. That's not to say that Jesus is not genuine. It is only to say that the various masks of Jesus are not genuine; and one of the masks of the Jesus of John in **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS** is that he was a **lamb** – as in one who was sacrificed to the god of the Old Testament.

The god of the Old Testament commanded such, you know. Like the gods of other pagan religions, the god of the Old Testament found great delight in having lambs offered in his honor; and eventually he even required human blood to be offered to him in his honor – which was somehow construed as necessary to forgive the sins of man. Thus Jesus, son of the god of the Old Testament, was required to be a **just sacrifice** that would please the god of the Old Testament - and in being pleased, the god of the Old Testament would forgive some sins of man - not all sins, mind you – just some. We can know all sins were not forgiven because sin begets sin; and since we have as much sin today as ever before, some sins must not have been forgiven.

This Jesus, this **lamb**, changes, though, through the course of time – alternating between **lamb** and **lion**. It is my opinion, of course, but as I see it, the author of **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS** is determined to validate the Old Testament (represented by the image of a lion) through his vision by somehow connecting it to the New Testament (represented by the image of a lamb) – as if to argue that the god of the Old Testament was really Jesus in camouflage. The lamb of the current day was the god or lion of the olden times – and then quite amazingly, we are led to believe that the lamb of the current day who was a god or lion of the olden times is going to change and become the god or lion of the olden times again. And what will this **new** Jesus, reborn from the **old** Jesus, reborn from the **first** Jesus do? He will stone all who disobeyed **The Law**; but all those nice little souls who bowed down to this Jesus will be ushered into an eternity of love and celebration.

Quite a picture, isn't it? On one side of a street will be eternal punishment whereby all on that side are being whipped or stoned or burned or whatever – and on the other side, all smiles, and joyous barbecues of fresh lamb and sumptuous orange deserts. On the one side, a guy named **Prince Satan** will be delegated by **King Jesus** to punish by embrace all who did not believe in **King Jesus** before **Judgment Day** – and on the other side, there will be **King Jesus**, smiling at his billions of fans who saw fit to offer him obedience.

As outrageous the picture I have just painted is, many believe it. **They think that a real Jesus can change – can be a forgiving saint on one day and a condemning judge**

tomorrow – can be a lamb today and a lion tomorrow. Oh, they don't call him **Judge Jesus**. They call him **King Jesus**; but regardless of name, it all comes down to the same thing. Be he a **judge** or a **king**, this Jesus will rule the world – after overcoming other false kings and terrible dragons, of course. Those who know **The Law** can think such things; those who live by *The Rule* cannot.

But, you see, in all probability, the one who wrote **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS** was not particularly impressed with *The Rule*. His obsession was with **The Law**. What's the difference? Life according to rule is only life conducted within the framework of *character* – like that of *Jessica's* class. It's to say that I will inherit what I am tomorrow – character wise. It is nothing more than that. If I do not become a character of choice today, then I can't continue to be that character of choice tomorrow. Can I? That is my judgment and the *Judgment of The Rule*. Likewise, if I am kind today, I will be kind tomorrow. Pretty simple, huh? It stands that if I do not want to inherit a certain character tomorrow, then there is only one thing to do – change to embrace a character (or character trait) I will want to inherit. Like I say, pretty simple, huh?

Life according to **The Law**, however, is much different – and much more complex. It is not about character and continuation of character as much as it is **about obedience**. I will obey – or else – and the else is always connected with punishment by another. In **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS**, the new Jesus (or lamb) will become the old Jesus (or lion) – or the old god - and will literally punish those who will have refused to **obey The Law** - a "law," by the way, that Jesus repudiated in his life.

In one of the gospels of the **BIBLE**, Jesus was asked what a person has to do to gain eternal life. His answer was something like this: *Love God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind - and love your neighbor as yourself*. That's it – no need for going through him, Jesus, to acquire some special grace in order to love God and others. No need to love God by obedience to some authority like a Peter. All one has to do to gain eternal life is to love God and love everyone just like that one is God. That is all that salvation amounts to. So, **The Law**, demanding much more specific conduct including sacrifice of lambs in the so called **Temple** was repudiated by Jesus. **How, then, could Jesus have been a champion of a way he repudiated?**

Amazingly, as I see it now, and it is only personal speculation and nothing more – the author of **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS** attempts to do the impossible – to connect Jesus **with The Law**, not *against The Law*; and just as amazingly, there are 90 billion Christians who think he was right. Where is *Love God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind – and love your neighbor as yourself* as the only rule for salvation in **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS**? It is not there. Why? Because John was trying to establish a need for authority – and he could only do that by relating back to **The Old Law** – and the **testament of authority** from which it came. To do that, obedience to the old law had to be supplemented with threat of punishment for disobedience. Otherwise, any idea of authority was null and void; however, in reinstalling the notion of authority and accompanying that installation with threat of punishment for violation of authority, in effect, *The New Rule* of love and forgiveness as the only rule of salvation was negated. Peter talked love alright, but he acted threatening. **It was not love that Peter commanded, but obedience to him as rightful heir to Jesus.** Almost unbelievably, it seems to me, Peter single handedly turned accent on love

and forgiveness to threat of punishment for disobedience – and it is that accent on punishment that is the tall tale of **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS**.

If you doubt what I say, ask one who is a fan of **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS** about some so called **Judgment Day**; and to a single soul, the answer will always be **punishment by another** – not simple *continuation of character*. That is, of course, where punishment is concerned; but it is very unlikely that one who believes such punishment will be imposed will be among the crowd of dissidents who deserve such an eternal spanking. No, they will be among those of rapture who will have committed to the god of the Old Testament and to the Jesus of the New Testament – as if the one is the other.

Most importantly, however, it is extremely unlikely that one is of the other. I am not John. I do not see a *Jesus* as any kind of friend to the **god of the Old Testament** – let alone a son of that god. I see a *Jesus* who tried to defy **The Law** of the god of the Old Testament – not complete it as some kind of graduated order of God. I see a *Jesus* who recognized that the god of the Old Testament was just that – a god – and not **The God** of All. That god of the Old Testament acted like the gods of the Greeks and the Romans and the Persians. My *Jesus* recognized that and probably tried to warn his disciples not to identify the god of the Old Testament with **The God**.

The God does not need laws to order Its world. It simply is – and It is not outside of the world to demand sacrifice from the world. *Little gods demand sacrifice – but The God does not because The God is not even separated from Its subjects. The God* is Infinite and cannot draw lines between good and evil because for **The God**, there are no divisions. There is no heaven and hell as combination. There is only Heaven – because Heaven is only being where **The God** is; and if **The God** is everywhere, then so also is Heaven.

In my opinion, *obedience to any law without respect to rule of heart is not only futile for a soul, but also dangerous because it suggests that life itself lacks splendor in order to need supplementation with law. Our accent should be on life itself, not some arbitrary regulation of it as if life itself is not sufficient for satisfaction. Life itself should be seen as sufficient for satisfaction because there is no such thing as life itself. Life does not exist independent of God. It only co-exists with and in God if God is truly Infinite and everywhere.*

Mary Magdalene & Jesus

In the **Gospel of Mary Magdalene**, Jesus is offered as addressing the issue like this: *Peace be with you. Receive my peace. Be careful that no one leads you astray by saying, ‘Look here’ or ‘Look there.’ The child of humanity is within you. Follow that. Those who seek it will find it. Go and preach the good news of the kingdom. Do not lay down any rules other than what I have given you, and do not establish law, as the lawgiver did, or you will be bound by it.*

To repeat, *do not establish law, as the lawgiver did, or you will be bound by it.* And before that, *the child of humanity is within you. Follow that.* There is no Peter there – or need for a Peter or any authority. If you think you need authority to recognize the tremendous splendid of life, you have failed to recognize the tremendous splendid of life;

but if you need authority, then you will be bound by the authority you claim. It makes sense, does it not?

Of course I could be wrong, but it seems to me that Peter did not understand the notion of seeking meaning through the *child of humanity* within us. What does it mean? I think it only means that we are really equal to something good within us that Jesus called the *child of humanity*. Whatever it is, it is there – in us and not outside of us. It is not something lacking. It is something present; but if we do not know it is there, it may as well be absent. I think it only means that *our humanity is wonderful* and without blemish.

I do not think Peter believed that, however. I think he believed that **humanity is potentially wonderful**, but tainted with sin. Well, that is what he had been taught as an **orthodox Jew**; and it is what he passed on as an **orthodox Jewish Christian**. I do not think that Jesus was an **orthodox Jew** in terms of believing we are sinful by nature. Peter probably believed that; but I don't think Jesus did – given the *evidence of non belief* in the **Gospels of Thomas and Mary Magdalene**.

The Jesus of Mary Magdalene says that *there is no such thing as sin, except that you create it*. The Jesus of Thomas says *the Kingdom of the Father is spread upon the earth and men do not see it*. Can there be sin in the Kingdom of the Father? I don't think so, but it seems that Peter did.

My Vision

In a vision or a dream of mine, “my Jesus” would have recognized that he was not son of Jehovah, but son of The God – just like we all are. My Jesus would have seen Jehovah for what he was – a pagan god that pretended some rights over others and one who was separated from those he supposedly created, with some strange divine right to select one son over another. The God does not select or favor because The God is in all. In a vision of mine, my Jesus would have recognized this.

Also in my vision, my Jesus would have been consistent from beginning of vision to end of vision. My Jesus lived kindness and forgiveness in his sojourn among us 2,000 years ago; and my Jesus could not but continue that kindness and forgiveness 10,000 years later – or a million years later. My Jesus would have to be consistent – doing later the same as he did before; and there would be no millennium where my Jesus would rule over others when in his life 2,000 years ago, he showed no interest in such rule. No rule now is no rule later – in terms of command. My Jesus could not change – anymore than I can change or Jessica can change – or would want to change.

Of course, it is to each his or her own, but I have long realized that Jessica yesterday is like Jessica today – and the Jessica of tomorrow will be the same as the Jessica of today. Jessica will not change; and neither will Jesus; and neither will you or I. Those who think that Jesus could have been a stoning god yesterday – and then lived an interim life of peace and forgiveness – just to return to a stoning god – have no idea of the real Jesus – or The Real God. ***Or so I Believe!***

So, I had quite a day yesterday. I encountered with a *light*, a lamb, and a god. Will I have any difficulty selecting a favorite? You know I can't. Who would choose a sacrificial lamb and condemning god over a *light*? No! I choose the *light of Jessica, the*

light of Jesus – a never-changing-always-the-same-forgiving Jesus – and my own light too. The three of us will choose *character* as our main class – and one of us will teach the other – because we will all learn from each other’s example.

And where will we live? In the *Light of The God - The God* that is in everything and everyone. **Little gods like Jehovah and Apollo select. The One God simply Is.** No one needs to go anywhere to find *The God* because *The God* is everywhere. Once again, that means quite simply that if *The God* is everywhere, *Everywhere is Heaven.* *Jesus* may be where I am or he may be elsewhere. It does not matter in the least. With or without *Jesus* as actual personal companion, virtually anyone who believes in the *Presence of Divinity* everywhere and acts like it is automatically a *companion of Jesus.*

And that would be my vision!

Word of Caution

I am sure that many are saying, **it can’t be true.** There is no way that we may have been following a **Peter Church** all these years – no way. It is impossible that a billion minds and souls have led their lives expecting a **Jesus of Authority** when it is all a lie. Yes, I realize that the idea seems all too much to bear. To think that we could have been having *Heaven here on Earth* all this time – and that is what I am saying if it is true that when **Thomas & Mary Magdalene** departed Israel after the death of Jesus, **Peter** took over and cast his own view as that of **Jesus.**

I can’t prove it as true. No! It might not be. I might be the one suffering delusion – not Peter. On the other hand, I might be right too. All too often, people argue some point because **it was written** – as if that which was written has to be true; but I have long been aware that I cannot take **what was written** with me when I die. I can only take *what is in my heart.* In the final event, all that was written will not make any difference – in terms of actual truth. For me, if I believe what was written, then it may become true for me *in my heart* and that may make **what was written** as true for me as for the one who wrote it; but in truth, **what was written** and **what is in my heart** could be false.

In the end, it is up to each of us to make sense of life and not depend on others who think they may know the answers to decide for us; and that includes any who are reading this. It is not for me – or anyone – to decide for anyone else. If it makes sense, then I guess it is right for you to believe it – but I would issue a word of caution – **make sure it makes sense** before committing yourself to it.

The End of the World

As I see it, John’s vision in **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS** had a lot to do with **the end of the world.** Let’s face it. It is a very dramatic idea because it is inescapable. Everything does end. I will die. You will die. Everything will die; but **the end** doesn’t scare me much anymore. Once, it did scare me; and I will admit that I was even terrified of the prospect – but not anymore. I have come to realize it is not what it seemed to be when I was scared of it. I think it scared John, though, and that is why he was so obsessed with it.

John talks a lot about death in **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS.** He talks so much about it that one has to wonder if he saw anything else. At least, I don’t get a sense of

anything else. I can't read a single verse in **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS** that says anything but **dire** to me, even though there is much that pretends to offer glimpses of life too. There is a constant dread and threat of death in John's vision – from beginning to end. There's death by sword, death by pestilence, death by earthquake, death by fire, death by disease, death by and at Armageddon - **death, death, death!** – but all because of sin that I do not believe exists because I believe that everything is sacred. I believe there is sin alright, but no inherent sin. Like the Jesus of **THE GOSPEL OF MARY MAGDALENE**, I believe *there is no such thing as sin, except that I create it. I do not need to flee sin. I just need not to create it.*

And what is *creating sin*? For me, it is the opposite of *Love God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind – and love your neighbor as your self.* In other words, **sin is hate.** Should I concentrate my energies on any kind of hate, I am sinning because my focus is not on love. **There is no joy in hating** – no matter what the hate – even if it be of sin. I don't hate sin. I just love life. I don't hate death. I respect it as part of the process of *life-death-rebirth* – that wonderful cycle that is in all of nature.

In **THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS**, Jesus was asked: *Should we fast? How should we pray? Should we give alms? What diet should we observe?* The Jesus of Thomas answered: **Do not lie. Do not do what you hate.** Beside needing to always tell the truth, it seems Jesus was high on not doing what you hate. That is exactly how I feel about sin. I think sin is hating – even if the hate is of something supposedly worthy of being hated – like sin itself. **Why waste time hating when that same time can be spent loving?** I can't recall a moment that I really enjoyed hating anything. Some might argue that some hate is ok – like hatred of disease, for instance; and my reply would be: **why not focus instead on love of life – and then disease might disappear for having no attention paid to it?**

Personally, I have written a lot in my life, but almost none of my writing concentrates on hate or death. Almost all of it concentrates on life and loving; but not so John. For John, there may have been some kind of **life at the end of the tunnel**, so to speak, but **no life within the tunnel.** For John, it seems, life had no meaning except that it might lead to something, but that something can only be attained after death. Thus: his concentration on death. Death was his **doorway to life**; but little did he know about either death or life to be so consumed with death. I cannot imagine focusing on death when such focus distracts me from looking at life and loving it. **Why in Heaven's name would anyone want to look away from life to stare at death?**

Yet death or the thought of it doesn't scare me. Why doesn't the end of me or the end of the world scare me? It's because I think death is an illusion. I think death is real alright, but I think it's also an illusion because as one thing ends, another begins. In terms of my death as Francis, I may be reborn as a Frances – as John may be reborn as a Joan. Importantly, however, the new Frances, reborn from the old Francis, will only be an extension of the former Francis. And that's why death is an illusion – and it's why it should not scare. I will not really end. I will only begin again; but I will begin again as Frances just as I ended as Francis. So, why should death scare me – unless I do not like the current Francis and dread continuing as such?

In **THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS**, someone asked Jesus: *tell us how our end will be.* The Jesus of Thomas replied: **Have you then discovered the beginning that you inquire**

about the end? And there it is: the end is likely only the beginning of another event, another journey, another adventure. So, what's to fear about it?

But John of **THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS** – and Peter – were probably of the mind that they had to **conquer death** - perhaps by being willing to die a **sacrificial death** as if their deaths would impress some potential judge on the other side of death. Maybe their deaths did impress someone **on the other side**, but I don't think I should have to die to impress another anymore than I should live to impress another.

Jessica & Francis

I am as I am – and you are as you are – because both of us have been blessed beyond any right of being blessed with life – the wonderful, mysterious, splendid gift of life. There is no reason to be obsessed with anything but that – and be aware of the **Heaven at hand**, as Jesus might say. Never mind the future – or fear it. *As long as the present is truly adored, then the future can only be filled with adoration.*

Jessica will continue as Jessica – though she may live again as Jesus. Jesus will continue as Jesus – though he may live again as Jessica. And Francis will continue as Francis – though he may live again as Frances.

Or so, I Believe!

SOCRATES, JESUS, & ME

Written July 7th, 2002; modified a bit on May 8th, 2009.

What is the meaning of life? It's a question we all should ask.
Asking that question and searching for answers should be our greatest task.
It seems to me it's the only way that each of us can be free;
and if you don't believe it, just ask the likes of Socrates, Jesus & me.

Socrates was a questioning gent who lived 400 years before Christ.
He led the way for Jesus, I think, to find his life quite divine.
He said, question everything, my friend, to find the truths of divinity;
and I must say that has been the way of Socrates, Jesus & me.

Don't be afraid of life, Jesus would say, take it and cherish it bold.
Don't fear what you can't see – just love all that you can hold.
Know what is in your sight and what's hidden you will see;
and that has been the key for knowing life by Socrates, Jesus & me.

If you do not love what you can see, then how can you love what you can't?
Just embrace life for all that it is and ignore those that say, thy shan't.
Life is meant to be lived and known as much as we can allow it to be.
You can know life as much as we – Socrates, Jesus & me.

Life is a mystery and always will be and there's much we can never know,
but as long as we love the mystery, we cannot fail to grow.
Generously question while searching for answers. That's the key to being free.
Enjoy your questions and enjoy your answers as we have - Socrates, Jesus & me.

Be not subdued by the questions for which answers do not come.
Enjoy the rays of light that shine even as you may never understand the sun.
Ask why there is light, but be not discouraged if the answer you never see.
Love life as the gift it is – that's what we know – Socrates, Jesus & me.

I have only a little more to offer and then I will let you go.
Ask what you will, but never allow anyone to dictate what you must know.
Love what you know and also that which you would like so much to see;
and you will be hitching a ride with the likes of Socrates, Jesus & me.

On VISIONS & DREAMS

THE END

JESUS VIA THOMAS COMMENTARIES

(64 Pages)

By
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Laramie, Wyoming
- 2009 -

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Laramie, Wyoming. U.S.A.
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Introduction

Who was Thomas? It seems he was a man who took some notes a long time ago about a man named *Jesus*. Or maybe he jotted down his recollections long after Jesus died. I do not know anything about the details of what has become known as **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS**. I am not a scholar of the languages or of history in any way. My reading of the Gospel of Thomas is almost strictly personal – approaching its verses from a viewpoint of my own rationale for life. That is to say, I suppose, that I may be *reading into* the Gospel of Thomas as much as I am *reading from* or *extracting from*.

Having admitted that, let me tell you what I do know about The Gospel of Thomas. I know that only recently in historical terms has it become known to modern man. In 1945, a peasant in Egypt stumbled onto a jar in a cave overlooking the Nile River in Egypt near a place or town or settlement known as Nag Hammadi. It was entirely an accident. Our peasant stumbled on some rather big ancient jar that contained a lot of stuff. When he overturned that jar, among some other ancient hidden works, out tumbled **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS** – or at least the first 114 verses of a work that may have included more than those 114 verses; but it is my understanding that only the first 114 were recoverable.

From carbon dating, as I understand it, the age of the contents of this jar could be traced to around the 4th Century. What happened in the 4th Century that prompted stuffing things in a jar and hiding the jar in a cave dwelling off the Nile River? In general, an Emperor named Constantine who had just taken over the Western World and had decided to make Christianity the state religion. He wanted unity in his empire and he did not like conflict about his new hero, Jesus. There were lots of gospels in his empire about Jesus, but they did not all tell the same story. He wanted the same story to be told to all and obeyed by all. So he felt it necessary to select only those gospels that told a somewhat favorable story and outlaw the rest. He commanded his bishops to settle on a canon – and **THE HOLY BIBLE** was born out of that. Of course, this **BIBLE** included lots of books, other than just gospels about Jesus, but around 325 or so, it was born by command of Constantine.

Among the many books excluded from the new canon was **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS**, as well as another of my favorites, **THE GOSPEL OF MARY**. I offer my interpretation of The Gospel of Mary in another work – *JESUS VIA MARY COMMENTARIES* - but this is a work about The Gospel of Thomas. Constantine (and/or his bishops) decided that any gospels not selected for the new canon should not only be excluded from the new **BIBLE**, but banned from the public as well. Thus, as I understand it, all outlaw works were to be destroyed.

Fortunately, some monks disobeyed the order to destroy all copies of banned works and did what they could to hide them away for posterity. That is why **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS (THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS)** was put in a jar and hidden away in a cave for safe keeping. If that mindful monk had not done that, we would have no alternate gospel to talk about today and Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John would remain sole custodians of Jesus.

Due to the disobedience of someone or ones, however, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are no longer sole custodians of Jesus. After all these years of having to keep quiet, others who offered different stories about Jesus are finally being heard. **The Ban of Constantine is Over!**

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS found in 1945 was written in Coptic, an Egyptian Language. It may have been written originally in Greek, but the copy found in 1945 was an Egyptian translation. It is largely held by so called experts that the author, Thomas, was likely Thomas, one of the original apostles of Jesus. Supposedly, Thomas was Greek. So it stands to reason that he would have written an original in Greek. Who knows what happened to the original Greek? Perhaps it did not survive its pre Constantine days – and perhaps it was in the care of some obedient monk who did as he was told and burned it as contraband.

The Gospel of Thomas only contains a series of *Jesus said* statements. There is no narrative offered – just a bunch of *Jesus said* statements. I get the feeling that Thomas may have actually taken notes during the life of Jesus and this gospel may be the result of his jottings. You may get that sense too as you review the verses. Imagine a student taking notes – as primitive as that would have been in 30 A.D. But people did write in those days and manuscripts were written on papyrus or whatever. So it is feasible someone could have taken notes during the life of Jesus.

If so, those notes in the form of **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS** may have been the first writings about Jesus. Others like Peter's boys – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – could have started with those writings and then expounded stories from there – stories both true and false. Given the apparent disagreement between the Jesus reflected in the Gospel of Thomas and the other gospels, it could have happened in just that way. In reality, Thomas may have been the favorite of Jesus for being the more understanding companion and Peter may have been a man looking for a cause and seeing one in Jesus.

In any case, in time, after the discovery in 1945, scholars of Coptic have translated The Gospel of Thomas into various languages, including my own English. In 1979, I acquired my first copy; and I believe that translation may have been among the first of the English translations, if not the first. It was done by a team headed by a fellow named A. Guillaumont and was copyrighted in 1959. My copy included the Coptic on the left hand side of the book and the English translation on the right. Thus, if one knew both Coptic and English, one could refer between the languages, but being ignorant of Coptic myself, I read only the English pages on the right.

Unfortunately, I no longer have my original copy of Mr. Guillaumont's translation. After copying all the verses into a pc file for my own safe keeping, as strange as it seems to me, I lost my original copy. It is my copy of my own recording of the verses of The Gospel of Thomas that I feature in this work. I tried my best to copy the verses exactly as Mr. Guillaumont offered them in his translation, including all parentheses and brackets and little arrows where they were found. In some cases, I guess the team of translators could not decipher a word or expression and they had to guess about a word, but when they did guess, they made it clear that some word or expression was hard to decipher by punctuating their translations with marks that indicated some confusion.

Personally, I appreciate the integrity and honesty of a team of translators who will admit to confusion. I have read several "translations" that offer no confusion at all and

recite verses like that is just as they were found. That often leaves the false impression that there was no confusion in the first place. If someone reads such a translation, they have no way of knowing that a verse may not be quite what it seems because a “translator” may have been no more than an “interpreter” of a previous translation and simply stated a personal opinion in the place of an authentic text.

Be that as it may, though Mr. Guillaumont did not explain his markings in his work of 1959, you will have them as best as I could reproduce them with my pc, using Microsoft Word. Most importantly, however, I think you will have as authentic a translation of The Gospel of Thomas as there is. You can judge the verses and my attending interpretation of those verses as you wish.

For what it’s worth, as implied previously, I think it is highly possible – and maybe even probable – that the stories of Jesus as offered in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are far from complete – and maybe even misleading. I get the sense from the canon gospels that all the apostles of Jesus were in agreement that Jesus intended to present himself as a Jewish Messiah – or The Jewish Messiah; however I do not get such a sense from the Gospel of Thomas. In fact, I get the impression that Jesus wanted nothing to do with being part of Jewish history, let alone be its Messiah.

A messiah – or the notion of messiah – implies a belief in a separation between God and man. If there is no separation between God and man, then there is no need for a messiah to bond them. As I read both the Gospels of Thomas and Mary, I see a *Holistic Jesus* rather than a **Messianic Jesus**. A *Holistic Jesus* is a Jesus who believes that life is whole as it is and needs no saving grace to make it whole. A **Messianic Jesus** is a Jesus who believes that life is not whole as it is and is in need of some saving grace to bond it with a God with which it has been previously separated.

Personally, I cannot reconcile the notion of infinite – which I think God is – with the traditional notion of sin. If God is infinite, that means God must be everywhere. If God is everywhere – and in everything – how is it possible for there to be a separation between God and anything? If there can be no real separation between God and man, then the Jewish notion of sin has to be wrong. If the Jewish notion of sin is wrong in that there never has been a separation between man and God, then the Jewish notion of messiah must also be wrong. A Jewish messiah is supposedly needed to reconcile man with God; but if there is no actual separation, neither is there need of reconciliation. Accordingly, Jesus must have another meaning other than that of Jewish Messiah.

It just so happens that both Thomas and Mary present a completely different perspective of Jesus than that offered by the canon gospels. The Jesus of Thomas and Mary seems to reject the notions of Judaism as related to sin. It is hard to believe. I know that. We have been led to believe for so long that Jesus believed that sin exists and that he was the one to resolve it in mankind. Now, we get the story – long suppressed by Constantine and history – that it was opinion offered in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – and not fact.

Certainly, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, and Paul had a right to their opinions; but so did Thomas and Mary and all those who had various opinions about the man named Jesus. And speaking of opinions, this work is a set of my opinions based on my own personal interpretation of the verses offered for my use by the fine team, headed by A. Guillaumont. Make no mistake about it. That which you are about to review – and

study if you wish – are the verses of Thomas as supplied by A. Guillaumont and team and my own opinions about their meaning.

I pride myself in being a student of life and Jesus. **That means I am still learning.** An interpretation of today might not be the same tomorrow. That is what happens when someone is a student. Their views change as their thoughts change. I wrote an interpretation of **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS** in 2003 that remains for the most part my current interpretation, but there has been some changes. I will not detail the changes except to offer that there has been some. That is to emphasize that I am still a student and probably always will be. I am still learning.

I cannot stress how important a notion that is to me. I do not want anyone to assume that I know anything for sure. **I am only offering my opinion;** and I think that is what we should presume of Thomas and Mary and Matthew and Mark and Luke and John and Peter and Paul too. They did not know anymore than what I know today, but they had their opinions about things. As long as we approach any writing in that light, I think we can do ourselves a wonder of good, but when we approach any work like it is some definitive glossary of the meaning of life, that is when we are apt to stumble – and maybe stumble badly.

In my opinion, mankind is still very much in the dark about Jesus because Constantine and his bishops chose to exclude certain opinions and tried to make everyone believe some so called mainstream opinions as if those opinions were unquestionably right. Never in my wildest way would I ever submit that any of my opinions are unquestionably right. The very nature of opinion is that it may or may not be right. So to assume that anyone has a hold on what is unquestionably right is about as dumb a thing as we can do if we want to preserve our status as students of life.

In regard to any opinion about life, I think it is very useful to consider the person with the opinion. What is his general belief about life? What was Peter's general belief about life? What was John's general belief about life? What was Mark's general belief about life? What was Paul's general belief about life? What was Thomas's general belief about life? What was Mary Magdalene's general belief about life? What is Francis William Bessler's general belief about life?

Just as my approach to Jesus must be colored by my general belief about life, so it has to be with everyone. I mentioned at the outset that I may be *reading into* **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS** with some of my prejudices and preconceived notions about things. Without question, I admit that; but so also does anyone who writes about or reviews a verse. We all do it. It comes with the territory of a "*general belief*" about life.

What was Peter's general belief about life? How did that color his perception of Jesus? I think Peter believed in the Jewish dogma that man and God are separated by virtue of some sin of Adam. If so, he could only review Jesus in that light. What about Thomas? Not much is known about him. Did he meet Jesus with a preconception about man being lost in sin? Perhaps yes. Perhaps not. If Thomas was Greek by origin – as he may have been – and was only visiting Israel when he met Jesus, he may not have been equipped with the Jewish notion of sin. If so, he could have heard a different Jesus – or he could have seen Jesus in a different way than did Peter. Thus, his opinion about Jesus would necessarily be different than that of Peter.

That is the way it goes. I get the impression from the Gospel of Thomas that Jesus was not very impressed with Peter. That may be because Thomas was not very impressed with Peter. Who is to say? I get the impression that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and Paul were all impressed with Peter. Maybe they were so because of sharing a general belief about life. Maybe they all met Jesus with a preconceived notion of sin in hand whereas Thomas may have been without such a preconception.

The point of all this is to emphasize that all of this is opinion. To assume that the opinions of Peter and his boys are somehow inspired of God and the opinions of Thomas and Mary are without useful inspiration is truly foolish. To declare that the **BIBLE** in general is inspired of God and this set of commentaries is not is about as self defeating as you can get. It is probably because some men have decided that they deserve to be anointed with inspiration and others anointed with desperation that man has been at war for all of his days on this earth so far.

Make no mistake. I am of God, but am no more inspired of God than anyone else. Of course, that is an opinion. I see God as infinite and in everything and everything emanating from God. That is my *general belief* about life. It is that belief that I take with me everywhere I go and it is that belief that I use to judge the wisdom or folly of anything in life. Peter and his subordinates, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John did not possess that same *general belief*. Accordingly, they could not decide about any issue in life in the same way as I do – or you do or as Jesus did or does.

With that, let us take a look at the opinions of a man named Thomas as he jotted them down over 2,000 years ago. He saw Jesus in a different way than did Peter and his subordinates because he was possessed with a different *general belief* about life than they. Maybe you will agree with how Thomas is perceiving Jesus and maybe not. Maybe you will agree with how I am perceiving both Thomas and Jesus – and maybe not.

In any case, I am happy I can share with you how I see it. I may be wrong. I have been wrong in the past. That is as definite a proof as one needs that I may be wrong now too. On the other hand, I am not new at reviewing the verses of **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS**. I have been meditating on these verses since 1979 – when I encountered it for the first time. With all that meditation, maybe I am close to the truth – at least much closer than I was in 1979 and a little bit closer than I was in 2003 when I wrote my first full interpretation of The Gospel of Thomas. That one I called **JESUS – A DIFFERENT VIEW**.

In 2005, I met with a number of interested students of The Gospel of Thomas on a weekly basis for twenty-three weeks. Those sessions clarified my thinking a bit; and it is largely because of that clarification that I decided to offer a whole new interpretation. We students can do that. **It is only those who refuse to change that cannot see their way clear to embrace anything new; and in their defiance of change, they refuse to correct error and remain as blind as they were yesterday.** That is just the way it is.

One final note: In this work, I am most intent on sharing the verses of **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS** and not my personal interpretation of those verses. Accordingly, I am making the verses themselves much larger in terms of font or size of print than my own “small” interpretation. My personal interpretation is not so important; but sharing the verses themselves is. Hopefully you will take the verses and

formulate your own interpretation of them. If you wish, you can even skip over my interpretation and ponder only the verses themselves on your own.

Finally, my eternal thanks to the team of A. Guillaumont for providing the translation of the verses as they have – an effort copyrighted in 1959.

Sincerely,
Francis William Bessler
April 12th, 2009

Beginning: These are the secret words which the Living Jesus spoke and Didymos Judas Thomas wrote.

Verse 1: And He said: Whoever finds the explanation of these words will not taste death.

Tasting death is fearing death, not experiencing it. It is living in fear of death and what may come afterward. Whoever finds the explanation of these words will have wisdom and will not fear death anymore than they will fear life. Life and death are part of a continuum. To know one is to not fear the other. Death only continues life. It does not end it. So what is to fear about death – unless that which is in life now is not desired to be continued after death. If we do not want to continue as we are, then we better change what we are – or how we are – because death will not stop what goes before. It is only like an intermission between one life and the next.

Verse 2: Jesus said: Let him who seeks, not cease seeking until he finds, and when he finds, he will be troubled, and when he has been troubled, he will marvel and he will reign over the All.

Essentially, Jesus offered that we should seek until we find. He added that when we find – the answers for which we seek – we will be troubled. I think that is because the answers we seek are probably contrary to what most think is the truth. It is indeed troubling to face the possibility that we have not been living the truth. It was true when Jesus lived and it is still true today.

What does Jesus mean by “reign over the All”? He offered that when we have found the truths for which we seek, we will marvel and reign over the All? What did he mean by that? Good question; but I think the key to “reign” is in the word “marvel.” By marveling what we know and see, we will reign over the All – or better perhaps – with the All. To know ourselves as the “sons of the Living Father” as is offered in the next verse is to marvel at what we know because the reality is so amazing. If we truly find ourselves, we can only marvel what we find – and it is in marveling what we find that makes us like kings. It is not in commanding others that we are kings. It is in marveling the truths of life that we find security – which is what being part of a “kingdom” is all about. Right?

Verse 3: Jesus said: If those who lead you say to you: “See, the Kingdom is in heaven,” then the birds of the heaven will precede you. If they say to you: “It is in the sea,” then the fish will precede you. But the Kingdom is within you and it is without you. If you (will) know yourselves, then you will be known and you will know that you are the sons of the Living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you are in poverty and you are poverty.

Jesus offered that we should not be fooled if someone tells us that Heaven - The Kingdom - is over here or over there. He said that the Kingdom is inside of us and outside of us and that if we would only realize it, we are "sons of the Living Father." Amazingly, traditional Christianity would have us believe that Jesus is the "only son of God." The Jesus of Thomas tells us in the Gospel of Thomas that we are all sons of God - or children of God. It is one of the great errors of traditional Christianity that Jesus was the only son of God when, in truth, he was only a son of God - along with the rest of us.

In offering that the Kingdom is within us and without us – or outside of us – that pretty much says “everywhere.” Many have the idea that the Kingdom (of Peace) is elsewhere and that after life we may find it, but Jesus is arguing here that the Kingdom we may think is elsewhere is right here and right now. If we do not know that, then we act without awareness and are ignorant – or as Jesus offers, are in poverty. We who act like God is not already inside us are poor because we lack the riches of wisdom. If we realize that God is everywhere, then we would act accordingly. We would know we are “sons of the Living Father” – or children of the same.

In a very real way, we are the Living Father because we come from Him or It. We have to be sons of the Living Father because anything that comes from the Living Father has to be part of the Living Father. That makes us all sons. “Son” here is not saying “masculine.” It is only saying “like God.” A “son” is like his “father.” If we are from God, we are “like God” because we are made in the likeness of God. But that is not just we who are human. That is everything in Creation because everything that is created comes from God. How can we not marvel about that?

Verse 4: Jesus said: The man old in days will not hesitate to ask a little child of seven days about the place of Life, and he will live. For many who are first shall become last and they shall become a single one.

I think Jesus was arguing here that life is continuous. **The old becomes the new, but the new only extends as a continuation of the old.** Personally, I think Jesus believed in reincarnation and there will be verses that imply that beside this one, but even without incarnation, whatever comes after is only a continuation of what went before. A “child of seven days” represents the new – a beginning of a new life. “Old in days” represents the end of life – the old. When Jesus says “for many who are first will become last,” it is only a way of saying that what is last will become first.

Last is old. First is new. But, as he says, they shall become a single one. That is to say, the new will continue in the same mold as the old. The new soul will be reborn, as it were, but will only continue the paths of a former existence. That is really the true nature of judgment. Lots have in mind that judgment is being punished by someone outside of ourselves, but I think Jesus realized it is not punishment from without, but continuation from within. If that does not tell us to get it right so that we do not have to continue the wrong, nothing will.

Verse 5: Jesus said: Know what is in thy sight, and what is hidden from thee will be revealed to thee. For there is nothing hidden that will not be manifest.

There is tremendous depth in this one. It is one of my favorite quotes of all time. It says so much. **“Know what is in thy sight”** tells us to know our lives, know about them, know them inside and out, know ourselves. It is to say that which is knowable is worthy of being known. To know in a spiritual sense is to become one with, to have a sense of union. You cannot know something or someone and not be part of them. Knowledge of self leads to knowledge of others. Ignorance of self leads to ignorance of others.

I am not sure that the word “revealed” is a good word for what Jesus is trying to say here, but in essence, he is saying that if we know what we can see, we can experience what we can’t see. Perhaps the better word would be “inexperienced” in place of “hidden.” What is hidden is really that which is inexperienced. He is offering that we can “experience” or “know” that which we can’t see – God – by knowing and appreciating what we can see. That makes sense. If God is making us – as I think Jesus believed – then we can “experience” God by loving that which God is making – us. We are a manifestation of God. We are a manifestation of the hidden God.

Lots think that they can know God as God is, but no one who is finite can know that which is infinite. God is infinite. **We will never know God “face to face” on the same level; but we can know God by knowing and loving that which God is making – us.** Pretty simple, huh?

Verse 6: His disciples asked Him, they said to Him: Wouldst thou that we fast, and how should we pray, (and) should we give alms, and what diet should we observe: Jesus said: Do not lie and do not do what you hate, for all things are manifest before Heaven. For there is nothing hidden that shall not be revealed and there is nothing covered that shall remain without being uncovered.

What a verse this one is! When asked if they should fast and give alms, one would have thought that Jesus would have encouraged doing just that for the sake of the soul; but our Jesus of Thomas did not so much as tell his disciples not to fast and give alms and pray, but that none of those things are important; though in one of the following verses (Verse 14), he does say don't do these things because doing them will actually hurt you spiritually. **Telling the truth and respecting the truth is all that is important for the soul.**

Why would Jesus suggest that praying is not very useful? Because generally one prays to a God outside of him or herself. Jesus knew that God is not outside of us for us to have to pray for Him or It or Her to come to us. If I pray to God with the hope that God is going to do something for me as a result of my prayer, then I am ignoring that God is already inside of me. If we pray, I suppose we should pray to only those outside of us - like perhaps saints or angels. It may be just fine to pray to that kind, but to pray to a God Which is inside of you does not make a whole lot of sense. Does it?

Then Jesus adds that there is nothing hidden that shall not be revealed, for all things are manifest before Heaven. Seems like we already covered that idea in the previous verse, but I think it is to say that spiritually we can't fool the truth. We can pretend that we are something we are not in this world that we see, but in the world of spirit, our real thoughts and attitudes are what judge us. We can't stay hidden in a spiritual sense because our real attitudes and spirits judge us. Like I mentioned in a previous verse, I

don't think any of us should concern ourselves with judgment from another upon us. I think we should only be concerned about being in tune with ourselves - or we should care about ourselves being in tune with the things that really matter like the attitude of equality of being.

Verse 7: Jesus said: Blessed is the lion which the man eats and the lion will become man; and cursed is the man whom the lion eats and the lion will become man.

I think it only means that blessed is the one who is angry who is converted by one who is at peace. The lion stands for something fierce or angry and the man stands for one at peace - in this verse at least. Cursed am I if I allow someone who is not at peace to convert me to his angry or hateful ways. That is all Jesus is saying here.

I think this one of the clearest dictations, as it were, that it is not smart to become a soldier to oppose a soldier. Jesus would not agree with that stance. Thus, he could not approve of war because to go to war and be willing to kill another who may be out to kill me, I would have to become what I resent. That is allowing the lion to eat me and make me as it is. Not smart!

Verse 8: And He said: The Man is like a wise fisherman who cast his net into the sea, he drew it up from the sea, full of small fish, that wise fisherman, he threw all the small fish down into the sea, he chose the large fish without regret. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear.

If I am out fishing, why not catch the biggest fish I can? Jesus is only saying here that I should not settle for knowing less than I can. That is like catching only a small fish. I should be willing to throw all the little fishes away that represent being less than what I can be – and only settle for being the best that I can be. But as I think Jesus would argue, doing the best I can is not what it is all about. It is realizing that I am a “son of the Living Father” and acting accordingly – marveling at my existence and experiencing the hidden God through the unhidden me and the unhidden all that is.

Verse 9: Jesus said: See, the sower went out, he filled his hand, he threw. Some (seeds) fell on the road; the birds came, they gathered them. Others fell on the rock and did not strike root in the earth and did not produce ears. And others fell on the thorns; they choked the seed and the worm ate them. And others fell on the good earth; and it brought forth good fruit; it bore sixty per measure and one hundred twenty per measure.

This is only telling it like it is. Some of us can hear an idea and grasp it and some cannot. **To be able to grasp an idea, one needs to prepare him or herself with good principle.** Otherwise, a good idea can go to waste. It can fall among thorns or rocks and never grow. Ideas – and that is what Jesus is talking about here – require a good foundation to be understood.

I can tell you to “do good” and not prepare you with another idea that you are a “son of the Living Father.” If you do not know you are a son of the Living Father, then the notion of “doing good” will probably go to waste. You won’t have any idea what it means. Jesus is only saying here that to experience spiritual growth, we must first recognize some elementary truths. We must prepare ourselves with good earth and good principle. If we do not prepare ourselves with elementary truths, then any dictums that are issued that are dictums of wisdom may not be able to live within us; but if we are prepared for worthwhile ideas, then we can receive them and they will bear much fruit.

Verse 10: Jesus said: I have cast fire upon the world, and see, I guard it until it (the world) is afire.

The truth hurts at first when you are unaccustomed to it. No one likes to confront the truth that he or she has been wrong. By offering that the world is not comprised of good and evil like the Jews believe and like so many still believe today, people of old could only resent the message rather than be comforted by it. The Jews found great comfort in the idea that they were a chosen people – that they were chosen to be “sons of the Living Father.” Of course, that is pure nonsense. God does not choose some to be his sons and not all to be his sons. But if I am convinced that inequality is the basis of salvation and not equality, then I will be disturbed to hear otherwise.

Jesus came to disturb the world with the truth. That is all he is saying here. He is not talking in literal terms because he almost never talked in literal terms. The fire that he is casting upon the world is not real fire, but ideas that hurt because they confront us. In Verse 2, Jesus said: *Let him who seeks, not cease seeking until he finds, and when he finds, he will be troubled, and when he has been troubled, he will marvel and he will reign over the All.* It is that “being troubled” with confronting ideas that amounts to the fire he is casting upon the world. But, as he offers, the fire will not last if we deal with it. Once we overcome our being troubled, we will marvel at what we find anew and reign as a king – secure within our new ideas.

Verse 11: Jesus said: This heaven shall pass away, and the one above it shall pass away, and the dead are not alive and the living shall not die. In the days that you devoured the dead, you made it alive; when you come into the light, what will you do? On the day when you were one, you became two. But when you have become two, what will you do?

I think Jesus is offering that at some point, the world will end – as we know it now. Verse 111 addresses the end of the world too. When Jesus offers that *this heaven will pass away*, I think he is referring to what folks think as “the sky.” When he refers to *the one above it will pass away*, I think he is referring to the mythical heaven – the heaven that people think they are going to after death. If that mythical heaven “passes away,” there goes the eternal heaven that many folks are counting on.

But why should that mythical heaven pass away? My guess is that it will pass away because it is really one with the regular sky and the regular earth. That is to say that “heaven” is all caught up with life on earth in some way. There may be no mythical heaven where souls go to rest for eternity after serving a life on earth. There may only be

the earth and its heavenly status during life. What life? The life of the soul within the body – the life here and now.

At the end of the world, Jesus says *the dead are not alive and the living shall not die*. Knowing Jesus as I think I do and his focus on the kingdom of the Father being within us and without us – or outside of us – I think Jesus is referring to the “dead” as those who are not alive in this life – or not aware, though they are alive. Who can that be? Those who fail to understand that the kingdom of the Father is here and now. If one lives life unaware that the kingdom is now, then, in a very real way, that one is living a “dead” life in terms of being “unaware” of the life of plenty he or she actually has.

Life is probably very much defined for a soul in a body as being alive while within that body. People have some notion that life after the body will be a better life, but that is probably so only if the soul is reinvested in another body. But time may run out at least for some interim period where there is no more life on earth and therefore, no bodies available to incarnate. In that event, souls will be left with their last state prior to their “last death” in a body. Of those, if a soul did not achieve awareness of the kingdom of the Father while alive, they will remain dead. Of those, if a soul did achieve awareness of the kingdom of the Father, they will remain alive – or aware.

What did Jesus mean when he said: *in the days that you devoured the dead, you made it alive*? I think he was talking about our taking in ideas. If we live our lives basing our lives on false ideas, then we are “devouring the dead.” What may have been the false ideas he was talking about? Since he was talking to Jews, more than likely it would have been the false ideas of their tradition – namely that the kingdom of the Father is not at hand and is not for everyone. That would be my guess. We can “make alive” that which is really “dead” if we live according to dead or false ideas. I think that is what Jesus is offering here – warning us, in effect, that we better get things right while we have the chance because there will come a day when we will have no more chances.

On the day that you were one, you became two. What did he mean by that? Two stands for “confusion” in this text. So Jesus is offering that if we become one with something false, then we become confused. I think he was referring once again to the notion of being one with the falsity of Jewish tradition. If I am in alignment with a false notion, I am one with that notion. The same, of course, could be said about being in alignment with a true notion. I am also one with that notion; but Jesus is not talking about right notions here. He is warning against the false ones because he offers that *when you have become two, what will you do?* When you have become confused believing in the false notion that the kingdom of the Father is not here and now, what will you do? Your confusion will continue. How could it be otherwise if resolving confusion is being aware of the kingdom of the Father while in the body? If you no longer have a body, as the “end of the world” implies, you will have no more chance to get it right and become aware that the kingdom of the Father is here and now. Jesus is only warning us here that we have just so much time to get it right because the world will end at some point and we will be left with our last states of mind.

From an evolutionary standpoint, life may regenerate on earth after an eon of time and incarnation of bodies by souls may resume, but in that interim that life has ceased on earth – probably more for cosmic happenings than for any other reason – perhaps when the earth will go into another long ice age – there will be no life on earth and therefore, no chances of incarnation. It might happen that way.

Verse 12: The disciples said to Jesus: We know that thou wilt go away from us. Who is it who shall be great over us? Jesus said to them: Wherever you have come, you will go to James the righteous for whose sake heaven and earth came into being.

Who knows who James the righteous was and what Jesus may have meant when he said that heaven and earth came into being for the sake of James the righteous? My first guess is that James represents the same providence of souls that Jesus represented. From the standpoint of both Jesus and James, the earth is useful for their purpose. Therefore, it came into being in a way for their sake.

But everyone could say the same thing. Anyone who is on earth could be here for his or her own purpose. That might be stretching it, but I think it is so. I think that various communities of souls incarnate on earth for various reasons. So, it would not be fair to say that the earth only exists for the incarnation of souls from soulful communities like those of James and Jesus; but it would be fair to say that James and Jesus have chosen the earth for their purpose. And what is that purpose? To instruct others that the kingdom of the Father is here and now and for everyone. Such awareness is the best way for a soul to prepare for any existence of peace – be it within a body or outside of a body.

Verse 13: Jesus said to His disciples: Make a comparison to me and tell me whom I am like. Simon Peter said to Him: Thou art like a righteous angel. Matthew said to Him: Thou art like a wise man of understanding. Thomas said to Him: Master, my mouth will not at all be capable of saying whom Thou art like. Jesus said: I am not thy Master because thou has drunk, thou has become drunk from the bubbling spring which I have measured out. And He took him, he withdrew, he spoke three words to him. Now when Thomas came to his companions, they asked him: What did Jesus say to thee? Thomas said to them: If I tell you one of the words which He said to me, you will take up stones and throw at me; and the fire will come from the stones and burn you up.

Just by offering that Thomas should not see Jesus as a "master," much is offered in this verse that tends to contradict the traditional image of Jesus as lord - if by lord is meant ruler or supervisor. I do believe the traditional understanding of "lord" is "ruler." Given that understanding of lord (or master), in this verse, I hear Jesus practically begging Thomas not to see him in that light. The reason is that no one of wisdom even begins to want to be a ruler. Lords want to be rulers - or at least think they deserve to be so; but true wise souls like Jesus have no attraction toward wanting to be rulers or lords. A truly wise person only wants another person to share a personal vision or intellectual or spiritual impression of life so as to know freedom on his or her own merit.

One who is free - such as was Jesus - can only remain free if no one actually depends on him for their virtue. This is what so many who misunderstand Jesus lack.

They think that Jesus wants them to be hangers on as if Jesus will be pleased if they call him lord. I can assure you if someone called me 'lord,' I would quickly try to dissuade them because I would know great disappointment that the other does not know his or her own virtue. If it takes one to know one, being anti-lord myself, I can't imagine anyone wanting to bear such a burden. It would be alright if in bearing the burden, another gained needed insight to become his or her own master; but how could anyone gain such insight by holding on to a belief that he or she is deficient? It is quite a question. Isn't it? All I can say is that I do not envy Jesus for his having to put up with such a cockeyed misunderstanding of him as to even begin to think of him as a lord or master of another.

What were the three words that Jesus spoke to Thomas that if revealed to Peter and Matthew would anger them – as in the reference that fire will come from the stones and burn you up? That is a good question. I do not know what they might be specifically, but in general something like: **Don't be fooled**, meaning do not be fooled by Peter and Matthew who are looking for the kingdom of the Father outside themselves. In other words, Jesus could have recognized that Peter was not getting it, so to speak, and that he, Thomas, ought to be careful to not be misled by Peter and Matthew because of their misunderstanding of him, Jesus. I suspect that is the proper meaning of this verse. In essence, the three words were "**Beware of Peter.**"

Of course, we know from the other gospels that Peter would go forward to claim that Jesus chose him to lead his new church. Peter would go forward to teach Jesus as lord and not merely teacher – just the opposite of what Jesus wanted. Jesus offers here that when we listen to his ideas, they become our own and we become our own lords or masters. It is the bubbling spring of ideas that set us free, not any one person, be it a Jesus or otherwise.

Verse 14: Jesus said to them: If you fast, you will beget sin for yourselves, and if you pray, you will be condemned, and if you give alms, you will do evil to your spirits. And if you go into any land and wander in the regions, if they receive you, eat what they set before you, heal the sick among them. For what goes into your mouth will not defile you, but what comes out of your mouth, that is what will defile you.

Imagine Jesus warning against praying. At first glance, it would seem absurd. But prefacing this warning with the counsel in verse 13 about becoming your own master by virtue of hearing the right ideas and attending to them, praying to God as if God is outside of me could only harm my soul. Why? Because it impresses upon myself a lie that God is not already inside of me. We covered this in previous verses, but I don't think it can be over emphasized. **If I am praying to impress a God that I think is outside of me, but which is actually inside of me, then I am leaving myself wide open to a misunderstanding of life on my part and also open to some potential meddling into my affairs by souls without bodies who may just be waiting to hear an appeal from a soul such as me.** If I pray to God, thinking that he or she who is hearing me is God, then I am leaving myself wide open to being manipulated by some bodiless agent who may be more than happy to present him or herself as the God I think I am addressing. Not smart! As Jesus would say, let him who has ears hear!

Jesus offers that what goes into our mouths does not defile us, but rather that which comes out of our mouths. What goes into our mouths? Food. The Jews were of the idea that certain foods are not pure – like pork – but Jesus is offering here that we cannot defile ourselves by what we eat. We can only defile ourselves by what we think and what we speak. We speak what we think; and it is in speaking foolish thoughts that we defile ourselves.

Verse 15: Jesus said: When you see Him who was not born of woman, prostrate yourselves upon your face and adore Him: He is your Father.

I think Jesus is only offering here that our true parent of soul is not a person as such that we can see. None of us has a human body for a parent of our soul. Our souls are born of other stuff, so to speak. Jesus is not so much denigrating our humanity by offering that none of our souls are born of flesh as he is offering that we should be aware that our true soulful heritage may not be what it might seem. Of course we can't see our true soulful parent - or parents; but if we could, we should be ready to prostrate ourselves in front of him or her or it and offer thanks because without that parentage - whatever it may be - we would not be as souls.

Verse 16: Jesus said: Men possibly think that I have come to throw peace upon the world and they do not know that I have come to throw divisions upon the earth, fire, sword, war. For there shall be five in a house: three shall be against two and two against three, the father against the son, and the son against the father, and they will stand as solitaries.

We often think that peace is something that can be delivered to the world. It is not. Peace has to be earned, I think. Peace only happens when souls realize a sense of fulfillment; but fulfillment is not something that can happen except with self-esteem. Jesus came into a world that was of the mind that a messiah can bring peace by virtue of some messianic power in itself. To suggest that peace is not a social or communal thing – as was expected – but an individual thing, such a message could only divide people. **Those who expected that peace can be delivered to a community or nation by virtue of God acting on behalf of that community or nation could only become upset with a man who would challenge a favored nation concept of salvation.** Thus, father would be turned against son and son against father. In the light of such divisiveness, peace for many would be illusive.

What does Jesus mean by *they will stand as solitaries*? I think it is only to mean that each of us is alone in regard to really achieving peace in our lives. I cannot gain peace for you, nor can you gain peace for me. Each of us must pursue and attain peace strictly as solitary souls, independent of all outside of us; but regardless of our achieving peace or not, in the end, each soul truly stands alone. Standing as solitaries, however, would also apply to two or more being in unison – regardless of motive or vision.

Verse 17: Jesus said: I will give you what eye has not seen and what ear has not heard and what hand has not touched and (what) has not arisen in the heart of man.

I think Jesus is only offering here that he has a wisdom that is unusual – or was unusual for the times. Most of the Jews of the time were expecting salvation by virtue of a national blessing. Just in offering that salvation is strictly a personal thing not tied to national identity, Jesus was offering to those Jews ideas that had “not arisen in the heart of man.” It should be very comforting indeed that my salvation is strictly up to me and not dependent upon my obeying some external law imposed upon me from without. Even today, however, many do not see salvation except in the light of a reward by another, that other being an external God. Even today, for so many, Jesus still represents what “has not arisen in the heart of man.” Even today, many men do not get it. **Salvation is strictly a matter of personal disposition, not reward from without.**

Verse 18: The disciples said to Jesus: Tell us how our end will be. Jesus said: Have you then discovered the beginning so that you inquire about the end? Blessed is he who shall stand at the beginning, and he shall know the end and he shall not taste death.

For me, Jesus is offering a tale of reincarnation here. **It is to say that where the ending is, the beginning of something else is.** Blessed are we if we can position ourselves at our beginning - in my opinion, birth into a body - and look forward to a repeat performance upon death - being born again. I do not know about you, but when I do just that, it leaves me with no fear of death. I know that death is only a portal to a new life. And what a wonderful notion it is too - to know that the new baby I will be will be dependent like a new child on the old me - the parent of the child to be. Yes, that would say that I am my own parent - or the parent of the child to be. Nice thought, huh?

Verse 19: Jesus said: Blessed is he who was before he came into being. If you become disciples to me and hear my words, these stones will minister to you. For you have five trees in Paradise, which are unmoved in summer (or) in winter and their leaves do not fall. Whoever knows them will not taste death.

Wow! This one is chuck full of wisdom. Where do I begin? First, Jesus is offering, I think, that blessed am I if I am aware of the process. **Blessed am I if I am aware that I was before and will be again.** The wonder of this blessing is that it puts total responsibility on myself "to get it right" or "to get me right." If I live unaware that I was before, then I will probably live like I don't have to be after I am too. That leaves me open to all sort of bad guidance because others will be quick to inform me, teach me, command me, that some unknown has something in store for me - depending on how I act in life. Thus, the proverbial threat of Heaven if I am good and Hell if I am bad. If I am aware that I was before I came into being and will be after I am, then I am not likely

to fall for the threats and decisions and regulations of others. I am my own soul. It is for me to determine who I am - and who I will be.

Then Jesus said, if you become disciples to me, these stones will administer to you. Who knows the exact language that was offered, but in general I think it offers that **if - like Jesus - I become aware that I am an equal part of life, that equality - in terms of being aware of the divinity of all - will make it so as anything that exists is my brother - or friend.** Friends administer to one another. Thus, even a stone, full of the blessedness of divinity will be a friend and an administrator to me.

If you doubt this, then take a moment to sit on a hill on a quiet day when nothing else is about to disturb you. Look about. If it is for you like it is for me, I become part of all my surroundings. I can reach down and grab a stone and study it, touch it, embrace it, kiss it, rub it up against me - and that stone becomes like my best friend. I think this is what Jesus is offering. To be like him is to have everything as a friend - even a dead stone.

Then he said that there are five trees in Paradise that are unmoved in summer or winter and whose leaves do not fall. If I know those five trees of Paradise, then I will not taste death. I think he is offering that no. 1, Paradise is here and now - depending on some awareness if the threat of death can not keep me from it - and no. 2, if I find that Paradise, I will not taste death.

I think he is offering that I should not let death scare me if I love the process. Death is part of the process. **To be aware of the process and embrace it is to not fear it - at least when the process is so grand as life and death really are.** It is really life before death, then death, then life again – in a body, that is. The soul simply continues through all of it. So what is to fear about that?

About the five trees, though the author of this verse may have been relating to some magic to the number 5 of which I am unaware, being unaware of that magic, I can only take it to mean something like the 5 senses. The 5 senses are unmoved in summer and winter in that they happen regardless of season. Right? They keep on regardless of season and are therefore not tied to the seasons. Being aware of the wonder and the divinity of my 5 senses allows me to live life fully. **The key is to know those 5 senses are Divine and Good and of God or in God - or that God is in them.** This is Paradise - and it can be had right now, right here. Make sense?

Verse 20: The disciples said to Jesus: Tell us what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. He said to them: It is like a mustard-seed, smaller than all seeds. But when it falls on the tilled earth, it produces a large branch and becomes shelter for <the> birds of heaven.

I think Jesus is offering here that the Kingdom of Heaven is the result of a very small seed. We tend to think that Heaven is due to some magnanimous happening or event when it is really due to a very small idea – or an idea that is very easy to understand, without complication. **That little idea is that “the kingdom of the Father is already here.”** It is a very small idea, but that idea is like a huge tree that provides shelter for those who heed it and are nourished by it.

Verse 21: Mary said to Jesus: Whom are thy disciples like? He said: They are like little children who have installed themselves in a field which is not theirs. When the owners of the field come, they will say: "Release to us our field." They take off their clothes before them to release it (the field) to them and to give back their field to them. Therefore I say: If the lord of the house knows that the thief is coming, he will stay awake before he comes and will not let him dig through into his house of his kingdom to carry away his goods. You then must watch for the world, gird up your loins with great strength lest the brigands find a way to come to you, because they will find the advantage which you expect. Let there be among you a man of understanding; when the fruit ripened, he came quickly with his sickle in his hand, he reaped it. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear.

Wow! Does this say a lot. At least my take on it is that Jesus is offering that his disciples are ones who are not understanding his true message and are trying to take him and make him what he is not. They have installed themselves in a field that is not theirs, I think, is to say that they are out of line with what he is trying to offer in terms of how he thought they were seeing him; and he was probably right. They were expecting a real lord; and he was only, in truth, a sage - a wise man.

Who knows what the initial word "disciple" was in the original language of the gospel? It may have been changed from some word meaning "follower" to the more favorable word "disciple" to imply that those who called themselves disciples really knew what Jesus was about. Mary may have had some "followers" of Jesus in mind that she was referencing and a translator may have interpreted an initial "follower" as "disciple." Who knows about that? But whatever the case - be it some known followers or disciples - I think **Jesus felt they were out of line and he could see that they could very well use him for their own purpose.**

Jesus probably knew about the Messiah stuff and knew how he and his teachings that all are safe in God who believe in Him or It or Her could be misconstrued to put him, Jesus, in the light of their expected Messiah - as one from God to make them safe; but his coming had nothing to do with becoming safe in God. He was only telling us what was true and had always been true. **We have always been safe in God, but being unaware of our true safety, we have acted otherwise - like we need God in a way different than we have Him - or Her or It - to make us safe.** He said those who were called his disciples had taken it upon themselves to install themselves in his field, but they did not belong.

It would be interesting to see how a firm traditionalist who sees Jesus only as a Messiah and not as only a wise man would interpret this verse. I am sure such a one would either dismiss Jesus offering that his disciples were out of line or would find another meaning. To each his own, but that is what I get from this verse.

Then he says that these children who are out of place will eventually have to release the field they have stolen; and when they do, all that they think they have assumed as theirs will go back to the original owners. That not only applies to his so called

disciples. It applies to each one of us. **His reference to them having to take off their clothes before releasing the field is like saying that in the end, they would be left naked - without protection from the Jesus ministry because they were never part of it.**

I know this seems harsh, but I see it as realistic. Anyone can conjure him or herself as a disciple, but just claiming yourself to be one does not make you one. You have to become part of the message of the master, not just a blind follower. Traditional Christianity offers that we should accept Jesus as our personal savior blindly and trust him to save us without knowing why - or for thinking that he is needed in a different light than that in which he offered himself. It speaks to merely misunderstanding Jesus to think of him as one who is needed to save us from our sin because in reality, the sin we think we need saving from doesn't even exist - namely the supposed sin of separation of God and man.

Wanting a sin to exist does not make it exist. If I live my life wanting sin to exist and think that Jesus was a master over that unreal sin, then when I die, even though I die with the name of Jesus on my lips, Jesus will be nowhere to be found. Why? Because he represented an attitude against inherited sin, not for it. **If we die thinking we need saved from a sin we do not have, we will die in blindness and will be in effect, naked.** At least that is my take on this verse. **Naked in this verse means "unprotected."** In another verse soon to be covered, it means innocence; but here it probably means "unprotected."

But what an eye opening verse. Let him who has ears hear - as Jesus would say. The other part of this verse is merely telling us that we should live aware of the meaning of life so that we can be aware of that meaning when we pass from this life to the next. This is offered in the regular gospels too; and quite likely was taken from the Gospel of Thomas as an original source. That is merely my opinion; but it seems to me that a lot of what Thomas offers in full, the other gospels repeat in part. In other words, they took the part that was beneficial to them in treating Jesus as Messiah and left anything out that might challenge that notion. Jesus was for our becoming our own masters from insight - offered by his teachings of kindness to all because all are equally of God. It is that kindness to all that is the basis of what might be called his offered salvation - not adherence to Jesus as lord.

Verse 22: Jesus saw children who were being suckled. He said to his disciples: These children who are being suckled are like those who enter the Kingdom. They said to Him: Shall we then, being children, enter the Kingdom? Jesus said to them: When you make the two one, and when you make the inner 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 male and the female (not) be female, when you make eyes in the place of an eye, and the hand in the place of a hand, and a foot in the place of a foot, (and) an image in the place of an image, then shall you enter the Kingdom.

Again, Jesus is offering that the true effect of salvation is having the trust of a child - of seeing things simply like a child does before he or she is thrown off course by adults who think they know better. A child left to him or herself can only learn respect for all about him or herself for what it is - a hand, an eye, a foot, a penis, a vagina. Until he or she is taught that a hand is naughty touching certain places, a hand remains a hand. Then with the notion of evil being thrown in by an adult and a warning against touching "evil places," the once innocent hand becomes a possible accomplice in a crime. This is sad. Jesus is offering that we should not confuse things like we do. We should not call "up" heaven and "down" hell. We should not divide the world into good and evil. Up should be the sky - not heaven; and down should be the earth or below the earth - not hell. The inside of us should be the same as the outside of us. Everything and Everywhere is holy - if we only recognize that the Goodness or Presence of God is equally everywhere. **Why should the inner be different than the outer if the same Divine Presence is in both?**

But I guess it should be obvious that those offering heaven and hell and dissecting reality between good and evil would not like this verse. So, when it came time for Matthew through John to copy from Thomas, they just left this one out. Oh they kept the being like a child alright, but in a different light than the intended meaning offered through Thomas. I think the others imply that being a child means being obedient to a proper authority. Since we are all supposed to obey God, that leaves the door wide open that we should obey those who claim they speak for God. To disobey is to not act like a child should. This is likely what Matthew through John believed - the need for being obedient like a child; but this verse offers a meaning that does not require authority. It offers that being a child is only lacking confusion. Right?

Verse 23: Jesus said: I shall choose you, one out of a thousand, or two out of ten thousand, and they shall stand as a single one.

I think Jesus is saying here that in his selection process for his providence, he won't choose many, probably because many won't qualify. He will only select a few because only a few can be selected. He says he will choose one out of a thousand - or maybe only two out of ten thousand. In other words, he is implying that very few will be able to hear his words in the end. However many he can choose, though, he says, they who are chosen will stand as a single one. That is to say that in value or worth, neither of two who are chosen will be better than the other. Both will be equal because they will see themselves as equal. Two shall stand as one. That is an expression of equality.

Verse 24: His disciples said: Show us the place where Thou art, for it is necessary for us to seek it. He said to them: Whoever has ears, let him hear. Within a man of light, there is light and he lights the whole world. When he does not shine, there is darkness.

Show us where you live, perhaps, is what the disciples were asking of Jesus. We need to go there with you and be with you. I guess that is to say that they did not know where he lived that they would ask about it; but Jesus did not answer them in terms of the place for which they were seeking. Rather, he told them that the "place" from which he came or the place at which he lived is not important. I think the irrelevance of place can

be assumed because Jesus did not answer the question in terms of place. Instead he offered another evasive answer. Show us the place where thou art – he was asked – and he answered – within a man of light, there is light and he lights the whole world. What kind of an answer is that?

I think it's a Jesus kind of answer, for sure. He seemed to thrive on being mysterious and seldom answered questions in a direct manner. In this case, he was telling the disciples that it would not help them to know where he lived because there where he lived is no different than there where he was at any given moment. You think you can know more about me if you know where I live. Not so! He was saying. My light follows me wherever I go. You want to know me. Check out my light here in this place because that light is no different here than in the place where I may lay my head at night. **A man of light – or darkness – is a man of light – or darkness – wherever he is.**

I think this is good to keep in mind. It is not where we live that is important, but how we are using life. What difference does it make that I live in Laramie or Atlanta or Baghdad – as long as wherever I live, I live aware of the graciousness of life and the beauty of life and splendid of life and am grateful for it. My light will follow me wherever I go. It matters not where I live, but how I live.

Verse 25: Jesus said: Love thy brother as thy soul, guard him as the apple of thine eye.

I think Jesus is merely emphasizing the ideal of brotherhood here. Love another as you love yourself, keeping in mind that if you do not love yourself, how can you love another like yourself?

Verse 26: Jesus said: The mote that is in thy brother's eye thou seest, but the beam that is in thine eye, thou seest not. When thou castest the beam out of thine eye, then thou wilt see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye.

No comment needed on this one. We all know it means not to judge others because no one is in a position to know another's circumstances in life. It is best to pay attention to your own soul and get that right. Perhaps after that is done, one might be in a position to aid another.

Verse 27: <Jesus said:> If you fast not from the world, you will not find the Kingdom; if you keep not the Sabbath as Sabbath, you will not see the Father.

I think Jesus is talking about the world of rules and regulations here - not the natural world as such. If one thinks he or she needs a lot of rules and needs to abide by a lot of law, one really does not have any sense that the Kingdom can't be bought with attention to law. Being part of the Kingdom is only having an awareness that the Living Father - as Jesus might call it - is in everyone. I think it is impossible for a person to practice a lack of compassion for everyone if one is aware that everyone has God. That awareness

is what makes for membership in the Kingdom Jesus is talking about. It has nothing to do with attention to laws and regulations within society. It is law and regulation that I think Jesus would equate to "the world."

Verse 28: Jesus said: I took my stand in the midst of the world and in flesh I appeared to them; I found them all drunk, I found none among them athirst. And my soul was afflicted for the sons of men because they are blind in their heart and do not see that empty they have come into the world (and that) empty they seek to go out of the world again. But now they are drunk. When they have shaken off their wine, then will they repent.

I see a lesson in reincarnation here, but that is because I believe in it so much. It is my prior belief in reincarnation that I take to the table when trying to assess this verse. I think we are born into bodies as souls with the souls with which we ended our last life. It is entirely possible for souls to constantly go round and round and round without ever changing if they are the timid type who fail to take chances in life and depend on others to do for them what they should do for themselves.

Those who take chances I think might make mistakes, but they also make progress. Progress can be measured by the level of independence of spirit one achieves in a lifetime. The more dependent you are for your alleged virtue - the less progress you are making. Jesus is offering here his sorrow for so many who come into the world blind and are willing to go out of the world blind too. Jesus was offering being blind here in the sense of having to follow someone else and not know your own way around - like a blind man having to hold onto another to make his way. He said - *empty they come in and empty they go out*. Just speaks, I think, to the need of personal responsibility to get on with life and find one's own answers. In a way, it is sad, but spiritually no one can make progress for another. We can share progress we each make, but no one can actually progress for another.

Verse 29: Jesus said: If the flesh has come into existence because of <the> spirit, it is a marvel; but if <the> spirit (has come into existence) because of [the body, it is a marvel of marvels. But I marvel at how this great wealth has made its home in this poverty.

I see Jesus using gentle sarcasm here. It is like he is talking to a Jewish audience who has a sense that souls are trapped by the flesh - rather than seekers of the flesh by choosing to be born in bodies for the advantages that may offer. So many people act like their souls are enslaved by their bodies; and yet if reincarnation is a true process, it says that souls seek bodies - not the other way around.

Jesus says - if the flesh has come into existence because of the spirit, it is a marvel. I think this is a very positive statement. **Our bodies come into existence for us as souls because of the needs of our souls to live in them.** Jesus is saying that this is truly marvelous. Then the sarcasm: But if the spirit - or soul - came into existence because of the body as if the body makes the soul - or reaches out and grabs it, then that would

indeed be a marvel of marvels. In other words, it can't happen. Bodies do not exist to capture souls like so many act in life like they do. **Souls seek bodies and should therefore love them when they are in them - not pretend that they are somehow captive of the body when they chose their bodies in the first place.** Jesus concludes with more sarcasm: You Jews who hate the body so - I am amazed that you choose to spend so much time in a body if it is so impoverished. In other words - if you think so little of it why does the great wealth that you think is your soul bother with such a worthless vessel? Sarcasm!

Verse 30: Jesus said: Where there are three gods, they are gods; where there are two or one, I am with him.

I must admit I have long been intrigued by this one. Because of the great emphasis that Jesus puts on his being one with those who share his vision – as in Verse 13 – I think this one must be interpreted in that light. The emphasis should be on the last statement – not the first. *Where there are two or one, I am with him* could stand alone. What does he mean by that? I think he is only specifying *two or one* as a figurative for few – as he is specifying *three* as a figurative for many. In essence, he is saying that **salvation is an individual issue**, maybe worked out between two as well; however it is not a **communal issue**. It is not a matter of consensus on the part of three or more – because that will only put someone in charge other than yourself. A *god* could be seen as someone who **needs to control someone else**. The opposite of a *god* is a **solitary** – or one who depends only on himself for his virtue. If you are not a **solitary**, in effect, you are involving a *god* for either needing to be controlled by another or needing to control another. Where there is control, be it by you or over you, there is a *god*.

Anyway, that is the sense of this verse, I think. If there is another besides Jesus, then there are *two*. If there is one without a Jesus, there is *one*. I think Jesus is only saying that if you think I am there with you and you need no other – in terms of shared vision – then I am there with you. If you have no awareness of me as a person, but are there by yourself – with my vision – then I am with you. But if there is more in your picture than you and I, then you are dealing with gods who require servitude and not virtue.

Verse 31: Jesus said: No prophet is acceptable in his village, no physician heals those who know him.

This is right out of the regular gospels. Nothing new here. It is only to say that people do not expect to hear any kind of wisdom from those they know.

Verse 32: Jesus said: A city being built on a high mountain (and) fortified can not fall nor can it (ever) be hidden.

I don't think Jesus is talking as much about a city fortified on a high mountain as he is suggesting that a city on top of a mountain cannot be hidden. Given other verses that offer that we should not keep our light hidden, I think this is only to offer the same kind of instruction. **Whether it is a city on top of a mountain or a lamp on top of a pole or**

a person sticking up for his or her principles, Jesus is only offering that we should not keep our testimonies hidden. Neither should we expose them on an intentional basis as in false boasting; but we should not be afraid to live our own lives and be willing to defend them in public.

Verse 33: Jesus said: What thou shalt hear in thine ear (and) in the other ear, that preach from your housetops; for no one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel, nor does he put it in a hidden place, but he sets it on the lampstand, so that all that come in and go out may see its light.

More of the same. **Do not hesitate to share what you enjoy.** Do not hesitate to share that in which you are proud. Put your light on a lampstand is only to say be willing to testify as to your beliefs. If you love something, take pride in sharing it.

Verse 34: Jesus said: If a blind man leads a blind man, both of them fall into a pit.

Again, also found in the regular gospels. Nothing confusing about this one. It is to say be careful as to who you follow. If the one who leads you is ignorant or foolish, though he or she may think they have wisdom, if it is foolishness they represent and you follow their trail - both of you will share the same foolishness. Right?

Verse 35: Jesus said: It is not possible for one to enter the house of the strong (man) and take him (or: it) by force unless he bind his hands; then will he ransack his house.

Only to say be strong in your convictions in order to withstand assaults against them.

Verse 36: Jesus said: Take no thought from morning until evening and from evening until morning what you shall put on.

I think Jesus was extremely soul oriented. He realized that free souls are only free to the degree that they can enjoy a comfortable independence. Don't depend too much on comforts of the world - or civilization - like clothes. Pay attention to the things that really matter. What difference does it make what you wear? **Pay attention to being grateful for life - not what you may adorn life with.**

Verse 37: His disciples said: When wilt Thou be revealed to us and when will we see Thee? Jesus said: When you take off your clothing without being ashamed, and take your clothes and put them under your feet as the little children and tread on them, then [shall you behold] the Son of the Living (One) and you shall not fear.

I love this one. **Jesus is only offering here that I can recognize him as "the son of the Living One" he is only if I recognize myself as another "son of the Living One."** It takes one to know one. It is like that. No one can really know another unless they are like that other. That is true regardless of who it is that may be known. I cannot claim to know you and feel for what you feel unless I adopt your vision of life. Apparently, Jesus was offering that his vision of life is that it is innocent. **Nakedness reflects innocence. It says that something is good as it is.** Jesus must have believed that not only his life was good as it is, but all lives are good as they are. **He told those to whom he was talking in this verse that they could come to know him only if they imitated him.**

Many do not realize that to imitate Jesus is only to recognize one's holiness. Jesus knew he was holy - not because he had anything special the rest of us do not; but because he recognized that God is in all things. It's that being in all things that makes all things holy. One who realizes he has no sin - or separation from God - has no reason to cover up a life that is supposedly holy. Jesus suggests that one can't know him unless he can get naked without shame because when naked, Jesus was without shame. If one is without shame, it is an unconditional thing. Clothed or naked, it is all the same thing. If someone thinks he can claim to be shameless and cannot be comfortable with his or her naked being, then the sense of shamelessness is not unconditional and therefore probably not very authentic. It is pretty simple. Life is holy. Act like it. If you can't, then you can't know Jesus.

How many of those who claim to be of Jesus would be comfortable going naked to prove their innocence? First of all, most of the Jesus fans do not believe they are innocent or they would not need a savior to make them innocent - and Secondly, even under the umbrella of the innocence of Jesus, they still would not be able to claim a love of nakedness for the innocence it reflects. The test for knowing Jesus is the same now as it was then. Do you know you are innocent? If you do not, then you can't know Jesus. I do believe that most who preach Jesus today would fail that test. What do you think?

Verse 38: Jesus said: Many times have you desired to hear these words which I say to you, and you have no other from whom to hear them. There will be days when you will seek Me (and) you will not find me.

Only to say that we have so much time to get things right. This Jesus knew he was wise and he also knew that many of those in his audience lacked wisdom. He wanted to share his wisdom, but no one can make another wise. Each of us must listen to the wisdom of another and make it our own while we have that other available. There may come a day when that wise teacher will be gone. We need to learn when we can because delay may cause us to miss our opportunities. You know how it goes.

Verse 39: Jesus said: The Pharisees and the Scribes have received the keys of Knowledge, they have hidden them. They did not [enter, and they did not let those (enter) who wished. But, you become wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

Jesus was offering here, I think, that we should not depend on so called authorities to learn about life. In his time, the Pharisees and the Scribes were like keepers of the books in terms of the so called wisdom of life - mostly reflected in the Laws of Judaism - but Jesus is saying here that his students should not depend on the Pharisees or the Scribes, but learn wisdom on their own. Of course, their greatest teacher was Jesus himself.

The "be wise as serpents" instruction, I think, was only to emphasize that each of his students could attain wisdom on their own without dependence on anything another has to offer. Get it from within - though it helps to get it from one like Jesus too. But even if Jesus was not available, **we all have the capability of attaining wisdom on our own because it is really only a matter of good logic.**

The "be innocent as doves" instruction is only to offer that we can be innocent. **Jesus would not have told us to be innocent and find our innocence if we do not have the power to do so - again without the help of so called authorities who have nothing more to offer than what we can get from within.** We are all innocent in terms of being one with God and pure because of that. We only have to realize our innocence to really enjoy it. If we are innocent and do not know it and act like we are sinful, then we might as well be sinful because in effect, we are.

Verse 40: Jesus said: A vine has been planted without the Father and, as it is not established, it will be pulled up by its roots and be destroyed.

I guess we all have some bad vines in our lives that we need to uproot in order to plant good vines in their place. If we are not really rooted by sound principles, eventually the bad roots we have will be uprooted and we will be left helpless.

Verse 41: Jesus said: Whoever has in his hand, to him shall be given; and whoever does not have, from him shall be taken even the little which he has.

I think Jesus is basically offering here that it is what we have in oneself that counts. So many think that they can depend on what another has to find happiness. Jesus is telling us that salvation - if you want to call it that - is not dependent on someone else and their merits, but dependent on oneself. He says that should life end, if you have virtue in yourself, then it will only get better; but if you do not have virtue within yourself - and are maybe counting on the virtue of another - like Jesus, for instance - to save you - you will lose.

There is one important consideration about this one, though. Say that it is the end of times because of some wipe out of the earth and its population. As long as the world continues, there is always a chance of self-improvement with a next life; but what happens if there is no next life because there are no bodies on earth available for incarnating. In that event, all souls would be locked into what they have accomplished. If that's the case, if one is expecting another chance at life but doesn't get it, then very definitely, that which is expected will not be forthcoming and a soul would lose what it expected. In that sense, what a soul did have or expect would be taken away.

I think there is a clear possibility of this because at some point we know that some catastrophic event is going to happen - probably strictly natural - that will end all life on

earth as we know it. It has happened before and it is bound to happen again. It probably won't happen anytime soon, but who can know for sure? Just goes to argue that souls better get their act in order while they have the chance because in time, there will be no more chances - at least for some long period of time - after which maybe life will reemerge on the earth and souls can again begin to incarnate in them. Food for thought perhaps!

Verse 42: Jesus said: Become passers-by.

This is great advice. It is to say that we should be aware we are only passing through a life. That is not to say life is not important. **It is only to say that we should be aware that any one life is temporary.** Take heart. If any one life is filled with health problems, for instance, be aware that this life will end and maybe the next life will not be caught up with the burdens of this life. I mean, that is one way to look at it. It is important to always live life like the attitude we take with us is the attitude we will start with in the next life. Be aware that this life - or any lifetime - is temporary. Personally, I love this thought. It makes me more determined to live this life to my fullest knowing it will not last for long; and it gives me hope that whatever gains I achieve in this life can be very useful in the next.

Verse 43: His disciples said to Him: Who are Thou that Thou should say these things to us? <Jesus said to them>: From what I say to you, you do not know who I am, but you have become as the Jews, for they love the tree, they hate its fruit, and they love the fruit, they hate the tree.

Jesus is chiding anyone who thinks like the Jews he is accusing here. The Jews were of the mind that all life comes from God who is Good, but then they offered law that assumes that we are not good and need some extra grace to make us better. Jesus is not applauding that attitude that offers that a good tree can bear bad fruit. He says that is how the Jews think, but it is wrong. If the source of life is good, meaning God, then so must the fruit of God be good, meaning us.

Verse 44: Jesus said: Whoever blasphemes against the Father, it shall be forgiven him, and whoever blasphemes against the Son, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, either on earth or in heaven.

I am a bit uncertain as to why Jesus would offer that blasphemy against the father or son is forgivable, but blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is not. I see the Holy Ghost as only being the truth and I can understand why denial of the truth is not forgivable because denial just leads to dead ends, but I would also think that part of the truth is recognizing as true the father and the son. I do not understand how rejection of the father and son could not also be a denial of the truth and therefore, unforgivable; but the important lesson here is not that denial of the father or son is forgivable, but that denial of the truth is not forgivable.

I think the father Jesus is talking about here is the source of his particular origin - his providence, as it were. The son he is talking about here is himself as son of his providence. I do not think he is equating father with God or son with God - or else there would be no question that such denial cannot be forgiven. Given he is offering that denial of father or son is forgivable, I think it is quite clear he can't be talking about God. Maybe that is all he is offering here. He might be emphasizing that his father and himself are not God; but the truth is God. Certainly is an intriguing verse.

Verse 45: Jesus said: They do not harvest grapes from thorns, nor do they gather figs from thistles; [for] they give no fruit. [A] good man brings forth good out of his treasure, an evil man brings forth evil things out of his evil treasure, which is in his heart, and speaks evil things. For out of the abundance of the heart, he brings forth evil things.

Nothing hard about this one. It is found in the regular gospels as well. It is only to say that something good in terms of virtuous can't bear anything bad; and something bad - in terms of attitude - can't bear anything good. If we have evil thoughts or see life as evil, then we can only do evil things. If we have good thoughts and see life as good, then we can only do good things. Our hearts or our attitudes determine the worth of our expressions. It is important to make sure you always have a good heart or peaceful heart or kind heart so that you can always put forth the same.

Verse 46: Jesus said: From Adam until John the Baptist, there is among those born of women none higher than John the Baptist, so that his eyes will not be broken. But I have said that whoever among you becomes as a child shall know the Kingdom, and he shall become higher than John.

John the Baptist represents someone who is very law bound. Among those who are law bound or versed and practiced in Jewish law, none are higher than John, but in the Kingdom - which we can understand as the Kingdom of Jesus - a child is higher than John. Why? Because a child has not been corrupted with law. Jesus was not praising John the Baptist here. He was offering that John and John's ways are not the way to the Kingdom. Jesus is implying that the Kingdom is only one of innocence. A child is innocent precisely because he or she has not been corrupted by law that claims to be the way to the Kingdom. Very telling indeed.

Verse 47: 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, otherwise, he will honour the one and offend the other. No man drinks old wine and immediately desires to drink new wine; and they do not put (wine into old wineskins), lest they burst, and they do not put old wine into a new wineskin, lest it spoil it. They do not sew an old patch on a new garment, because there would come a rent.

For me, this is very clear. Jesus is once again trying to tell us to ignore the old while embracing the new. The old in this case could be seen as the Old Testament. Sadly, very sadly, the Christian world has paid no attention to ignoring the old and has, in fact, insisted on holding onto the Old Testament and claiming that the new is a completion of the old. What nonsense! The New Testament should have pertained only to a law of love without any attention to anything in the Old Testament. **Jesus was not a fulfillment of the old. He was an initiator of the new.** I get so exasperated in this area. For me, it is so clear that we must ignore the old, not add to the old with the new. Jesus is telling us here that no one would put new wine into old wineskins; and yet that is exactly what we do by holding onto the old. Will we ever see the light? I hope so because if we don't, we will continue to rely on revelation to teach us how to live when we should just be loving one another without respect to law. Sad!!!!!!

Verse 48: Jesus said: If two make peace with each other in this one house, they shall say to the mountain: "Be moved," and it shall be moved.

What a wonderful verse! Of course, Jesus is not offering that we can literally move mountains if we have peace with one another. He is only comparing a mountain to a "problem." He is saying that if any two have peace between them, they can solve all their problems with ease. So what do we do in this world? We refuse to make peace with each other and insist that somehow we are following the counsel of Jesus in doing so. Jesus was all about refusing conflict - not insisting on it as we do. He offered that his followers should try to pass on his message of love, but if another did not want to hear it, to back off and go onto to someone who might want to hear it. Everything with Jesus was ease. He emphasized peace and the need to have it between any two. Once again, his counsel is largely ignored.

Verse 49: Jesus said: Blessed are the solitary and elect, for you shall find the Kingdom; because you come from it, (and) you shall go there again.

For me, this is one of those verses that lead me to believe that Jesus believed in reincarnation. How can you come from a kingdom if you did not previously exist in it? To have existed in a kingdom to which you may return, you must have had a previous life. Jesus is only saying here that many in this world come from a soulful community that is Jesus like. They are of the elect only because having come from a Jesus like community, it is very likely they will return to the same when they die. I would say that many souls incarnate - both from Jesus like providences and from anti-Jesus like providences - in order to gain new members for their communities. When a soul that has incarnated for any purpose is done with his life, it is likely he or she will return to the community of origin. One is not chosen to return after being born. One is chosen - or elected - to return before being born. At least, it seems so to me. Of course it is always possible that one might not return to a providence of origin. In fact, if Jesus were to be successful, he and his kind might succeed to free some souls who came from oppressive kingdoms. That might be the very reason he came. I think so.

Verse 50: Jesus said: 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. It [stood] and it revealed itself in their image." If they say to you, "(Who) are you?," say: "We are His sons and we are the elect of the Living Father." If they ask you: "What is the sign of your Father in you?," say to them: "It is a movement and a rest."

We are getting into more of this coming from providences again with this verse. Jesus is offering that some of his disciples probably originated from the same providence from which he came. *If they ask you from where have you originated, tell them you come from the Light where the Light originated through itself.* That is to say, they come from a place of truth or light and being from that place of truth or light, as souls of the light, they are originating from themselves in a way. **The light from the light is only a way of offering truthful ones from truthful ones.** The truthful providence reveals itself through its children - Jesus and his disciples. Jesus and his disciples are the image or representatives of their providence. Jesus says that his disciples should tell the curious that they are the sons of the Living Father, but also the elect of the Living Father. We should know now what elect means. Jesus then says that if they ask you what is the sign of your Father in you - just say to them - it is a movement and a rest. **That is only to offer that coming into the world as incarnated, there is movement, but once an incarnation is complete and one returns to the providence from which he or she originates, there is rest.** I doubt that anyone else thinks that is the meaning of this one, though.

One has to guess about the use of the term "Living Father" when used because it seems to me that it is used to represent both God and the Providence of Jesus. In some cases, it will refer to the Providence of Jesus and in some cases, to God. One has to take note of the context of its use to know when it means God and when it means Providence of Jesus. Who knows? The original Coptic may have offered different terms when referencing the Living Father, but we may be getting only one English term that in the original Coptic was several terms. Just one of the problems with trying to deal with translations.

Verse 51: His disciples said to Him: When will the repose of the dead come about and when will the new world come? He said to them: What you expect has come, but you know it not.

What a question! When will the new world come? It seems we are still asking that question. Amazingly, Jesus answered it 2,000 years ago. What did he say? You have the answer above. The new world is already here. What you expect to happen in the future, Jesus said, is already happening. But it seems we did not listen when he gave the answer to our question - and we still refuse to hear the answer today. Same story. They thought the new world was to come then; and we still think it today. Sad, huh? Very importantly, however, **the new world is a "repositioning" of the dead.** We die and we

are reborn. I love it because it gives me tremendous confidence that my rebirth is nothing more than a retread of my last state before my last death. Not that this verse offers that detail, but it would sure seem to be the truth. What do you think?

Verse 52: His disciples said to Him: Twenty-four prophets spoke in Israel and they all spoke about (lit:in) Thee. He said to them: You have dismissed the Living (One) who is before you and you have spoken about the dead.

Getting back on my soap box, once again, Jesus should not be connected to the Old Jewish Laws. He says it here again. They implied in their statement about Jesus that they saw him as one of the prophets of Judaism. What was his answer? Please, please do not include me with them. If you do, you will dismiss me for what I am trying to teach. I am not who you think I am - or should be. I am not one of your prophets. But we insisted on making him the last of the prophets. Didn't we? I get from this verse from Thomas and a lot of other verses that Jesus did not want to be connected to the old law in any way, shape, or form.

Verse 53: His disciples said to Him: Is circumcision profitable or not? He said to them: If it were profitable, their father would beget them circumcised from their mother. But the true circumcision in Spirit has become profitable in every way.

Again - we hear a refusal of the old. Jesus is not offering that at one time circumcision was useful. He plainly offers in this verse that circumcision was never useful. If he had been the expected prophet or messiah, there is no way he would have offered that circumcision was not useful. He does offer that circumcision in spirit is useful, but that is totally disconnected from the ancient physical practice of circumcision. But again, Jesus is denying the old. How many times must he deny the old before people get the idea that - hey - he could not have been fulfillment of the old if he did not even believe in it.

Verse 54: Jesus said: Blessed [are the poor, for yours is the Kingdom of Heaven.

We get this in the regular gospels too. In my opinion, I think Jesus was offering that only the poor could satisfy the requirements of the Kingdom of Heaven, assuming here that Heaven means a kingdom of freedom. Amazingly, people do not realize that those who insist on controlling or owning things or persons in life are denying themselves freedom. The real poor do not have control over anything. It is that sense of poverty - that independence - that Jesus is applauding here. No one can be free - and therefore belong to a kingdom of freedom - if he insists on owning things - be it people or objects. **Ownership ties a person to that which is owned, thus refusing freedom to those who own.** Blessed are the poor because they have no ties to subjects and therefore are free. That is the essence of Blessed are the poor.

Verse 55: Jesus said: Whoever does not hate his father and his mother will not be able to be a disciple to Me, and (whoever does not) hate his brethren and his sisters and (does not) take up his cross in My way will not be worthy of Me.

This verse comes right after Jesus blessing the poor. **It is only to say that if you insist on ownership of people or things, you cannot belong to the kingdom of freedom.** So many think that they must stay true to their heritage and hold onto property given them by their parents or relatives or whatever. If my father is rich and he gives me some of his riches and I use that inheritance to continue the wealth ways of my father, then naturally I cannot be a disciple to Jesus who stands for poverty and independence and freedom. **To be free in spirit, you cannot hold onto control of others.** This is pure philosophy; but who sees it as that?

Verse 56: Whoever has known the world has found a corpse, and whoever has found a corpse, of him the world is not worthy.

This one is a bit tricky. I think what Jesus is offering is that whoever claims law or the world of law as a regimen for living the good life has found a corpse. I think Jesus would equate the world of civilized law with the "world." He is not talking about the world of Nature. He is talking about the world in regards to the society of men. Whoever believes that salvation can be achieved by attention to law without regard to the heart has found a corpse - a dead thing. The last part of this is even trickier. He is offering that the world of civilized law is not worthy of the person who recognizes that law is not the way of salvation.

Anyway, that is the gist of it. I think there is a good chance that something was lost in the translation from Coptic to English here.

Verse 57: Jesus said: The Kingdom of the Father is like a man who had [good] seed. His enemy came by night, he sowed a weed among the good seed. The man did not permit them (the workers) to pull up the weed. He said to them: Lest perhaps you go to pull up the weed and pull up the wheat with it. For on the day of harvest the weeds will appear, they (will) pull them and burn them.

I think Jesus is offering here that it takes time for wheat to grow and mature. Comparing souls who can grow spiritually to wheat, Jesus offers that unfortunately souls who refuse to grow are planted next to souls who can grow. To harvest a field too soon would be to cut off the growing life of the wheat. So in spite of weeds (unwilling souls) living next to wheat (willing souls), the growing season should be allowed to proceed without trying to pull up the weeds before harvest time. Otherwise, the wheat could not grow to maturity. That is the gist of this one.

Who knows what the growing season amounts to? There may come a time, though, that life on this earth terminates. That could be equated with harvest time. If there is any

positive message here, it is that those of us willing souls who want to do our best should not fret about the weeds that may be growing around us. Just do the best we can, I guess, and hope that the weeds don't become so numerous as to wipe us out before the expected harvest takes place. Take heart, Dear Wheat. Grow and mature and you will be harvested to join other wheat types.

Verse 58: Jesus said: Blessed is the man who has suffered, he has found the Life.

Jesus is offering here that if you are one of those willing souls who is trying to attain what he calls "the Life," persevere and you will find it - even if you have to suffer to do it. **There is certainly no value in suffering of itself, but if suffering occurs while trying to live a conviction, be encouraged.** The suffering will not last. Hold fast and persevere and you will find "the Life."

Verse 59: Jesus said: Look upon the Living (One) as long as you live, lest you die and seek to see Him and be unable to see.

Nothing hard about this one. Jesus is only telling his audience to take advantage of him while he was alive because they might die without having taken advantage of their opportunities. There is a bit of a sub theme here in that once a soul has passed into its next experience and has lost the advantage of a body, it may not be able to learn. Personally, I believe this to be so. I think that souls are incarnated - or take bodies - for the advantage that a body offers. Otherwise, souls would not choose to incarnate. It would stand to reason, then, that if a soul has lived and paid no attention to Jesus while it had the chance, upon death, it would be too late. In death, we may "be unable to see."

Verse 60: <They saw> a Samaritan carrying a lamb on his way to Judea. He said to his disciples: (Why does) this man (carry) the lamb with him? They said to Him: In order that he may kill it and eat it. He said to them: As long as it is alive, he will not eat it, but (only) if he has killed it and it has become a corpse. They said: Otherwise he will not be able to do it. He said to them: You yourselves, seek a place for yourselves in Repose, lest you become a corpse and be eaten.

This one is absolutely fascinating to me. **In essence, it is saying "Get a Life" so that you will not be life for another.** My "Get a life" could be equated to his "seek a place for yourselves in repose." Perhaps "repose" could be equated to "peace." If a soul is at peace with itself and with the world in general, it has found contentment and fulfillment. Contentment and fulfillment could be equated to "the Life" in Verse 58. I know it works that way for me. If I am contented and peaceful, it is like my life is full. Is not that finding "the Life"? If I am contented and peaceful, my soul has found repose.

On the other hand, if I am not contented and peaceful, then I will be unhappy and unhappy people look toward others for fulfillment. In doing that, they are subject to being eaten by those who use them. If you are not alive - as in full of life - then you are

dead in comparison. You are as a corpse - and like the poor lamb who has no life left in him for being killed by others - you will become a slave to the wishes of others. The bottom line is "Get a life" of your own and find peace and contentment to avoid having to depend upon others and to be used by others for their gain - not yours.

Verse 61: Jesus said: Two will rest on a bed: the one will die, the one will live. Salome said: Who art thou, man, and whose (son)? Thou didst take thy place upon my bench and eat from my table. Jesus said to her: I am He who is from the Same, to me was given the things of my Father. <Salome said>: I am Thy disciple. <Jesus said to her>: Therefore I say, if he is the Same, he will be filled with light, but if he is divided, he will be filled with darkness.

I think this is basically a discussion between a lady named Salome and Jesus as to what constitutes a disciple. Salome offers that she is a disciple of Jesus - and Jesus goes off about something he calls "the Same" and offers that if he (one who claims he is a disciple) is really "the Same" or perhaps "from the Same," that he will be filled with light. **In essence, Jesus is offering that one can claim to be something all they want, but the test of their being what they claim is how they conduct themselves or how they see things.**

If I am a disciple of Jesus, the proof is seeing the truth that Jesus taught. Jesus says he is from that mysterious Same he talks about, but others could also have been from that mysterious Same. I think that mysterious Same is none other than the soulful providence of Jesus. As souls, we all originate from some soulful providence or soulful community. Many of us may well originate from a common source. When talking about that source amongst ourselves, we could say that we come from the "same" place or community of souls. But if we do come from the same community, our souls will be filled with the light of that "same" community. So the proof of anyone being a disciple - or brother - of Jesus, stemming from the "same" providence is that they would have to share a common perception or attitude with Jesus - which, of course, is love for all.

It is an intriguing thought - that we all originate from some soulful community before we incarnate in bodies on this earth. Who knows how many of those who thought they were disciples of Jesus actually knew him for what he actually was? Salome may have been one from the "same" providence as was Jesus. From this verse, there is no actual offering that she was or wasn't. Jesus is only offering the condition of someone being a disciple of his. Did Salome qualify? We do not know. Nothing is offered about that. We only know that she thought she was qualified and Jesus was telling her what the qualifications of being a disciple of his were (and are) - that a real disciple had to share the same light or understanding about life as did (and does) Jesus. Makes sense. Right?

In that light, I doubt very much that most of the apostles were really disciples of Jesus because it seems that in general they were of Jewish persuasion that was looking for a messiah to make life right. Jesus was a person of light, as he claimed, but he was not a messiah. Any who would have concluded that Jesus was a messiah - rather than just a person of light - could not have known who Jesus was and therefore, could not have been persons of light themselves. So it seems to me.

Verse 62: Jesus said: I tell My mysteries to those [who are worthy of my] mysteries. What thy right (hand) will do, let not thy left (hand) know what it does.

I won't get into the first part of this verse about Jesus telling his mysteries to the worthy. It might be an important idea, but the idea that engages me in this verse is the idea about not letting the left hand know what the right hand does - or vice versa. I think it amounts to not letting yourself be confused. One side of you might claim one thing and the other side do another. Jesus is only offering here that we should focus on some one thing - as in the right hand - and not let ourselves be diffused and confused with some speculation about something contrary. It is only a matter of focus that Jesus is applauding. He is not offering here any substance of focus - just that **the wise man should focus on some principle and not be sidetracked by any distractions - as from the left hand.**

In reality, this idea is not practiced well at all in the world. People will say they believe in Christ who clearly taught tolerance and love for all - even for one's enemy. Yet many Christians spout the principle with their right side and then practice something entirely different on their left side. This is what Jesus is denouncing. He is offering that we should be consistent with what we claim is right and how we act in life. **You cannot say one thing and do another. That is letting your left hand know something different than your right hand.** Be consistent. That is the message of this verse.

Verse 63: Jesus said: There was a rich man who had much money. He said: I will use my money that I may sow and reap and plant and fill my storehouses with fruit, so that I lack nothing. This is what he thought in his heart. And that night he died. Whoever has ears, let him hear.

This one is clear. **Jesus is only offering that we should not spend our lives storing things for our physical future when we may not have a physical future.** It is pretty dumb. That is what Jesus is offering. Dumb or not, a lot of us do it. We live our lives mostly with a focus on our future within life on earth when we should be spending our moments concentrating mostly on our spiritual present. If we do that, the future will also be secure because the future is only an extension of the present.

Verse 64: Jesus said: A man had guest-friends, and when he had prepared the dinner, he sent the servant to invite the guest-friends. He went to the first, he said to him: "My master invites thee." He said: "I have some claims against some merchants; they will come to me in the evening; I will go and give them my orders. I pray to be excused from the dinner." He went to another, he said to him: "My master has invited thee." He said to him: "I have bought a house and they request me for a day. I will have no time." He came to another, he said to him: "My master invites thee." He said to him: "My friend is to be married

and I am to arrange a dinner; I shall not be able to come. I pray to be excused from the dinner." He went to another, he said to him: "My master invites thee." He said to him: "I have bought a farm, I go to collect the rent. I shall not be able to come. I pray to be excused." The servant came, he said to his master: "Those whom thou hast invited to the dinner have excused themselves." The master said to his servant: "Go out to the roads, bring those whom thou shalt find, so that they may dine. Tradesmen and merchants [shall] not [enter] the places of my Father."

This is quite a story about some well off person inviting a lot of people to a feast and having all those he invited refuse their invitations for one reason or another. All those who refused invitations were tradesmen and merchants. So really the gist of this story is that - as is offered in the last line - tradesmen and merchants shall not attend the feast of life - so to speak - not because they were not invited, but because they were (are) too caught up with distractions to respond to their invitations. The master in this story does not exclude them from his dinner. They exclude themselves by not accepting their invitations.

And so it is with life. That is all that Jesus is saying here. **We are all invited to enjoy life - but relatively few of us accept our invitations.** Why? Because we get too caught up with storing food for the future and pay no attention to living the moment. We make excuses for not enjoying life - as in accusing it of sin - and do not accept our host's invitation to love the life we have. In essence, all are invited, but only a few accept their invitations and dare to attend to the real feast of life - which is merely to embrace life as holy and pay attention to that. Jesus emphasized the need to enjoy life now a lot in his ministry. This is just another evidence of that, I think. Jesus would not have chosen a dinner feast as the object of an invitation if he was not implying that life is a feast. So this verse tells us that life should be a feast and that we ought not refuse our invitations to enjoy ourselves and the feast of life.

Verse 65: He said: A good man had a vineyard. He gave it to husbandmen so that they would work it and that he would receive its fruit from them. He sent his servant so that the husbandmen would give the fruit of the vineyard. They seized his servant, they beat him; a little longer and they would have killed him. The servant came, he told it to his master. His master said: "Perhaps he did not know them." He sent another servant; the husbandmen beat him as well. Then the owner sent his son. He said: "Perhaps they will respect my son." Since those husbandmen knew that he was the heir of the vineyard, they seized him, they killed him. Whoever has ears, let him hear.

This parable was also featured in the regular gospels of the Bible – with one significant difference. In the regular gospels, it is offered that the owner of the field will

likely destroy those who betray the host. In this version, there is no such judgment. Why the difference? I think that the regular gospels are intent on using the parable to threaten punishment by the host – for disrespect of the host; but this parable simply states what is likely to happen to someone who might be sent to disturb what has become the status quo. Perhaps Jesus was reflecting on his own case, realizing that he would likely be killed for challenging the status quo. In fact, any other conclusion to his life would have probably been unlikely – given the hard hearts of the Jewish system and the Roman world with which he was dealing.

I think it's good to keep in mind that Jewish Law would have commanded that any Jew who defied Jewish Law should be stoned to death. As I see Jesus, I see him as one proposing rule of heart only without any need whatever of attending to law. If that vision of Jesus is correct, it stands to reason that any Jew who might be seen in defiance of Law would be subject to execution according to the Law.

According to the tale of this parable, however, Jesus probably saw this Jewish system of Law as being a corruption of perhaps an intended rule of the heart system. Thus, in his tale, he offers that the rightful owners of a vineyard lose control of their vineyard to those to whom it had been entrusted. In other words, the entrusted ones defy original intent and choose to take over that with which they were entrusted without regard to the original intent of the owner – which was to reap a harvest from his grapes – which stands for liberating souls from slavery to sin.

Putting that plain, the Jewish system of harsh law was never intended. It happened, but it was not intended; and Jesus was only trying to correct the corruption that had happened by arguing for what had been intended – which is **love by rule of heart**, not **obedience by command of law**. Of what use was it to tell this tale? Some might understand it who might otherwise not understand it; however, on the flip side of that, many might misunderstand it too; and among that many are probably those who think the son was supposed to be killed as satisfaction for the very law the son actually opposed.

That is not to say, however, that Jesus as the son of this proverbial vineyard owner of this parable was sent to die. It is only to say that – given the world to which he was sent – that would likely be his end. Notice, however, the lack of an idea of “sacrifice” in this tale. Jesus was not to be seen as a “sacrifice” to redeem anyone – as the orthodox Christians would later conclude. There is no tale of “sacrifice” here – only a tale of what would probably happen to someone who is seen as a challenge to the status quo.

Why would Jesus tell such a story? I suppose because of his awareness of his likely end. Perhaps it was to prepare any who might choose to share in his challenge to the authority of the day for what might happen to them too. In that light, Jesus may have seen himself as an example to follow in terms of being willing to do what one thinks is right without fear of death; however being willing to die for your principles for lack of fear of death is not to equate death for principle as sacrifice for others.

But many of the people who loved this verse who did not understand Jesus as merely a visionary for his providence could have sincerely jumped to the false conclusion that Jesus saw himself as the Jewish Messiah. If they had paid attention to the other verses of this Gospel of Thomas and not gone off half cocked, they would have realized that Jesus did not see himself as part of the Jewish prophets and their dismal vision of life. Thus, he could not have been a fulfillment of the wishes of prophets with which he disagreed.

But I guess enough said about that. The debate will go on about whether Jesus qualified to be a messiah or not; but, in time, that debate may change to favor a non messianic Jesus from the previous almost universally understood and accepted messianic Jesus. When that happens, perhaps the main work that will change the debate to favor a non messianic Jesus will be the wonderful Gospel of Thomas.

Verse 66: Jesus said: Show me the stone which the builders have rejected. It is the corner-stone.

This is in the regular gospels too. Not much doubt about its meaning. That which we reject today may become the cornerstone of our life tomorrow. **As we change in life, we see new realities tomorrow that we did not know today.** Thus, with the awareness of new realities tomorrow, we may very well embrace tomorrow what we adamantly refused today. This is still true, of course. In fact, so many of the ideas about not needing to pray to a God that is in you that we find in the Gospel of Thomas may well become the cornerstone of future thought about man's relationship with God. Knowing God is inside of me really frees me to try and appreciate that life in which He (or She or It) is. I think this is what the Gospels of Thomas and Mary are all about - realizing that we can have no sin except that which we perform out of ignorance. But it is a new version of sin; and most Christians have not put themselves to thinking about it. Thus, Thomas and Mary, as gospels, have not been considered. But tomorrow - there may be a whole different structure. I hope so.

Verse 67: Jesus said: Whoever knows the All but fails (to know) himself lacks everything.

Anyone who claims he knows God and then proceeds to tell you all about everything outside of him or herself, while refusing to admit him or her self in his or her knowledge is one who, in practice, is not aware of the God Presence in all things. If I fail to know myself as a child of God, of what could I possibly think is worthwhile? The Jesus of Thomas was (or is) very self centered. His message was very strongly - Know Thyself. The reason for that is thyself is only a variant of me. If you know yourself, in ways of appreciating the blessing that is you, then you will also know me. If you do not know yourself, then how in the world could you even begin to know me - since I am, for the most part, only a version of you?

As Christ knew, you cannot really know another except by first knowing yourself; and it is how you view yourself that you will view another. Still, you must get the self right first. After that, relate to others, but first find yourself.

Verse 68: Jesus said: Blessed are you when you are hated and persecuted; and no place will be found there where you have been persecuted.

There is no value in being persecuted on its own; but if you are persecuted because of your convictions and you stay the course, blessed are you. That is what

this verse says. Stay the course, so to speak, and once the persecution is over, you will have no awareness that it ever took place. You could have no awareness because the mind can only focus on one thing at a time. If you are focused on the blessing that is you, how could you find any time - or place - for pondering having been persecuted?

Verse 69a: Jesus said: Blessed are those who have been persecuted in their heart; these are they who have known the Father in truth.

This is pretty much a repeat of Verse 68.

Verse 69b: Blessed are the hungry, for the belly of him who desires will be filled.

This too, a repeat of the former Verses. Eventually your being persecuted will end and you will have plenty to eat.

Verse 70: Jesus said: If you bring forth that within yourselves, that which you have will save you. If you do not have that within yourselves, that which you do not have within you will kill you.

Once again, Jesus is emphasizing his most treasured ideal - know thyself. You can deal with others having yourself as a base, but you cannot very well deal with yourself by having others as a base. So what happens when you no longer have others around as a base to know yourself? You will be dead, in a way. **If you go from yourself - which you will always have - to others, then you will always have a base from which to proceed.** Knowing yourself through the appraisals of others, pondering themselves, is about as useless as it gets, though. And yet many people think that they are unworthy of being known by others because they see themselves as unworthy of themselves. If you think you need another to be completed on your own, then when that other is taken away, you have nothing. So what happens with Paul of Tarsus when his Jesus goes away? Of course, Paul of Tarsus is counting on Jesus to always be there, but by depending on knowing Jesus to love himself, Paul is taking a huge chance that he will be lost in the great forever.

Again, know yourself first, then proceed to relating to others. Love yourself first, then proceed with that love to loving others. It works without question in that way, but it does not work from the other way around - knowing and loving self by first knowing and loving others. **The greater your independence of others for your own self awareness and self praise, the greater your self security.** This is the Jesus of Thomas in a nutshell.

Verse 71: Jesus said: I shall destroy this] house and no one will be able to build it [again].

What did Jesus mean by "this house"? My guess is that he was talking about the house of Jewish Law - if this is an accurate quote at all. He could not have been talking

about anything physical because anything physical that is torn down can certainly be rebuilt. So what could he possibly have wanted to destroy? **If I know Jesus, he would be up to only one thing of destruction - and that would be to destroy false concepts.** What false concepts? Those concepts that pretend to offer that the value of man is dependent upon anything that man does.

The Jesus I know was about offering that everyone has integrity - in terms of being whole in God. All of us are holy. I think Jesus believed that. The problem is that people fail to know they are holy - or in God - because too many people go about making holiness conditional upon some extra achievement of holiness through obedience to law. The Jewish Law was all about man needing to obey some set of laws handed down through Jewish tradition to become holy. Obedience to law was required for holiness. But Jesus was aware that obedience to law cannot make anyone holy. Holiness is a state of life that is inherited - not a state of life that can be achieved. I think that Jesus tried very hard to offer that message in life; and it was holiness according to obedience to Jewish Law that he would have been about destroying - or the notion thereof.

Maybe at some point in the life of man, false notions about achieved holiness will be destroyed; but for now, they are as alive and well as they were in the time of Jesus. Time will tell if the future will see any kind of destruction of such outmoded ideas.

Verse 72: [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 (a) divider? He turned to his disciples, he said to them: I am not a divider, am I?

Again, Jesus was not about law or culture. Of what did he care about how people should conduct themselves legally? The man asking Jesus was more than likely a Jew who was asking Jesus to tell his brothers to "obey the law" in terms of dividing an inheritance. Jesus could care less about such things. Who made me a divider - he asks? I am in no way interested or qualified to judge such things. Jesus was not about law. He was about the rule of love; and the rule of love does not concern itself with external judgments of one upon another. That is a matter of civil law - not the rule of love.

Verse 73: Jesus said: The harvest is indeed great, but the labourers are few; but beg the lord to send labourers into the harvest.

This one is also in the regular gospels. I guess it means that the work of salvation could use more hands. Jesus is not so much suggesting that we should ask the "lord," as it is said here for more help - as he is implying that we should pitch in and help out. He is asking us to help with his work.

Verse 74: He said: Lord, there are many around the cistern, but nobody in the cistern.

My idea of cistern is a public bathing pool. Jesus is offering here that there are a lot of folk jostling about outside the pool - implying dirty - but none in the pool getting clean. Of course, being dirty is relative to spiritual confusion - or confusion about spiritual things. **To take a bath in this case is to rid myself of notions that prevent me**

from a clean look at life. Each time I review one of the verses of the Gospel of Thomas, I am jumping into that cistern and becoming cleansed of old notions that may be keeping me from seeing life freshly.

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

Jesus emphasized that salvation - or the matter of salvation - is strictly a personal affair. Each one must attend to living life the best he or she can on one's own. No one should depend on another to do what is right. When an individual becomes aware of his or her own holiness, it should be like getting married. In a way, you are marrying a concept or a disposition when you become aware of your own holiness or soulful integrity within God. This marriage of the individual to a conscious active spiritual awareness of worth is the ideal we should all seek in life. It is not a "we" kind of thing. Each person must take upon him or herself the responsibility of caring for his or her own soul. It is a singular thing - not a group or social thing.

Bridal chamber is an image for happiness. People tend to think that getting married is a happiness thing. Thus, a bridal chamber can serve as an image of happiness. **Jesus is offering that it does not take two to be happy - only one.** Pretty neat, huh?

Verse 76: Jesus said: The Kingdom of the Father is like a man, a merchant, who possessed merchandise (and) found a pearl. That merchant was prudent. He sold the merchandise, he bought the one pearl for himself. Do you also seek for the treasure which fails not, which endures, there where no moth comes near to devour and (where) no worm destroys.

This one is found in the regular gospels too. It's meaning is quite clear. We should be not only willing, but anxious, to strive for that which we hold dear. We should be willing to sell all that we have to buy just one article of real importance in exchange. Jesus offers that we should seek for the treasure that will not fail us. What is that treasure? That which is spiritual, of course. That which is spiritual will survive this life as all in this life will eventually decay. **Our souls will not decay, however; and so we should pay attention to doing in our bodies and with our bodies what will benefit our souls because once the body is gone, the soul will not be able to benefit from the body any longer.**

For me, this is just paying attention to the idea that the body is divine. If I look at the body as divine and treat the body as divine, that translates to looking at my soul as divine and treating my soul as divine. Like Jesus says elsewhere, we should "know what is in our sight and what is hidden from us will be revealed to us." That is to say - as you treat your body, so also are you treating your soul. Treatment of the soul is invisible whereas treatment of the body is visible. **We can know how we are treating our soul which we can't see by the way we treat our body that we can see.** You see, the body is only a substitute for the soul while we live in it. As we treat our body, voila, we are

doing the same to our soul. We use the body to reflect treatment of the soul. At least I think so.

Verse 77: Jesus said: I am the Light that is above them all, I am the All, the All came forth from me, and the All attained to me. Cleave a (piece of) wood, I am there; lift up the stone and you will find me there.

Some consider that Jesus is referencing himself as God - or the Son of God - with this verse. He might be, but I suspect not. Putting myself in his place - or in the place of someone who may have said this - this would be my interpretation.

Anyone who sees all of existence as divine must also see any part of existence as divine. In a very real way, for any one person who knows he or she is divine, everything should remind of that personal divinity. If I am divine and so is everything else, if I look at anything at all, I should see me in terms of something also divine like me. Lift up a rock - and there is divinity - and me. Grab a piece of wood - and you are grabbing divinity - and me. I think that is what Jesus is trying to say with this verse - though I may be wrong.

I don't think he is saying that he is special. He is only admitting to his own divinity, but by so doing, he is not denying the divinity of all. Any of us who know we are divine also know that we are equivalent to "The All." Everything within "The All" is equally divine. If we can look at anything and see "The All," then, virtually speaking, we are equal to "The All."

I am the Light that is above them all is only to say that I am aware of my divinity and the divinity of all whereas most are not so aware. Perhaps if I have the meaning of this verse correct, I could also say that compared to most who are not aware of their divinity, **I am a light that is above them all.** Light is equivalent to vision - or seeing clearly. I see where most do not.

Verse 78: Jesus said: Why did you come out into the desert? To see a reed shaken by the wind? And to see a man clothed in soft garments? [See, your] kings and your great ones are those who are clothed in soft [garments] and they [shall] not be able to know the truth.

More than likely, Thomas found Jesus naked in the desert. He probably did not expect that. He also found Jesus quite strong whereas he had expected to find him weak - perhaps from being in the desert with almost nothing to eat. Jesus asked Thomas - or whoever met him in the desert - what did you come out to see - a reed shaken by the wind, a man clothed in soft garments?

Then Jesus offered that kings and the socially elite or "great ones" are ones who are clothed in soft garments - and they shall not be able to know the truth for that reason. A king or socially prominent one thinks that he or she has to dress to separate him or herself from the rest. They have to dress and dress different from the rest in order to be distinguished from the rest; but **a wise person does not need to seek distinction because a wise one does not need to see him or herself superior or inferior to others.**

Why was Jesus naked in the desert? Because it lent to the awareness he was seeking. Having done the same thing myself, I think I understand the usefulness of personal nakedness. It imprints on my soul a sense of equality; and it is equality that a soul needs in order to refuse to power over others as well as refuse to let others power over them. If I am aware of my equality, then I am not concerned at all with power. **Nakedness is the epitome of powerlessness.** That is why I go naked when I can; and I suspect that is why Jesus went naked in the desert.

In an earlier verse, one of the disciples asked Jesus when they would recognize him. He answered that "**when you take off your clothing without being ashamed.**" That came in Verse 37. If he had not prefaced this verse about nakedness in the desert with that reference to nakedness, we could not be as sure that Jesus probably loved nakedness as we can be - though all of this is strictly personal opinion in the end. Ultimately, each of us must make up our own mind about the usefulness of anything - be it nakedness for its imprint of equality - or anything at all.

Verse 79: A woman from the multitude said to Him: Blessed is the womb that bore Thee and the breasts which nourished Thee. He said to [her]: Blessed are those who have heard the word of the Father (and) have kept it in truth. For there will be days when you will say: Blessed is the womb that has not conceived and the breasts which have not suckled.

Also found in the regular gospels. **Jesus is only saying that family has no bearing on virtue.** A person offers that "blessed is the womb that bore thee and the breasts that nourished thee." I suppose Jesus should have said, "Thank you," but he offered instead that blessed are those who hear the truth and attend to it.

In the end, it won't matter that Mary was the mother of Jesus. It will only matter if Mary practiced the truth that Jesus taught. Family claim on Jesus or fan claim on Jesus will not mean anything in the end. It will only matter that I heard the wisdom of Jesus and practiced it. Why? **Because virtue is its own judgment - as folly is as well.** If I practice virtue, then I will continue to practice it - in this life and after it. If I practice folly, then I will continue to do that too. It won't matter if I see Jesus or not. It will only matter if I practiced his wisdom in order to share his virtue. **Jesus cannot give me virtue. I have to earn it on my own without Jesus - and once I have earned it, it is mine.**

Verse 80: Jesus said: Whoever has known the world has found the body, and whoever has [found the body, of him the world is not worthy

My guess is that this is a counterfeit verse, though I am only guessing. Call it an educated guess. Either Thomas did not know this verse is different than an earlier verse that offers the word "corpse" where this verse offers "body" - or someone tossed in this verse not realizing that a body is not a corpse.

Verse 56 puts it this way: *Jesus said: Whoever has known the world has found a corpse, and whoever has found a corpse, of him the world is not worthy.*

In my opinion, Verse 56 says it right. Verse 80 says it wrong. A corpse is not a body - unless it is a dead body. Verse 80 seems to be equating the "world" with the "body." I do not think Jesus intended any such equation. He intended to equate the "world of civilized law" to a corpse - a dead thing. Spiritually, law cannot insure virtue. Virtue can only be practiced by those who know the truth, but it is knowing and practicing the truth that results in virtue - not obedience to law.

This verse should say that one who has discovered that law is dead has found a corpse and that one who has found a corpse and knows that law is dead, of him the world is not worthy. Discovery that law is dead cannot be equated to "body" in general - only to a dead body or corpse.

Given the existence of this verse, however, that may not be authentic, it suggests that other verses may not be authentic as well. I would prefer that everything I found in Thomas (or any of the gospels) is authentic without question, but it probably isn't so. Someone other than an original gospel author may have added his or her two cents worth to some degree; and so we might get a corruption of the original Jesus as a result. That leaves it up to the discerning mind to try and separate the weed from the wheat. No one should take anything as "gospel truth" unless it appeals to his or her intelligence. The soul is far too important to let it be guided by those who have corrupted any idea of Jesus with an interpretation of their own. We all have minds. Let us use them to discern what is probably truth from falsity.

Verse 81: Jesus said: Let him who has become rich become king, and let him who has power renounce (it).

If I have my perspective of Jesus correct, he was a fellow who did not participate in the business world of his day. Industry in terms of buying and selling just did not interest him. He says in the verse above - ***Let him who has become rich become king.*** I think he is only saying that those who are rich are kings, in a way. The let it happen part of the verse is really only - **let him who is rich realize he is like a king.**

And what is it like to be a king? It is to have servants. One can have servants by being either a king or one of royal order or a rich man who hires others to do his bidding. **Jesus is really saying - there is no difference between being a rich man with employees or being a king with governmental control.** In either case, **one who rules is without freedom.** One who is rich and one who rules both have others doing their bidding - but in doing so, are tied to those they rule.

After telling us that he thinks there is no difference between those who rule and those who employ, he offers that ideally, ***let him who has power renounce (it).*** Let those who rule and those who employ give up their claims of lordship - not so much for the benefit of those who they might be lording it over, but for their sakes - the sakes of the kings and employers. They should renounce the power they have to free themselves - as well as those they power over.

Most people fail to think this thing through - this business about being royalty with power or government official with power or business man with power. That which they fail to understand is that in being the lords they are, they are without freedom themselves. It is almost like the kings and the lords - whatever their description - are not

on the high side of things with their power, but on the low side of things. Why? Because one cannot rule without being ruled by those over whom superiority is imposed. **Power corrupts the powerful by refusing them freedom.** It is one of those delicious little tidbits of which many of the rich and the powerful seem to be unaware. People who pride themselves in power are no more free than those they may subordinate to themselves.

On the other hand, those of us who are poor but are still well off enough not to be bound as servants of others are the more free. We may not have much money, but we have what money can't buy - **freedom.** The world would be so much better off if there was far more accent on freedom for all and superiority for none. Until such a world comes about, however, each of us needs to attend to our own lives and ideally choose freedom without subjugating or being subjugated - or being un-free like a lord or government official. Amazingly, freedom is only possible if you are free in relation to me. That leaves some very uncomfortable room for kings and lords. They can't attain freedom until they give up their status as employer or ruler.

Verse 82: Jesus said: Whoever is near to me is near to the fire, and whoever is far from me is far from the Kingdom.

Not much doubt about this one. Jesus was a controversial teacher in that he tried to offer esteem without racial or national ties. In other words, he taught that each soul is independently worthy. He taught that, though, within a Jewish society that prided itself on racial or national holiness that the individual is to serve. As he would likely be criticized for his respect for the individual attitude, it only stands to reason that any who would side with him would also be criticized. If it was "hot" for him, then it had to be "hot" for any who would take up his cause.

Those who do not understand the integrity of the individual, however, are "far from the Kingdom." That stands to reason too. **If the "kingdom" is a kingdom of individual worth, any who would act like the kingdom is really of social worth or racial worth or national worth first would naturally be "far from the kingdom."**

Verse 83: Jesus said: The images are manifest to man and the Light which is within them is hidden in the Image of the Light of the Father. He will manifest himself and His Image is concealed by His Light.

Jesus seemed to be one very much aware of and attuned to images. I think Jesus was very much impressed with the "image of humanity" in itself. It was (or is) a matter of each of us resembling or imitating our image. It is like each of us is first patterned after a blueprint. If we are smart, we will honor that blueprint first and then each of us as creations of that blueprint second. In the image of humanity, we can find the Father of Jesus because the Father of Jesus chose the image of humanity as a place of guidance for the soul. Jesus is offering that to respect the image of humanity that he and his providence chose to populate or incarnate, as it were, is to respect Jesus and his Father - or providence.

On the other hand, to smear or distrust our image - the blueprint of our creation - is also to smear or distrust all those who have chosen our image as a vehicle of trust and respect. At least, that is how I see it.

He will manifest himself and His Image is concealed by his Light is to say that Jesus and his providence are choosing the image of humanity - and humanity - as vehicles to "conceal (or reveal) their light." To honor humanity, then, is to honor or reveal the "Light of Jesus"; and to dishonor humanity is to dishonor or hide the "Light of Jesus." Rather than denigrate humanity and pretend it is somehow unholy, we should applaud humanity because it is holy. It is holy because God is within it - as God is within every image of creation chosen or not chosen by Jesus and his providence.

Verse 84: Jesus said: When you see your likeness, you rejoice. But when you see your images which came into existence before you, (which) neither die nor are manifested, how much will you bear?

Again, Jesus is emphasizing our need to attend to our image - the blueprint of our creation. He offers that when we see our likeness, we rejoice; but when we see our images, we act like our images are "too much to bear." Jesus is being his normal sarcastic self here, I think, by stating that when we look upon our image - which is really reflected by our nakedness - we ask ourselves - how much can we bear who we are?

When you see your likeness, you rejoice is to say that we like what we wear because what we wear has become our likeness. In the process of covering up our real likeness, however, our real humanity, we are also blotting our real image. We think well of ourselves as we have chosen ourselves to be, but we think very little of the image after which we are patterned in the first place. It is not very smart to break the mirror so we do not have to look at our real selves while choosing to override our true images with socially approved conventions.

But when you see your images which came into existence before you, (which) neither die nor are manifested is to say that we pay no attention to honoring the blueprint of our creation - which blueprint itself came into existence before each of us created after it and which blueprint itself can never die nor be manifested as only a blueprint. Plans or blueprints or images cannot die. They simply are; however anything fashioned after a blueprint or plan or image can die. **We are manifested through the blueprint of humanity, but the blueprint of humanity itself is not manifested through us.** Some mighty interesting thoughts passed on by Jesus that one has to dig to find.

Verse 85: Jesus said: Adam came into existence from a great power and a great wealth, and yet he did not become worthy of you. For if he had been worthy, [he would] not [have tasted] death.

Jesus is only offering here, I think, that Adam lived in fear. In not knowing about life more than he did, he could not judge life or the likely consequence of it. Thus, as everyone who does not understand life must, Adam feared to die because of confusion about what happens after death. Jesus said *if he had been worthy, he would not have*

tasted death. That is to say that Adam himself found himself unworthy and because he did, he feared death. If I think I may not find God on the other side of death, then I may not be so willing to die as I would be if I was sure of the presence of God. It was not so much that Adam was found unworthy by others, but that Adam himself saw himself as unworthy because he had a notion that it is possible to lack God.

To see yourself as unworthy is really only to see yourself without God.

According to the story of Genesis, Adam was cast from the Garden of Eden because he suspected himself and his wife, Eve, of disobeying God. If I see myself as disobeying God, then that automatically puts me in some perceived opposition to God. If I perceive myself as "opposed to God" or that which is Godly, then I see myself as unworthy of God. If I see myself as unworthy of God, then how could I not fear death or not live in taste of death?

But Jesus offers that Adam came from a great wealth and power, but did not become worthy of others in his audience. That was only to say that the providence of Adam may have considered itself very wealthy and powerful in terms of letting Adam into the fold of humanity, so to speak, but as smart and wealthy and powerful as Adam's providence thought itself to be, the listeners or students of Jesus were a lot smarter - and in that light, much more worthy than Adam who preceded them in almost total ignorance.

Jesus taught the worth of every man. So if I hear the message that I am worthy because I belong to God, so to speak, and do not oppose God like Adam felt he did, then naturally I am more worthy than Adam. I see myself as worthy; and act like I am worthy. Thus I am better off than the one who started it all - Adam - or the ones who started it all - Adam & Eve.

Why would Jesus be offering that I am better off than Adam? Because I am **without the fig leaf of ignorance** that Adam chose for himself and his wife. Many are no better than Adam, however, and still hold onto the fig leaf of ignorance that Adam chose for himself and his wife when it all began. How many still think they have betrayed God? Not only Adam, but billions of sincere souls who have lost sight of the holiness of their own image and pretend that if they cover the manifestation of their image - their own nakedness - they will find their way to God - Who or Which has somehow become disenchanted with His or Her or Its own creation. That is only seeing God in some places and not others. If I think I can find God in a creation other than my own, then I have no idea that God is Infinite and Everywhere.

Covering one's nakedness out of shame is only to betray one's real thoughts that all life itself is not holy. Doing that is to still hold onto the same fig leaf of unworthiness that Adam and Eve chose so long ago.

Verse 86: Jesus said: [The foxes] [have] the[ir holes] and the birds have their nest, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head and rest.

Knowing Jesus like I think I do, I do not think he was complaining, though this verse sounds like he was complaining. I think Jesus chose to be a man without worldly possessions because of the simplicity of the life. He was just telling it like it was for him. Maybe there is a little complaining going on here, but he chose the life. He chose to live as a beggar and not own anything.

Why would he choose such a life? I suspect it was to demonstrate to his own soul first and then to other souls that he did not need to own anything to serve his soul. By doing so, he served as a great example for the rest of us - many of whom don't own much either. The message from it all is - if owning stuff is not important for me, then be not bothered by not owning stuff on your own. Owning things can very much tie a person down - and that can be a very sad thing.

It is really important to keep in mind that we cannot take anything with us when we die but our attitudes. All the wealth we may have enjoyed in life will be as naught then. **The wise person will prepare for the time when he or she will be stripped bare of worldly wealth and have to live on with an attitude.** If you do not own things in life, then you won't have to deal with losing things when you die. If you do not lose anything significant when you die, then you will be much more stable to continue on in the next life. Possessions can be a terrible burden. I think that is why Jesus chose to go without them.

Verse 87: Jesus said: Wretched is the body which depends upon a body and wretched is the soul which depends upon these two.

First things first. *Wretched is the body that depends upon a body.* What does that mean? Jesus was a champion of independence because he knew that independent souls could work out their salvation a lot easier than could dependent or interdependent souls. No one really needs another to recognize the only important truths in life. Essentially, life is divine. If we know that, be it alone or with others, then we can act in life very wisely. But often in the company of another, we can be distracted from knowing wisdom and living according to it.

If my body is dependent upon your body for its well being, then if your body is withdrawn from me, I am lost. As much as possible, we should live with our bodies as independently as possible. Every body is really the same. It is not like I should require your body to make my body well. Anything you have, I have too. So there is really no good reason for me to depend on your body for my well being.

Now for the second thought: *Wretched is the soul that depends on these two.* It is bad enough that my body should depend on your body for making my body happy, so to speak; but beyond that, if my soul has to depend upon our two bodies resolving the needs of life, then that dependency is not good. Again, as much as possible, we should try to be independent as souls so that we do not have to worry about burdensome baggage. I know it sounds crazy, but that is just the way it is.

I think Jesus was cautioning us to not lose sight of our souls, even as we gratefully invest in a body for whatever benefit that offers a soul. Wretched is the soul that loses sight of itself, however, in attending to the body. Ideally, soul and body should be as partners. Too often, souls lose sight of the **equal partnership** ideal by either accenting the body as if the soul does not exist – or accenting the soul as if the body is a useless trap. Either extreme is wrong. I think that is all that Jesus is saying here.

Verse 88: Jesus said: The angels and the prophets will come to you and they will give you what is yours. And you, too, give to them what is in

your hands, and say to yourselves: “On which day will they come and receive what is theirs?”

I guess this is to say that we all have to answer to others, even though we should live lives of solitary worth. As I see it, no one is really alone. I am not alone, though I act alone. I live in a society to which I am obligated to give my best. My best is my solitary worth, I think, but be that as it may, I still owe you and my fellow man to be the best I can be.

Now take that to what I call the "providential" level. If my soul comes from a community of souls (or providence) – like I believe it does – I am here on a mission, in a way. I am not just living for myself. I am living for my community of souls too. Thus, I will have to report to my community when I die. That is likely how it happens. My mission will be over, but it is not very likely that I will not have to account for my life to those who sent me. That is how I see the above verse.

Jesus is only reminding us that a day of reckoning is ahead for us all, but probably not before God as we think. The way that Jesus puts it – angels and prophets come to us to give us the support we need from our own kind, but eventually we will have to return to our angels and prophets to give them what is their due as well.

A prophet is normally considered to be a “spokesman” for God; but communities of souls probably have “prophets” or “spokesmen” too. I am a “prophet” of or for my own providence; and you are a “prophet” of and for yours. It might amaze us that when our lives are over that we will find that soul so and so that we may have loved or ignored was really a “prophet” of a shared providence. I do believe in that. I have encountered in my life many of my friends who may be “prophets” of a shared providence.

I love it. I like the idea of being part of a community of souls and I love the idea that I am responsible for not only myself, but my community as well. How about you?

Verse 89: Jesus said: Why do you wash the outside of the cup? Do you not understand that he who made the inside is also he who made the outside?

This one is a bit strange. Jesus is really saying this: **Why do you wash the outside of the cup and not the inside?** I can't imagine not washing both the inside and outside, but perhaps some do not. All that Jesus is saying here is that if we wash the outside, we should also wash the inside because both sides are made by the same creator. It is to say that we should be consistent with how we deal with life. Why treat one part of life differently than another part? Are not all parts made by the same God? It's that way.

Humans are very good for being inconsistent with life – and parts of life. We act like it is just fine to show hands and face but not the so called private parts. Why in the world is a penis more private than a hand? They are both parts; and ideally if we show one part, we should be comfortable in showing all parts. But in this day and age, we are no more comfortable with consistency of parts as were the Jews in the time of Jesus. It is not very smart to deal with our different parts in different ways. We should be consistent. That is all that Jesus is saying.

Verse 90: Jesus said: Come to Me, for easy is My yoke and My lordship is gentle, and you shall find repose for yourselves.

Easy is my yoke he says. Note that wonderful word *easy*. **Amazingly, virtue is much easier than vice;** and yet many people choose vice over virtue. **Virtue is only treating all parts the same – as if they all have the same wonderful divine significance.** Virtue of soul is shamelessness if the shamelessness is an expression of individual worth. How easy can it be? My life is very easy because at least I am willing to treat all of my parts alike. Society doesn't allow it in practice, but that does not matter. We are not responsible for what society does. We are only responsible for what we are in mind and intent. If my intent is to treat all of me alike, then that is my judgment.

It is so much easier to live the same ideal than to have to change practices depending on company. That is what Jesus was about – living the same ideal to the degree possible regardless of audience. That is why his yoke was so easy for him; and it is why it is so easy for me. **It is much easier to live a simple life than a complicated one; and yet many folks choose complicated over simple.** Not too smart! Such baggage comes from living complicated lives. Living a life of awareness of one's solitary worth is really all that life should be about; and it is far more pleasant and peaceful than depending on another – for their worth or their support.

Verse 91: They said to Him: Tell us who Thou art so that we may believe in Thee. He said to them: You test the face of the sky and of the earth, and him who is before your face you have not known, and you do not know to test this moment.

I have no idea how late in the life of Jesus that Thomas jotted down this verse. It suggests, though, that the so called disciples of Jesus - or many of them - only wanted to believe, but did not, in fact, believe in Jesus. He was a mystery figure to them. When asked by the disciples that he tell about himself so that they may believe, Jesus answered that he was a bit disappointed that in spite of being with him for some time, they apparently did not know him. He suggests that a big reason for their not knowing him was because they failed to "test" him. I believe this really means they failed to "imitate" him. The word "test" may a bit misleading. If it were me talking to a bunch of guys who I think failed to know who I am, I would know immediately that they did not know me because they did not imitate me. **Imitation is the surest form of understanding.** That is doing what I do - not just as a blind copy cat, but as a person of understanding doing what I do because you believe as I.

I may be wrong, but I suspect that it was clear to Jesus that they failed to understand him because clearly they failed to repeat his conduct. Maybe some of that conduct was shameless nakedness. There is ample suggestion in the Gospel of Thomas that Jesus believed in shameless nakedness. See Verse 37. If he went naked, but others around him did not, then it would have been clear to Jesus that they did not know him. The details of their failure is not clear, but it is my guess that they showed misunderstanding by failing to imitate Jesus. **This is sad because these same poor students would later go forward offering Jesus to the world but offering a false**

Jesus - not because they were insincere, but because they just plain did not know the man they claimed to know.

Verse 92: Jesus said: Seek and you will find, but those things which you asked me in those days, I did not tell you then; now I desire to tell them, but you do not inquire after them.

This suggests that Jesus measured what he tried to teach according to some standard - that standard being an impression on his part that his students were capable of understanding. He said that they asked questions before this time - probably late in his life - but he did not answer them. He did not answer them because he did not think they were ready for his answers. Perhaps he was waiting for some manifestation of his disciples understanding some earlier teaching - including example - before answering their questions. But apparently they grew tired of asking - probably because they failed to grasp his general message of the intrinsic worth of all beings. Still he was anxious for them to learn and he was hoping they would repeat earlier questions, but they never knew enough about the man to even know the questions they should ask - even though they had asked them before.

This lack of understanding must have been very frustrating for Jesus. His disciples apparently were impressed enough to know he stood for something, but it seems they never learned just who he was or what he actually believed.

Verse 93: <Jesus said:> Give not what is holy to the dogs, lest they cast it on the dung-heap. Throw not the pearls to the swine, lest they make it []. (These brackets around an empty expression imply, I think, that the translators could not make out what came here. Rather than guess, they just left it open. But there is enough they could translate to make some sense out of the verse.)

It may seem like Jesus is talking about some other than his disciples, but given earlier verses offering that his disciples did not know him, this verse could just as well be directed to his disciples as to any strangers. I know it has happened to me. I have had some wonderful notion to share, but to try and share it with others who have no good impression of me is like to throw myself or my ideas to the dogs. But Jesus was also talking in generalities here. It is good advice. Don't waste your time trying to offer wisdom to those who have no interest in wisdom. One has to be open to wisdom to understand it. It was true in the days of Jesus - and it is still true today.

Verse 94: Jesus [said]: Whoever seeks will find [and whoever knocks], it will be opened to him.

It is true. Anyone who truly seeks will probably find; and if you knock, a door will open for you. But you have to be a genuine seeker to find and you must knock on the door of a wise person to have him or her open his or her door to you. Pretty simple stuff. This is to say - be active and not passive about learning. Get after it. Don't expect someone to come to you. You must have the initiative to go to one with the answers and not expect things to just drop into your lap.

Verse 95: [Jesus said]: If you have money, do not lend it at interest, but give [them] to him from whom you will not receive them (back).

This is only to say that we should be interested in helping others for their sakes and not do what we do in order to get back something. Getting interest from a loan is to loan for the sake of profiting from your loan. To loan and only expect back what you lent and nothing more is the ideal. If possible, of course, it should even be more than that. When we can, we should not even loan, but give away - expecting nothing in return, not even the money or value lent.

Verse 96: Jesus [said]: The Kingdom of the Father is like [a] woman, (who) has taken a little leaven [(and has hidden) it in dough (and) has made large loaves of it. Whoever has ears, let him hear.

Jesus is only saying here, I think, that what Jesus is calling the "Kingdom of the Father" is like a little idea that makes for a huge impact. To look at a big loaf of bread, one would never guess that it is big only because of a "little leaven" or yeast that has been added. What is the "little idea" that has a huge impact? My guess is that it is the idea that God is everywhere - or as Jesus expressed in Verse 3, *the Kingdom is within you and without you*. That is to say the same thing that the Kingdom is everywhere. Once one comes to realize this little truth, entire lives can be changed. That little idea can have a huge impact.

What is the Kingdom of the Father? In this case, I think it only means "God's Kingdom." God's Kingdom is literally "infinite" embracing all things and all existence. **It is not a moral truth so much as a real truth.** One can realize a moral imperative from the idea, but essentially it is only a statement of fact - God exists everywhere - within us and without us - or outside of us.

Verse 97: Jesus said: The Kingdom of the [Father] is like a woman who was carrying a jar full of meal. While she was walking [on a] distant road, the handle of the jar broke. The meal streamed out behind her on the road. She did not know (it), she noticed no accident. After she came into her house, she put the jar down. She found it empty.

This is to say, I think, that the Kingdom of the Father (or God) does not depend on the intentions of man. I am not sure why he made the comparison, but Jesus offered that a woman carrying a jar of meal was totally unaware that the meal she was carrying had spilled out of the jar. That meal spilled without her being aware of it; and the spilling is being compared to the Kingdom of the Father. That is to say, I think, that Heaven does not depend on us.

Too often, I think, mankind thinks that Heaven depends on it to happen – as if God is dependent on man to achieve His or Her or Its Presence. Jesus is only saying here – though very awkwardly, I think, that Heaven (or the Kingdom of the Father) is happening in spite of mankind's intention or awareness. The important notion to get from this, though, is that Heaven does not depend on us. It happens because the

Kingdom of the Father is within us and without us. In no way, does it depend on us. That is all this verse intends to say, I think.

Verse 98: Jesus said: The Kingdom of the Father is like a man who wishes to kill a powerful man. He drew the sword in his house, he stuck it into the wall, in order to know whether his hand could carry through; then he slew the powerful (man).

Though the Kingdom of the Father does not depend on us, our realization of it for ourselves does. If we are wise, we will know what we are about so that we can better realize our purpose. Jesus is only offering here that it is smart to test ourselves with our weapons before we set forth to use them. He is only suggesting that it is foolish to face an enemy without first having tested the weapons we might want to use against him.

We should practice our skills to know if they will be enough to do what we want to do. Jesus is not suggesting that any one should slay another with this verse. He is only saying that if one were to want to kill another, he should test himself for the task beforehand in order to assure success. The key here is "test." If it is desired to kill a man with a sword, then make sure the sword has a sharp enough point on it to penetrate an alleged enemy. Plan what we do, but test what we plan.

How would this apply to the spiritual life? My guess is that any worthwhile objective of the spiritual life is peace. Peace is merely being at ease. If what we are doing with our minds and souls is not making us peaceful, then we should know that what we are doing is not producing peace. All we have to do is test any notion we have. Does it produce peace? Yes – then we can be confident that our plan for life is working. If the answer is No – then we can be confident as well that our plan for life is not working. If it is not working, then we should try another sword, another way. Test that. And so forth.

Verse 99: The disciples said to Him: Thy brethren and Thy mother are standing outside. He said to them: Those here who do the will of My Father, they are My brethren and My mother; these are they who shall enter the Kingdom of My Father.

He says only those who *do the will of My Father* can enter his kingdom or community of souls. Who are those? Virtually speaking, all of those who treat everyone equally, knowing that all are *sons of the Living Father*. That would be my guess. If the human family of Jesus did not respect that principle, then they would be excluded from membership because membership is tied to character of a life lived, not to a blood line or national or racial affiliation. It makes sense. Right? In essence, the Kingdom of Jesus is one of Peace; **but peace is derived from being content with one's equality within the entire Creation of God, not assuming inequality based on alleged diverse origin or merit.**

No matter how you may treat me, to do the will of the Father of Jesus – or Jesus himself – I must treat you with kindness due to your equality of divinity as being an equal *son of the Living Father*. If I treat you badly because you have treated me badly, then

your character of inequality becomes my own; and once that happens, I have lost peace; and if peace is lost, so also is membership in a kingdom of peace.

Verse 100: They showed Jesus a gold (coin) and said to Him: Caesar's men ask taxes from us. He said to them: Give the things of Caesar to Caesar, give the things of God to God and give Me what is Mine.

Jesus is only saying here that giving depends on the recipient. If I have a dollar in my hand and give it to God, then my gift is rather useless. God does not receive dollars because God is not about dollars. If I have a dollar in my hands and give it to Jesus, then he might tell me it is of no use to him. If I have a dollar in my hands and give it to you or the government, then, fine, it is useful. Jesus is only saying that we can't give except as according to the needs or character of the receiver.

He says that we should give to God the things that are Gods. What is that? I would say that is only **awareness that all life comes from God and gratitude for that gift.**

Jesus said to give him what is his and by so doing offered a distinction between him and God. Give to God what is God's and give him what is his. So what is his that is not God's? What would personally belong to Jesus? I'd say respect for his providence which stands for peace due to the equality of the divinity of all. I really doubt he would want anything else. Just respect for that which he stood. And what did he stand for? **The dignity of the individual due to his or her divinity.** If I had to come up with an answer, that would be it. He came to teach us of our dignity. So by believing in the dignity he taught, we would be giving him what he deserves.

All Jesus wanted us to be aware of is that - according to Verse 3 - we are *sons of the Living Father*. That is not just some of us. That is all of us. I can only give to Jesus what he deserves by believing his teachings and conducting my life accordingly. Anything less would be disrespect; and that is certainly not something that he deserves. Is it?

Verse 101: <Jesus said>: Whoever does not hate his father and his mother in My way will not be able to be a [disciple] to me, for My mother [] but [My] true [Mother] gave me life.

Getting close to the end of the gospel, the final entries were perhaps a bit more tattered than the earlier verses. The translators did the best they could, I guess, but where there are brackets without contents, they could not make out Coptic words. My translation is one of the earliest - 1959 - and the translators were at least honest in not offering their own expectations where original words were blurred - probably due to the age of the manuscripts. Let's face it. The Coptic work of the Gospel of Thomas had been in a cave for over 1600 years - without anyone knowing of its existence. Thanks to some conscientious monk or whatever, when the powers that be in the 4th Century directed that certain works like the Gospel of Thomas be destroyed, that fine monk did not obey and hid the banned works in a cave off the Nile River in Egypt. There that work - among others - stayed hidden until 1945 when a peasant accidentally stumbled upon it. But age certainly had to have had some impact, causing some erosion of words.

Be that as it may, this verse is also found in the regular gospels. It only offers that to be a disciple of Jesus, the counsel of Jesus must be respected. If I claim to be a disciple of Jesus, and follow instead the counsel of a parent, then obviously, there has to be a conflict. Who knows what Coptic word was found where the translators placed the word "hate"? Of course, it should not be taken literally. Jesus is not saying we should hate our parents if they teach other than he does. He is only saying that we can't be his followers if we respect any conflicting opinion over his own.

Commenting on the last part of the verse, *for My mother [] but [My] true [Mother] gave me life*, the translation is unclear, though the meaning, I think, is very clear. **Jesus is offering that his true parents are those who bore him his soul, not his earthly parents who gave him his earthly body.** He is only offering that we need to be aware - like he is - that our true Mother or Parent - of the soul - is the parent we must respect the most. Dad and Mom are only like us, of the same earthly heritage, but our souls are children of a much more important parent - our soulful parent. Some would take this to mean God. Personally, I do not. I think my soul comes from another soul originally just like my body came from another body. I think Jesus had that same sense of soulful parentage; though I suspect that none of his disciples understood his belief - perhaps including Thomas. But that is only my opinion - just like all of my comments are.

Perhaps the reference to his soulful parent as "Mother" rather than "Father" is of some relevance here. Mother would be a more fitting term to use than father for Jesus when talking about the origin of his soul because he would have wanted to offer a clear distinction between God - Our Infinite Father - and his parent soul - his mother. My mother gave me life, he says - or at least, the translator saw the expression "mother" here to be the intent.

It fits for me because personally I distinguish between my parent soul and the God of all souls and all bodies. People who are unaware that their souls came from other souls and not God are apt to misinterpret a lot about life. When we see God as our personal parent and do not recognize what might be called an evolutionary parent, then our confusion is apt to lead us into all sort of confusion. We make God responsible for this or that about us when it is not God Who is responsible - but our various evolutionary parent or parents - be they of the body or the soul. But that is a discussion that belongs to a different venue. I wrote a speculative work on the soul I call *UNMASKING THE SOUL*. I will leave the discussion of the origin of the soul to that work. See Volume 2.

Verse 102: Jesus said: Woe to them, the Pharisees, for they are like a dog sleeping in the manger of oxen, for neither does he eat, nor does he allow the oxen to eat.

Jesus is offering that woe should belong to those who are arrogant like the Pharisees. Perhaps being responsible for safeguarding the scriptures, they really did not pay much attention to the scriptures for their own sakes - and neither did they allow others to read the scriptures. I don't think any more needs to be said about this verse. It does not really

say much in terms of offering wisdom. It merely comments on what Jesus saw as arrogance and clearly repudiates that kind of conduct as woeful.

Verse 103: Jesus said: Blessed is the man who knows [n which] part (of the night) the robbers will come in, so that he will rise and collect his [] and gird up his loins before they come in.

Also found in the regular gospels. It is only to say that we need to live our lives ready to die at anytime.

Verse 104: They said [to Him]: Come and let us pray today and let us fast. Jesus said: Which then is the sin that I have committed, or in what have I been vanquished? But when the bridegroom comes out of the bridal chamber, then let them fast and let them pray.

In an earlier verse - Verse 14, in part, Jesus said: *If you fast, you will beget sin for yourselves, and if you pray, you will be condemned.* That is because, I think, that the only ones who think they need to fast and pray are those who think they need to appeal to a God outside of them. For what other reason would you need to fast and pray? So, fasting and praying, expecting some reward from God for doing so, is useless. **If God is already inside of you, of what need is there to pray and fast as if God is not inside of you?**

Given the earlier warning about the uselessness of praying and fasting (to impress God), Jesus is not suggesting prayer and fasting here - as it might be implied. He is only offering that if it were so that there is no bridegroom about, then praying and fasting might be useful. In fact, however, Jesus was about and is about. He was married to the truth as we should all be married to the truth. That is what Jesus means by bridegroom here, I think - one married to the truth and happily secure because of it. The condition of fasting and praying, then, becomes un-fulfill-able - as it were - and thus prayer and fasting (to impress God) is never of any use.

Verse 105: Jesus said: Whoever knows father and mother shall be called the son of a harlot.

Jesus is only, once again, citing the importance of our not following the advice of anyone - including our evolutionary parents - if we choose them over Jesus. Given his earlier warning about needing to "hate" father and mother if their counsel is not the same as his, we can be sure he is only continuing that warning here. Of what good is it to anyone to adhere to the advice of their evolutionary parents if that advice is a path to perdition?

Upon further reflection, my impression of harlot is a whore or one who is a prostitute or one who is willing to sell him or herself for a price. Makes sense that being caught up with having to sell yourself for a price while becoming oblivious to wisdom would not be

good for the soul. All Jesus is saying here is that life is precious and we ought to be about living it wisely - not fretting our lives away being prostitutes and losing sight of the real treasure of our souls.

Verse 106: Jesus said: When you make the two one, you shall become sons of Man, and when you say: "Mountain, be moved," it will be moved.

Knowing Jesus as I think I do now, since Jesus referred to himself as "Son of Man," he is saying here that we can become like him and also become "Sons of Man" if we do what he does - see everyone as equally children of God. *When you make the two one* is a way of offering that we should not be caught up with our differences, but impressed with how we are alike. If I see you as I see myself, then only peace results. It is when we insist on "being different" that we engage conflict in life and lose peace. **If we see ourselves as equal children of God and act like it, there is no problem too big to be solved.** That is what he means when he says that if we make two one, we will be able to move mountains. A mountain is only a symbol for a "big problem." If we are impressed with our equality and not our differences, we can "move mountains" or solve any problem we may encounter.

Verse 107: Jesus said: The Kingdom is like a shepherd who had a hundred sheep. One of them went astray, which was the largest. He left behind ninety-nine, he sought for the one until he found it. Having tired himself out, he said to the sheep: I love thee more than ninety-nine.

This one is certainly confusing. I think it is the source of the parable of the lost sheep as offered in the regular gospels, but in the regular gospels, the lost sheep is not referred to as "the largest sheep." In the regular gospels, the implication is that every sheep is important and that if one gets lost, the Father of the Kingdom will pursue that lost sheep as if it is the most important one of all. He would even be willing to leave the others who have not strayed and go after the lost sheep. It is comforting to think this, but I do not believe that is what Jesus is saying here.

Why would the sheep that is the largest be the one that strays? It is not just any of the sheep that strays, but the largest one - the one you would think is the least vulnerable. Because it is the largest sheep that goes astray, I think this is to refer to the largest sheep as Jesus himself. I think that the other sheep should have strayed with the largest sheep, Jesus, but perhaps to stay seemingly safe, they let Jesus go out by himself. But Jesus will not be allowed to go by himself. The Father of the Kingdom of which he is a part will go after him and not let him be alone. The other sheep should have followed Jesus, but did not.

The 99 who did not stray and "follow their leader" are part of the overall gang of souls sent to do the mission Jesus was left to do all by himself. It should not have happened that way. Perhaps the 99 are the so called "disciples" of Jesus who should know better than to huddle in safety and, in a way, betray the mission. What was the mission of Jesus and his disciples? To spread the good news of the kingdom. And what

was the good news of the kingdom? The previous verse tells all. ***When you make the two one***, that is the key to belonging to the kingdom (of peace). But as history has shown, the disciples did not make the two one and favor equality among beings. In other words, the disciples who should have been about the same equality ministry that Jesus came to promote chose to stress inequality - or that Jews were the chosen ones of God. Jesus came to disagree that any of us can be chosen over others, but the regular disciples stayed with the "chosen race" nonsense of Jewish tradition. **In essence, they abandoned the plan.**

Well, anyway, that is how I see it. Jesus was not alone from his providence. Lots of souls came with him, but for some reason, they became lost in the game of inequality and did not stay true to the mission. The 99 sheep are fellow sheep of Jesus, from the same providence or soulful community, incarnated among humans to show incarnated souls the way of equality. ***When you make the two one*** - says it all. Do not insist on inequality or treating others like they are unequal to you. Why? Because if you do, peace will be lost. It is as simple as that. **Sadly, the lesson of Jesus and the lesson of equality was greatly lost because the "disciples" of Jesus lost their way.** Too bad!

At the end of the parable, the Father tells the lost sheep - ***I love you more than the ninety-nine.*** Why would he say that? Because Jesus is a favored one of the 100 sheep. **As the "main one," on this collective mission, it would naturally follow that he would be loved more than the others - in a way.** Jesus was certainly for equality, but even among equal ones, souls choose favorites. Some might think that favoritism is a violation of the principle of equality; but think about it. I can spend a lot more time with one person than another in life, but having compared them equally in terms of being equally children of God, I would still choose my companion over the stranger. **When the Father says he loves Jesus more than the others, it is simply favoritism due to established companionship more than anything else.** At least, I think so.

Verse 108: Jesus said: Whoever drinks from My mouth shall become as I am and I myself will become he, and the hidden things shall be revealed to him.

Whoever drinks from my mouth and adopts the principle of equality ***shall become as I am.*** And what will happen if I should become like Jesus and embrace equality? **Hidden things shall be revealed to me.** What is hidden? For one, the cause of conflict. Strangely, it is only by actually treating others as my equal that I can see the truth. What is the truth? **Inequality divides and causes conflict as equality unifies and makes for peace.** It is easy to see that as a truth if you live by the principle that equality is the basis of peace.

People get lost when they become confused. Confusion happens when equality of being is abandoned. When people live their lives making two separate individuals totally separate and emphasizing the difference between them rather than the unity of them, then hidden things are also kept hidden and confusion continues. If you insist on confusing things, not only will you not be able to move mountains, you will not even be able to move hills. **Confusion and inequality disables. Equality - or making the two, one - enables.** But you have to live the life to see it. All the argument in the world will not let you see the truth unless you first live it.

Verse 109: Jesus said: The Kingdom is like a man who had a treasure [hidden] in his field, without knowing it. And [after] he died, he left it to his [son. The] son did not know (about it), he accepted that field, he sold [it]. And he who bought it, he went, while he was plowing [he found] the treasure. He began to lend money to whomever he wished.

This is to say, I think, that not all is lost if an idea is not at first embraced. The hidden treasure that is buried in the field is like the truths of Jesus. Those truths are handed down through the generations with the various generations being unaware of the treasure of them. For example, people keep passing along the parables of Jesus without understanding what they mean. Eventually, however, someone is going to buy the field that contains the treasure of equality - or the principle of equality - or making two one - and he will prosper unlike all those who proceeded him with the field with the treasure in it. Eventually, then, the truth will be discovered and the meaning of the parables will be known. When that happens, the one who finds the treasure and discovers the hidden truth (or truths) of the parables will be able to share his or her wealth at will with whomever he or she meets.

Verse 110: Jesus said: Whoever has found the world and become rich, let him deny the world.

This is only to say that if you are among those who insist on living in the world of inequality and have become worldly rich as a result of it, it would behoove you to know that true wealth of soul is about "denying the world" of worldly riches - not embracing inequality and worldly profit at the expense of spiritual profit. Jesus is only telling it like it is. If you are into inequality and insist on living according to that principle, you may become rich in this world alright, but perhaps at the cost of your very own soul.

Verse 111: Jesus said: The heavens will be rolled up and the earth in your presence, and he who lives on the Living (One) shall see neither death nor <fear>, because Jesus says: Whoever finds himself, of him the world is not worthy.

Sorry! These last verses were difficult for Mr. A. Guillaumont and his team of translators to translate - from Egyptian Coptic to English. My translation is one of the earliest - 1959 - and my translators were honest enough not to act like they knew every word. Age blurred some words. I have read many translations that simply offer verse like there never was any complications or blurred words. I am mighty grateful that my copy is one of the earliest and has the integrity to admit confusion where age blurred the original Coptic.

So, to get on with the translation of this verse, I think it offers that at some point, life on earth will end. *The heavens will be rolled up and the earth in your presence*, I think, says that life, as such, on the earth will end. It is hard for me to imagine that someone in

the time of Jesus could have known of the future like seems to be established in this verse. Was Jesus aware of the Cosmos? It seems that he was because I think he was aware that at some time something would happen - possibly, cosmic wise - that would declare an end to life on earth.

I think the Jews of the time looked at heaven as being "in the skies." I think that Jesus was offering here that those skies would end in terms of being available for some mystical kind of ascent. Why? Because there would be no life on earth to look to them anymore.

Just speculating off hand, there are probably many things that can cause an end to life on earth. Maybe some celestial body will crash into the earth and completely wipe out all life. Who knows? Life on earth has probably ended many times due to some cosmic event that may have caused an instant ice age or some calamitous end of life on earth.

Personally, I do not fear man upending the earth, though it is definitely within the realm of possibility. Maybe earthlings will end life by themselves via some catastrophic world wide war. I doubt it, but it could happen I guess. If that happened, then, yes, it might have been due to human activity or human insanity or human madness, but that is pure speculation. It is worthwhile to ponder, but in the way I am talking about the end of the earth, it does not matter one iota how it ends. It just matters that at some point, it will end.

And when it ends, what will souls without bodies do? Up to the end of the earth and its generation of life, there would have been bodies galore available to incarnate, but what happens when there are no more bodies? Interesting speculation, but **my guess is that souls would be "frozen" in whatever state they were in when incarnated life ended.** There would be no more chances to reincarnate and try to change a soul. As a soul would be found at the termination of life on earth is how it would remain - perhaps for millions of years - at which time, maybe a new spring would come about and new life on earth could emerge and new incarnations could proceed.

But what does this say about the need for each of us to get it right? Well, if you don't think that being "frozen" in some less-than-ideal state is worth trying to find peace in this life before there is no more chance for change, then you may be among those who will be frozen in a less-than-ideal state. I won't go into those possibilities. **Suffice it to say, that if my state is not a state of peace at the time of a final interruption of life, reason would say I may drift a long time without benefit of peace.** Now, is that anyway to spend an eternity?

The last part of Verse 111 is a repeat of other verses. Jesus was emphatic about not being caught "with the world." ***Whoever finds himself, of him the world is not worthy*** is a way of offering that "the world" is high on having no knowledge of self. Jesus was very strong on the idea that self awareness and self esteem is the key to peace. The world often teaches that we must sacrifice the individual for the sake of the lot. Jesus would not agree. In Verse 3, Jesus said, ***the Kingdom is within you and without you. If you will know yourselves, then you will be known and you will know that you are sons of the Living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you are in poverty and you are poverty.***

Jesus was all about our "knowing ourselves" because if we have such knowledge, we will also be aware that we are "sons of the Living Father." If I do not know I am a

son of the Living Father, then I do not know myself. Jesus emphasized the importance of self awareness, knowing that each of us is a "son of the Living Father," but if we are unaware of our status, then we might as well be the son of whoever it is we think gave us birth - like Satan for instance. **If we do not know who we are, then we are indeed in poverty and are poverty itself.**

Whoever finds himself - and knows he is truly a son of the Living Father - or God - of him the world is not worthy. Given that "the world" stands for civilization that does not consider the integrity of the individual as important, Jesus is asking us to stay clear of such a world. That world is not worthy of us because it is not even worthy of itself. Well, the meaning is clear if we want to look for it.

Verse 112: Jesus said: Woe to the flesh which depends upon the soul; woe to the soul which depends upon the flesh.

We are born to find self-esteem and we are borne into bodies that help us to do that; but we should always be aware that at some point in time, *"the heavens will be rolled up and the earth in your presence."* At such time, there will be no more bodies to incarnate - at least for some eons of time. The wise soul will realize that it has to go on by itself and will not live life dependent on a body. **We should cherish our bodies, sure, because they are the very vehicles by which we can learn self-esteem, but to act like we are only bodies that die in time and that we never survive as souls alone is not smart.** Is it?

Jesus is only offering here that the wise person is aware of the **"facts of life and death."** Life will end for the body - both temporarily and at some point, virtually permanently - and only the soul will continue in whatever state it left the world. We should love our bodies because they are our vehicles of salvation, in a way, but we should always be aware that our souls exist independent of them.

Verse 113: His disciples said to Him: When will the Kingdom come? <Jesus said>: It will not come by expectation; they will not say: "See, here," or "See, there." But the Kingdom of the Father is spread upon the earth and men do not see it.

If this thought does not open your mouth in awe, nothing can. It says everything. How many times have we been told that so and so is inspired of God and is offering that he or she can "lead us to Heaven." Nonsense! That is what Jesus is saying. Do not believe anyone who comes to you - in his name or otherwise - and offers that Heaven is someplace else. He is saying, it is right here and right now. *"The Kingdom of the Father is spread upon the earth and men do not see it."* Heaven is already here - or anything we might want to be Heaven.

Can there be a "better Father" someplace else? Not if God is everywhere. Jesus is offering us here that God is everywhere. The Kingdom (of God) is everywhere. It has nothing to do with place. It only has to do with a state of mind. If I have Heaven here, no matter where I go in a next life, it will follow me - or I will follow it. **Whether it is in**

a body or outside a body, as long as I am aware that I am truly - like you and everyone - a son of the Living Father, then I have found a perfect state.

Verse 114: Simon Peter said to them: Let Mary go out from among us, because women are not worthy of the Life. Jesus said: See, I shall lead her, so that I will make her male, that she too may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

What a way to end it! The Jesus of Thomas emphasizes equality. He is continuing to do that here. In Verse 106, Jesus said: *When you make the two one, you shall become sons of Man, and when you say, "Mountain, be moved," it will be moved.* When you make the two one. That is the key. When you see yourself as equal to me and me equal to you. When there is no longer a variance of quality between us because there is an equality of esteem between us and within us, then we can move mountains - which figuratively means, "solve huge problems."

But what have we done? In the very name of the man who forbid it for the sake of peace, we have insisted on keeping two as two. We have not paid any attention to being one. We have insisted that there is good and evil, not just good. We have insisted on two when there should be only one. We have insisted on distinguishing between two and have named one an infidel and the other a faithful one. We have insisted on separation. We have insisted on division; and we have been plagued with it.

What is the current war in Iraq but an insistence on making two, two? Us against them, them against us! It is all wrong for the sake of individual peace; and it could never lead to universal peace.

In the times of Jesus, the female was considered less worthy than the male. It is even admitted here. Peter says *Let Mary go out from among us, because women are not worthy of the Life.* What does Jesus say to Peter who will eventually claim to be the vicar of Christ? *I shall lead her, so that I will make her male, that she too may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.*

It only takes reviewing verse 106 to know what he means. *"When you make the two one"* is the key to knowing the meaning of this verse. In this case, it is a difference of gender. Jesus is not saying he can turn Mary into a male physically, but that he can lead her to know that she, too, is a "son of the Living Father." **In knowing she is the same as Peter, she becomes equal to Peter.**

Again, Jesus was all about seeing one where there is two. Male and female were no more two for him than were Roman and Jew or slave and master. There is no inequality in reality, related to God. We are all equally "sons of the Living Father." If I need to set myself apart from you, offering that you are of different Godly quality than me, then I am insisting on inequality; and whether Peter agrees with it or not, *inequality - or a sense thereof - is the single most vicious vice in the world because it only leads to destruction.*

So, there it is. We have finished the greatest course available to man in my opinion. Many will not agree with its simple dictums and will argue that the Jesus of Thomas is a fraud. I think it is quite adequate to say that the ones who believe the Jesus of Thomas is fraudulent are the same ones who want to keep on keeping to two. *For every female who makes herself male will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven* could also be stated in this wise. *For every male who makes himself female will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

It is pretty simple, huh?

Thanks for your attention!

Francis William Bessler

April 3rd, 2009

JESUS VIA THOMAS COMMENTARIES

THE END

JESUS VIA MARY COMMENTARIES

(28 Pages)

By
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- 2009 -

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Introduction

Who was Jesus? Who is Jesus? In all likelihood, no one knows. Many think they know, but I truly doubt that anyone does – including me. Up until rather recently in history, we have been limited to the **Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John** and perhaps the **Epistles of such as Peter and Paul** for any testimony regarding Jesus. I grew up thinking these are the only sources about Jesus; but since 1979 or so, I became aware that there were other gospels written about Jesus. Among the other gospels written about Jesus are those of the **Apostle Thomas** and the **feminine friend of Jesus, Mary Magdalene**. Until later in my life, I had no idea there had ever been a **Gospel of Thomas or Mary** – and I am not alone. Most Christians are still unaware that there are other gospels.

1945 should be considered a very pivotal year in the history of mankind. A World War II ended in that year – and perhaps as importantly – a long hidden gospel of Jesus was discovered quite by accident in a cave off the Nile River in Egypt near a place called Nag Hammadi. That gospel – allegedly written by Thomas, one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus – had been stored in a big jar with several other manuscripts since around the 4th Century. Why were these manuscripts hidden for all this time? Because it seems by Constantinian Edict (& Church Edict), all gospels not selected for what is known as the **BIBLE** were supposed to be destroyed. Among many works to be destroyed were the rejected works of **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS** and **THE GOSPEL OF MARY**.

If it had not been for the accidental finding of the Gospel of Thomas in that cave in Egypt in 1945, personally I may have never encountered the possibility of additional gospels about Jesus; but because of that discovery by a peasant who had no idea what he had found, eventually the Gospel of Thomas would be translated from its Coptic state into many languages, including my own English. Eventually, I would become aware of not only an idea that there were others gospels written about Jesus, but I would become aware of several of the other gospels. Since my discovery of **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS** in 1979, I have made it my chief source for information about Jesus. I still regard the gospels of the **BIBLE** as important, but my favorite has become the Gospel of Thomas. Why? Because the verses of that gospel seem to define a Jesus I would like to know much better than the others. I have written an essay type work featuring the Gospel of Thomas that I call **JESUS VIA THOMAS COMMENTARIES**, should anyone find that useful or interesting.

In 2004, I became aware of another gospel, for the most part lost for centuries by virtue of Constantinian Edict like the Gospel of Thomas was as well. That gospel – which is the subject of this work – is what is known as **THE GOSPEL OF MARY**. Because I find the Gospel of Mary defining Jesus in a more favorable way than the regular gospels of the **BIBLE**, the Gospel of Mary has become my second favorite gospel. That is something, considering I did not even know it existed until 2004.

Why did Constantine ban those gospels not selected for the **BIBLE**? I may be wrong, but I suspect it was because he did not want to suffer any conflict that allowing rejected gospels to survive might cause. It was much simpler to allow only those gospels

selected by his bishops and not only ban gospels not selected by his bishops, but command they be destroyed as well so as to leave no evidence of their prior existence. It seems to have worked quite well, too, not only for the period of time in which Constantine ruled, but for most of history since then. There has been no conflict regarding different views of Jesus because there has not been any other views – until recently.

I see the suppression of alternate sources about Jesus like a court ruling that the testimony of only certain of alleged eye witnesses should be allowed. That would be just fine if all the eye witnesses saw the same thing, but it becomes quite a travesty of justice if witnesses saw different things. If only certain testimony is allowed, think of the injustice that might be caused if testimony is only accepted from what turns out to be false witnesses. All witnesses could be sincere, even those who fail to see what really happened; but by not allowing the testimony of all of those who claim to have been eye witnesses, justice may very likely be denied.

That is what may have happened with the suppression of some of the gospels about Jesus. The result may be that we have had an inadequate rendering of Jesus for all these years. I am not saying that it is definitely so. I am only offering that it is possible, though personally, I think it is not only possible, but probable. In light of the different versions of Jesus that have now become available, it is somewhat clear to me that the real Jesus has “probably” been lost for centuries. With this work on the Gospel of Mary, I am trying to clarify the story of Jesus; though it is possible that Mary herself was a false witness of Jesus in terms of not really knowing him. On the other hand, it may be Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John who are the false witnesses; and witnesses like Thomas and Mary may be the more truthful witnesses in terms of their perceptions of Jesus may be the more accurate as reflecting the real Jesus.

When I use the word “false,” I do not wish to imply “intentionally false.” I only wish to imply false by virtue of the real truth. I do not doubt that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John saw Jesus in the way they define in their works; but neither do I doubt that Thomas and Mary and others saw Jesus in the way they define in their works either. I do not wish to impugn any source as being intentionally misleading; but I do wish to suggest that misleading may have in fact occurred because the wrong gospel writers may have been embraced as knowing Jesus better than the authors eventually rejected. All we can do now is try and right the situation and maybe show Jesus in a different light.

I am under the impression the version of Mary’s gospel featured here came from a Coptic (Egyptian) translation and was found in the first tractate of something called a **Berlin Gnostic Codex**. It is my understanding that this codex was acquired by a **German scholar named Dr. Carl Reinhardt from Cairo in 1896**. In the codex acquired at the time, there were three ancient works – **The Gospel of Mary, The Apocryphon of John, and The Sophia of Jesus Christ**. Due to subsequent World Wars I and II, the works were not translated to other languages until 1955 or so. **Mr. Marvin Meyer** – who is providing the translation I am offering below – did not offer any history as to how and where in Cairo these works were kept, prior to 1896.

Regarding **The Gospel of Mary**, perhaps there are other versions, but the Coptic version is the most complete text, though it is missing the first six manuscript pages at the beginning and four manuscript pages in the middle. Presumably, according to Marvin Meyer, **The Gospel of Mary** was originally composed in Greek, but the date and place of

composition are unknown. Someone called **Karen King** has suggested that the original gospel of Mary may have been penned in the late first or early second century, perhaps in Syria or Egypt. Again, it is assumed that the Mary of authorship is Mary Magdalene – or a disciple thereof.

I will transcribe the work as it is found in Marvin Meyer's work. The numbering of the verses below – which could be called “chapters” – are my own. Like I said, from the actual work, several pages are missing at the beginning and several in the middle. What I show as # 1 could actually be # 7 or so. I do not think it matters – just as long as you are aware that my numbers do not equate to anything in the original works.

Also, as in any translations, that which I offer below is only one version – in this case, that of Marvin Meyer. I have seen some versions that refer to the wonderful term of *child of humanity* that you will find that I love so much in my added commentary to be **son of man**. Every time I read one of these interpretations and see so much variance, I come away almost befuddled. Why Marvin Meyer would refer to a term as *child of humanity* and another would call that same term **son of man** is beyond astonishing to me. The two terms are almost worlds apart. My guess is that the translation offering **son of man** is trying to parallel **The Gospel of Mary** with other gospels that refer to Jesus as **son of man** and suggest that **The Gospel of Mary** should be an extension of the other gospels, not a challenge thereof. I do not know that to be the case; but it is a suspicion.

As you will see, I put a lot of spiritual emphasis on the term *child of humanity* in my commentary after the verses. To change that to **son of man** is, in essence, to change it to **Jesus Christ** since Jesus referred to himself in other gospels as **son of man**. Wow! To do that is to change the entire scope and intent of using a term like *child of humanity* as far as I am concerned. I think that Jesus probably used the term – or whatever term he may have used – to represent some spiritual identity in each of us not tied to Jesus himself as Jesus; but I have seen translations that imply he meant himself.

In the end, each of us can only relate to what makes sense to us personally. I will offer the verses of **The Gospel of Mary** as I found them in Marvin Meyer's work; and then later comment on the text as presented there. In all of this, my first intent is to provide the text of the Gospel of Mary. My opinion about what that text may mean is also being provided, but far more important than my personal opinion is the text itself. Accordingly, the text will not only be emboldened, but enlarged in size of letters to signify its importance. My personal interpretation is not near as important as is the text itself. You can attend to my personal comments or not – though my comments will only pertain to the first verse for reasons I will state; but in any case, I hope you will choose to consider the text as significant and proceed accordingly. **Meditate on it. Make it your own, as you will.**

Thanks!

Francis William Bessler
April 22nd, 2009

1. THE DISCIPLES DIALOGUE WITH THE SAVIOR

“Will matter be destroyed or not?”

The savior replied, “All natures, all formed things, all creatures exist in and with each other, and they will dissolve into their own root. The nature of matter is dissolved into the root of its nature. Whoever has ears to hear should hear.”

Peter said to him, “You have explained everything to us. Tell us also, what is the sin of the world?”

The savior replied, “There is no such thing as sin, but you create sin when you mingle as in adultery, and this is called sin. For this reason the good came among you, to those of every nature, in order to restore nature to its root.”

He continued, “That is why you become sick and die, for [you love] what [deceives you]. Whoever has a mind should understand.

“Matter gave birth to passion that is without form, because it comes from what is contrary to nature, and then confusion arose in the whole body. That is why I told you, be of good courage. And if you are discouraged, be encouraged in the presence of the diversity of forms in nature. Whoever has ears to hear should hear.”

When the blessed one said this, he greeted all of them and said, “Peace be with you. Receive my peace. Be careful that no one leads you astray by saying, ‘Look here’ or ‘Look there.’ The child of humanity is within you. Follow that. Those who seek it will find it. Go and preach the good news of the kingdom. Do not lay down any rules other than what I have given you, and do not establish law, as the lawgiver did, or you will be bound by it.”

When he said this, he left them.

2. MARY CONSOLES THE DISCIPLES AND PETER CHALLENGES MARY

The disciples were grieved. They wept profoundly and said, “How can we go to the gentiles and preach the good news of the kingdom of the child of humanity? If they did not spare him, how will we be spared?”

Mary stood up and greeted them all, and said to her brothers, “Do not weep or grieve or be in doubt, for his grace will be with you all and will protect you. Rather, let us praise his greatness, for he has prepared us and made us truly human.”

When Mary said this, she turned their hearts to the good, and they began to discuss the words of the [savior].

Peter said to Mary, “Sister, we know the savior loved you more than any other woman. Tell us the words of the savior that you remember, which you know but we do not, because we have not heard them.”

Mary answered and said, “What is hidden from you I shall reveal to you.”

She began to speak these words to them.

She said, “I saw the master in a vision and I said to him, ‘Master, I saw you today in a vision.’

“He answered and said to me, ‘Blessings on you, since you did not waver when you saw me. For where the mind is, the treasure is.’

“I said to him, ‘Master, how does a person see a vision, with the soul or with the spirit?’

“The savior answered and said, ‘A person sees neither with the soul nor with the spirit. The mind, which is between the two, sees the vision....’”

3. MARY RECOUNTS HER VISION OF THE SOUL’S ASCENT

“Desire said, ‘I did not see you descending, but now I see you ascending. Why are you lying, since you belong to me?’

“The soul answered and said, ‘I saw you, but you did not see me or know me. To you, I was only a garment, and you did not recognize me.’

“After the soul said this, she left, rejoicing greatly.

“The soul approached the third power, called ignorance. The power questioned the soul, saying, ‘Where are you going? You are bound by wickedness, you are bound, so do not pass judgment.’

“The soul said, ‘Why do you pass judgment on me, though I have not passed judgment? I was bound, but I have not bound. I was not recognized, but I have recognized that all is to be dissolved, both what is earthly and what is heavenly.’

“When the soul overcame the third power, she ascended and saw the fourth power. It took seven forms:

*The first form is darkness,
the second, desire,
the third, ignorance,
the fourth, death wish,
the fifth, fleshly kingdom,
the sixth, foolish fleshly wisdom,
the seventh, angry person's wisdom.*

“These are the seven powers of wrath.

“The powers asked the soul, ‘Where are you coming from, slayer of humans, and where are you going, destroyer of realms?’

“The soul answered and said, ‘What binds me is slain, what surrounds me is destroyed, my desire is gone, ignorance is dead. In a world I was freed through another world, and in an image I was freed through a heavenly image. The fetter of forgetfulness is temporary. From now on I shall rest, through the course of the time of the age, in silence.’”

4. PETER AND ANDREW DOUBT MARY'S WORD

When Mary said this, she became silent, since the savior had spoken this much to her.

Andrew answered and said to the brothers, “Say what you think about what she said, but I do not believe the savior said this. These teachings certainly are strange ideas.”

Peter voiced similar concerns. He asked the others about the savior: “Did he really speak with a woman in private, without our knowledge? Should we all turn and listen to her? Did he prefer her to us?”

5. LEVI SPEAKS ON BEHALF OF MARY

Then Mary wept and said to Peter, “My brother, Peter, what do you think? Do you think I made this up by myself or that I am lying about the savior?”

Levi answered and said to Peter, “Peter, you always are angry. Now I see you arguing against this woman like an adversary. If the savior made her worthy, who are you to reject her? Surely the savior knows her well. That is why he has loved her more than us.

“So, we should be ashamed and put on perfect humanity and acquire it, as he commanded us, and preach the good news, not making any rule or law other than what the savior indicated.”

When [Levi said] this, they began to leave [in order to] teach and preach.

Commentary:

That is all of the Gospel of Mary that author Marvin Meyer provided in his work, **The Gospels of Mary**. His was an argument that Mary Magdalene should clearly be considered one of the apostles of Jesus based on many accounts about her that seem to offer her as a favorite of Jesus. Though I may agree with Mr. Meyer’s main argument, my citing of **The Gospel of Mary** is not so much to highlight Mary as it is to offer a bit more in terms of what Jesus may have taught. In his overall work, Mr. Meyer offers citations from a lot of gospels, in the **Bible** and outside of it, about Mary Magdalene. Her importance is tremendous as I see it, but her importance acknowledged, I am much more interested in what Jesus may have taught.

The first verse, that headed with the title ***THE DISCIPLES DIALOGUE WITH THE SAVIOR***, seems to be the one and only verse that might be attributed to a pre-death Jesus. The others seem to amount to reflections of Mary and the others after the death of Jesus about their understanding of Jesus and what he may have taught. I find myself intrigued with the first verse because of its potential of being some actual words of Jesus during his life – not to say they were actual words for sure, but only potentially so. On the other hand, verses two through five are much less intriguing to me because they are ponderings about experiences that Mary Magdalene may have had after the death of Jesus. Perhaps they have some validity in a general sense, but I prefer to leave them to and with Mary.

To be truthful, however, I find paranormal experiences quite suspect because one can never be sure who the ghostly sender of a message is. In this case, Mary Magdalene may have been positive that one who sent her a vision was Jesus, but any ghost or spirit who might be trying to communicate with one who is “expecting” some paranormal visit – or visit from a ghost – would probably be smart enough to disguise him or her or itself enough to not be suspected as not being Jesus. Thus, once in, a paranormal ghost could mislead as much as lead. It is because of this possibility that I suspect any ghost for having anything worthwhile hearing.

It is offered in several of the gospels that Jesus warned us against false pretensions in his name – or using his name. Given this warning, I even suspect the alleged vision of Jesus to his mother and Mary Magdalene and the disciples of Jesus may have been fraudulent on the part of some ghost who may have seen an opportunity to gain a foothold. Visions for me are very suspect – any of them – because of an uncertainty as to their origin.

How, for instance, could Saul of Tarsus be sure the spirit who visited him on the road to Damascus was not a pretender? Saul had not known Jesus. I find it all too likely that a

pretender spirit could have visited Saul and turned him into Paul, claiming to be Jesus. Who could know different? This is an example of a possible mislead by a fraudulent spirit or ghost or community of ghosts. The visions as recorded in the famed **Book of Revelations** of the **BIBLE** are likewise suspect for their being advanced after the death of Jesus about Jesus. Who is to say that deceitful ghosts are not the real authors of the visions offered in that work too? It is just too uncertain to trust any of these type communications. So, I try to avoid them.

It is also possible that a vision of another that someone has comes strictly from within the person having the vision. In that case, it is a purely subjective experience and may only be one suggesting to him or herself something of considered importance – much like a dream, if not a version of a dream. Dreams are much too subjective for me to take seriously – be they of the unconscious sleeping variety or the perhaps wide awake visionary variety. I know very little about either phenomenon – and choose to ignore any message supposedly told through them.

For me, verses two through five of **The Gospel of Mary** come under the umbrella of uncertain for potential false paranormal links – or subjective visioning or dreaming. **I am not saying they are false. I am only saying I do not want to trust them.** It is hard enough trying to make sense of personal recollections of things allegedly said. I will leave all the visionary and post death happenings claimed of Jesus to those who have them – at least in this work. Omitting post-death of Jesus verses of **The Gospel of Mary**, however, I have but one verse of that gospel to try and interpret.

CREATURES & MATTER

That one verse (1) begins with a discussion of matter. Jesus is asked *will matter be destroyed or not? He answers - All natures, all formed things, all creatures exist in and with each other, and they will dissolve into their own root. The nature of matter is dissolved into the root of its nature. Whoever has ears to hear should hear.*

I think we need to keep in mind that the English words and English translation may not do the actual words of Jesus justice, but in general, I get from this part of the verse that Jesus thinks that all creatures are like a family of beings, existing in and with each other. I like this idea very much and relate to it. I like to think of myself as a brother to the rose and the rose as a sister to me. I like to think of everything I can see as being one of my siblings. From the sounds of the first words of this verse, Jesus agreed with that kind of thinking.

Besides my being a sibling of all things and all things being siblings of mine, Jesus offers that all things will dissolve into their own roots. What can he mean by that, if he really said it? I do not know. This is a part of the verse that has no clear answers for me. What does it mean “to dissolve into a root”? If it means that from dust I was and to dust I will return, that makes a lot of sense. My body or body parts will return to their source of origin, back to the matter from which they sprang. I have no problem with that. Essentially, however, the matter of my being will not be destroyed. Only that which is formed of the matter will cease and return to its root.

Importantly in this mini discussion of life and matter, however, I am taken by how casual this process probably is for Jesus. It’s only a matter of course, not a decision about good and evil. I like that. Personally, I see no evil in life or any part of any

process of life. All processes in life or within life and life itself are a mystery and a miracle for me. I stand in awe of it all; but standing in awe of it, I do not need to understand it. Jesus may have understood a lot more than I do or can about the process of life. I really cannot go there. Thus, the first part of this verse is wonderfully comforting to me, as if offering sanctity to the whole process of life whatever that process is; but personally, I can't go much beyond a sense of awe in this part of the discussion. It makes a lot of sense to me that things return to their root – or that flesh and life return to the base matter from which they sprang to life. Perhaps that is all that Jesus is saying here.

It is worthwhile to speculate, though, that Jesus is offering that at the conclusion of of life – at least of a human being – the body will “dissolve” into its particular origin – matter - and the soul will “dissolve” (or return) to its original state before it incarnated into body – as soul by itself. In any case, with death, all things return to some original state before any life as composed of parts began in the first place. The body goes back to being matter – or if you wish, dust; and the soul goes back to whatever it was – and maybe wherever it was – before it entered a body in the first place. *(A)ll creatures exist in and with each other, and they will dissolve into their own root* – could only mean “at the time of death of a human being, matter (or body) will return to matter and soul will return to soul (without body).” Personally, that is my belief – whether Jesus intended it as definition in this stated quote or not. FWB (8/21/2011).

ALL ABOUT SIN

Next, however, Peter asks Jesus about sin. He wants to know, what is the sin of the world? Jesus answered - ***There is no such thing as sin, but you create sin when you mingle as in adultery, and this is called sin. For this reason the good came among you, to those of every nature, in order to restore nature to its root.***

I think Jesus is offering that there is no sin in nature, as nature itself is formed – or as natural things exist in life; however, we ***create sin*** for ourselves when we mingle, perhaps only in erratic ways. It could be taken that Jesus offers that we see ourselves in sin when we mingle improperly or that we actually sin when we mingle improperly.

Going at this from my own perspective, I feel that I have wronged in life or have committed wrong only when I view what I do as somehow distracting from a sense of oneness or unity, especially with God, but also with persons. I sin – if you want to call it that – when I do something either with no purpose in mind or a purpose of hurting another or knowing that I will hurt them. In that sense, deviating from my own intent and good ***creates sin*** for me. For the most part, when I do sin – or fail the unity test – it is with another. Thus, it would make sense that I would normally ***create sin*** mostly in mingling with others.

Very importantly, however, I hear Jesus flatly denying that there is sin in nature itself. He said ***there is no such thing as sin*** in terms of somehow existing by itself in nature or life or whatever.

This is very important because it denies so called ***evil regions*** or ***evil places*** or ***evil things***. In my mind, this is somewhat confronting to the traditional notion that humans ***inherit sin***. I hear Jesus saying we cannot ***inherit sin***. We can only ***create*** it. That is to say that no one is ***born helpless*** or ***born defective***. Perhaps we are born within attitudes of helplessness or defectiveness, but that helplessness or defectiveness is not part of our

nature per se. Our natures are, in fact, perfect. It is only by seeing them imperfect that we take upon ourselves a sense of imperfection or defectiveness.

I was brought up with the idea that Jesus came into life to **take away my sin**. According to this mini discussion of sin, that could not be. I have no sin in me to be taken away by anyone. How could Jesus take away that which I do not have? If by sin is meant **improper mingling** with others – as it seems Jesus defines it – then the only way I could become sinless is by stopping the improper mingling. How could Jesus be responsible for that? Of course, he can't. Thus, it would seem that it could not be that Jesus could take away a sin. Now, we are getting down to a real issue of life. In this verse, I hear Jesus flatly denying that he could – or anyone can – take away sin. From the perspective of inheriting sin, such is impossible; and from the perspective of improper mingling, only I can stop that. Thus, Jesus is resolved from having to resolve sin in me.

Of course it could be argued that someone could aid another in stopping their sin or sinful behavior. In that sense, yes, you could aid me in the **removal of a sin**. In that light, yes, Jesus could be considered to provide the insight that allows me to take action and dissolve or resolve my own sin; but in the end, it is I who must resolve the sin – not Jesus or anyone else.

Let us finish this part of the verse. It continues. Let's repeat the entire statement: ***There is no such thing as sin, but you create sin when you mingle as in adultery, and this is called sin. For this reason the good came among you, to those of every nature, in order to restore nature to its root.***

Jesus seems to offer that improper mingling is related to adultery. How could this be? Again, looking from my own sense of comfort, I feel best when I am independent, when I feel a sense of wholesomeness all my own – or feel that I am individually wholesome. Adultery goes against that sense of individual wholesomeness. It suggests that I am not complete unto myself to have need of it. So, from a standpoint of individual integrity or sense of individual wholesomeness, any adultery or dependence on another for personal satisfaction could indeed **create sin** for me.

That is not to say I should refrain from any mingling with others. It is only to say that I should allow no mingling that detracts from an individual sense of worth or completion. Sure, I have to mingle sexually to procreate. That's fine – as long as I do not mingle sexually for reasons of needing it to feel complete. I realize that is a bit of a slippery ledge; but the truth of it should be clear, even if it might seem difficult.

A MINI DISCUSSION OF SEX & SIN

Perhaps we are getting ahead of ourselves by talking about sex now; but since we are chatting about sin and sin is often equated to sex, it might be a good idea to introduce a discussion of it.

I am not much interested in how the world has looked at sex, related to sin. So I prefer to start this discussion as if no history preceded me. Jesus offers that sin is **improper mingling** – though he did not say it that way exactly. He said, ***when you mingle as in adultery, this is called sin.*** I think it is fair enough to call such “mingling” as “improper.” Thus I paraphrase ***mingle as in adultery*** as **improper mingling**.

Be that as it may, when are things sexual improper mingling? The wonderful thing about Jesus is that he accented personal responsibility in deciding the issues of life. So, to start, improper mingling in sex can only be decided by the party or parties involved.

Allowing myself to be personal, I love sex. I see it on the equal of eating or drinking or sleeping. I love all those things too. Sex, for me, though, is as much of the mind as the body, as much of the soul as the flesh. Trying to decide all issues of any worth on a spiritual plain – that is how it might affect my soul – I decide sex on the very platform that Jesus offered we should conduct life – refraining from improper mingling. Of course, it is to each his or her own, though churches down through history have tried more in the area of sex to impose some general standards. But for me, sex is no more or less important than anything else in life. Upon entering a relationship, I ask myself, is the soul of a potential partner in step with me? If the answer is yes, then sex with that person is a possibility. If it is no, then sex is out of the question.

It is really simple – as long as you let your mind decide the issue and not your body. I love my body because I think it is a Natural and Godly gift in terms of both Nature and God are allowing me to possess it. My body is a companion to my soul. I think it was that way for Jesus too. If you do not see your body as a companion to your soul, I can imagine life's issues are far more complicated than they are for me; but loving myself in my soul and in my soul's current home – my body – I am almost always in delight.

I have another advantage, though, too, over almost everyone I know. I am constantly aware that I am really two – not one. My soul and my body make me two. In my case, my soul and my body are quite in love, as it were. My soul looks toward my body for its delight; and my body is always there to respond to the wishes of my soul. Now, if you are one who has a war going on inside between body and soul, then I suppose you would see things much different than I.

Getting back to our discussion of sex and sin, and basing sin on **improper mingling**, I cannot treat my body as anything different than another person. I cannot assume my body wants to do any given thing. It always depends on its state and its health. For me to impose something on my body – as for instance, a drug – I have to consider the possible impact before I can take it. To take a drug for my body without my soul (or mind) in concurrence is to be guilty of **improper mingling** between soul and body. Even though I am alone in the decision, if my soul does something that knowingly will hurt the body and the companionship between soul and body, sin is the result. I will have just exacted a state of **improper mingling** between my soul and body.

In my case, my body and my soul have a thing going between them in the sensual arena. I am not sure it could be called sexual, but it certainly is as good as sex if it is not sex. It is as if my soul wants to know the sensual delights of the body. So I allow my body to comply with my soul's wishes, though I will admit I don't do much in the way of exotic. A little exotic now and then might be ok, but for the most part, my soul is just glad to have a good body for a home. By looking in the mirror at my body, my soul gets the message that it chose well. By enjoying a shower, my body tells my soul that it chose well. I am always in touch with who and what I am because I chose life for the experience.

That does not mean I always choose well. I may try something that I expect to enhance my body; but now and then, it does not work out. To continue some practice by taking too much of a chance of hurting my body, my soul cries out – **improper**

mingling! Stop! I try to listen to my body, but I must admit I do have a weakness for sweets. Now and then I will overdo and have to put up with an awful state of heartburn. When that happens, my soul cries out – **I told you to stop. Now as your soul I have to sit inside of you and experience something other than joy.** So, my soul gives my body a good whipping and I am off to the races again.

I may die of a heart attack while doing what I think is good for my body. It happens. My soul has to take leave of my body eventually, anyway; but to do something that I know will end in a heart attack and abort the life my soul wants to love is a really big issue of **improper mingling**. I think that if people were aware of their own soul/body companionship, they would take life much more seriously and realize that even alone, one can sin by doing what is not good for the continuation of life.

Having said that, if I were to find tomorrow I had some terrible illness that might be treatable, I may well decide to pack it in anyway. I would have a grand discussion with my soul and my body; and if my soul decided it is time to go – I might do it. Who knows? If my body became an unacceptable companion for my soul, I may decide to allow the separation – thanking my body for a truly wonderful temporary experience.

I could exist on an island and only have to deal with myself; but given most reality, one has to deal with others too. I use the same precedence I use in dealing with my soul and body in determining my extra personal relationships too. In the area of sex, I always have to ask a potential partner about it to go forward with it; and a potential partner must always ask me about sex to go forward with it. If I should not ask and simply assume willingness on the part of a partner, then I am guilty of **improper mingling**. If a partner does not ask and simply assumes it would be right, then I am also guilty of **improper mingling** if I allow her - her way.

Again, every person must decide their own comfort level with any dealings in life. It should be a personal responsibility. I am not offering that others should adopt my own standard, but personally I will allow sex only with a partner who shares my love for life in the way I enjoy it. For starters, that means God must be a prime consideration. I will not allow sex with anyone who does not exclaim **Oh God** during the act and mean it. I am personally not interested in dallying in bed with anyone who does not share my love for God and Life.

When the **Oh God** becomes missing in a sexual relationship for me, sex is something I forbid. If I start out with a relationship and the **Oh God** seems to be part of the experience, I can go forward with it; but once a partner drops the **Oh God**, the act changes and I will no longer go forward with it. Why? Because the relationship will have changed to be an **improper mingling** thing.

Improper mingling, for me, is doing anything that distracts my soul from its goal in life of loving life and God in everything I do. If I have a partner who does not see in me a brother in God, then I feel distracted. Perhaps others can do a mind over matter thing; but it does not work for me. Each one must decide on their own what works for them; and that is the key in this discussion of sin. Stated as the Jesus of Mary states it, we **create sin** when we allow ourselves to be distracted from our goals in life. It is not only up to each person to decide their own goals, free only to consult as the soul it is, but it is also up to each person to decide if an act is a distraction toward meeting a goal. I cannot decide sin for you; and you cannot decide sin for me. My virtue could be your sin and my sin your virtue. Ideally, that is the way it should be.

GOOD SOULS – LIVING TO HELP TRAPPED SOULS

Then Jesus said: *For this reason the good came among you, to those of every nature, in order to restore nature to its root.* What could he have meant by that? Who are the good who came among us? I think that is a reference to souls with a sense of individual wholesomeness being born into the world to aid others without such a sense. That implies reincarnation. That implies that some of us come into the world without a proper sense of individual integrity or wholesomeness and others are born into the world with a proper sense of integrity. Jesus did not say – for that reason, I came into the world. He said – for that reason, the good came into the world, implying a community of good souls. At least, that is how I see it.

To continue, Jesus said the good came into the world *to those of every nature, in order to restore nature to its root.* What did he mean by *to those of every nature?* Perhaps he was talking about attitudes. Maybe it should have been stated – to those of every attitude. But that could only mean to those of every bad attitude or every unkind attitude or “un-good attitude.” But why? *In order to restore nature to its root.* If he really meant nature in general, that implies nature has somehow lost its way in order to need restoring.

We have already determined that Jesus did not believe that there is sin in nature itself. So we know he could not have meant that nature itself needs restoring. My answer to that is that if nature itself does not need restored, then it must be our perception of nature that needs restored or corrected. Maybe some of us have wandered from a proper perspective of nature – perhaps by becoming to believe there is sin in nature – and the good who have a proper perspective are born into the world to help us who have wandered back to a proper perspective of seeing nature and everything in nature as intrinsically good. Now, that makes one heck of a lot of sense. Doesn’t it?

Of course if you do not believe in reincarnation and the previous existence of souls prior to any incarnation, then that makes no sense. Then you are left to trying to explain people being bad by virtue of inheriting bad natures or bad bodies or bad spirits or whatever. That seems to me to be the approach that much traditional religion has taken. People are not born with personal dispositions. They are born with natural dispositions and everyone is tainted by nature – or a fallen nature. As I see it, however, the Jesus of Mary did not believe in the possibility of a tainted nature. He said there is no such thing as sin in terms of nature itself. He said that we only “create sin” by doing stupid things – like adultery. Am I not right?

Given that reincarnation is likely, however, it all makes sense. If souls exist prior to incarnating, they must have had previous experiences. Upon reincarnation, whatever attitudes they had in a last life could only be inherited in a current life. In that sense, some souls could **inherit the sin of their fathers**, but “their fathers” are really only themselves since they have really inherited themselves in terms of being born again with the same attitude of their previous death. A lot of this makes sense from that point of view. Perhaps Jesus said, the good came among us in order to restore us to a proper path. In that light, yes, Jesus could be seen as a savior – as could all of those good souls that Jesus talks about in this verse. It makes a lot of sense to me, given that we are talking about wayward souls and not wayward natures.

In any discussion of life – be it about Jesus or anything – I take note that I may not be getting it right. I try to present my arguments within a scope of trying to make sense of things. I have no revelation to assure me that anything I think is right; but by thinking about things, at least I do not leave myself completely naked with no defenses from thought onslaughts of others. None of us know for sure about anything that is of a spiritual or transparent nature. We are all guessing. In many cases, the thoughtful are blind; in others, perhaps, there is clearer vision. All we can do is try and see as clearly as we can and leave as little to the supposed insights of others as possible. It is in this light that I even attempt to interpret what any wise man may have said. In the end, if it makes sense, it might be right; but if it makes no sense whatever, then it should be suspect.

SIN – PRECEDENCE FOR ILLNESS

Assuming our pondering makes any sense whatever, let's continue with the first verse. Jesus then said: *That is why you become sick and die, for [you love] what [deceives you]. Whoever has a mind should understand.* I think Jesus is implying that sickness and death, though not all death of course, results from confusion. This is a continuation of the theme of our creating sin for ourselves with improper mingling. Because we commit sin, we become sick – and with some sickness, the end is death. Thus, our deaths can be attributed to sin – in some cases. Jesus died. Theoretically, he had no sin. So all death can not be attributed to sin; but that death which results from avoidable sickness, I guess, can.

That makes sense. Look at the current **AIDS** sickness. It is one sickness that clearly results from **improper mingling**. Though there are exceptions, many **AIDS** victims become sick because they mingle and pass on entities in some fashion that result in sickness. Without such mingling, this sickness would not happen; and perhaps it is true with most sickness. Maybe by improper mingling with each other, we share germs and agents that cause our health to break down. The more independent each of us is, it stands to reason, the less likely we can catch a disease by improper mingling.

This is not to say we should not mingle at all; but I think it is a strong statement for loving the solitary as much as possible. Personally I love to mingle with others, but never to the detriment of my own sense of worth. If I am exposed to a situation that serves to undermine my sense of integrity, this kid is gone – not only to preserve my own soulful and mindful health, but to allow others to go on their path as they choose as well.

I do believe Jesus was one smart guy. He knew how important it is to stand alone and not depend on another for one's worth. He tried to teach that independence to all; and yet, I think he was misunderstood. I think we have concluded that for his independence he was seen as stronger than any of us can be. He did not depend on others. For that, he was made a God because only Gods can be independent. We missed the tale of his life if we conclude that. At least, I think we do.

Jesus could have engaged in improper mingling with others, but he didn't. Why? Because he did not have any need of mingling to prove his own worth. He was strong, but his strength was not without reason – or above reason. We have made him a God because we have failed to understand his wisdom; but his wisdom can be and should be general. No man has any monopoly on what is right. Jesus had no monopoly on having a

clear vision of life. We can all have his vision – if we only learn to admit our individual worth.

Why are we individually worthy? Because God is in us all. Jesus has nothing to do with God being in us all – including himself. That is just the way it is. Jesus only recognized God – or The Father – is in us all. Jesus only recognized that we all come from God. We can all recognize that; and by so doing, see ourselves as the individually worthy we really are. None of us are born, lacking God. We all have God in us. How can we know that? By a simple process of deduction reasoning – or induction reasoning.

We can deduce that an Infinite God must be in each individual because God, being Everywhere, has to be in each entity. Flipping the logic, we can induce that we are all in God for the same reason. If God is everywhere, as It must be to be Infinite, then all must be in God and God must be in all. It is really simple.

In **The Gospel of Thomas**, Verse 3, Jesus says that *the Kingdom of the Father is inside of us and outside of us*. Jesus was aware of the omnipresence of God. I think it is that thought that provided the basis of his courage and his confidence. I say that because it is the thought that has provided the basis of whatever courage and confidence I have in life. In not having to struggle with the possibility of being shy of God, Jesus and I and anyone can handle the various issues of life with confidence. Knowing God is in us, we can not be deceived to believe that we need God. Knowing we do not need to attain a God we already have, no one can lead us astray by promising God via some saving exercise.

To know of the idea of omnipresence of God and celebrate it on a constant basis is the path to solitary perfection – or knowing solitary perfection. It is not our knowing it that makes it so. It is so whether we know it or not; but if we do not know it, we will not act like it; and if we do not act like it, then confusion and illness and sometimes death results.

ABOUT MATTER & PASSION

Let's continue with the verse. We are getting into deep waters now, but some of it is easy. Jesus said: *Matter gave birth to passion that is without form, because it comes from what is contrary to nature, and then confusion arose in the whole body. That is why I told you, be of good courage. And if you are discouraged, be encouraged in the presence of the diversity of forms in nature. Whoever has ears to hear should hear.*

Matter gave birth to passion that is without form. What did he mean by that? I guess it's to say that passion could not be if it were not for matter. It is certainly an interesting thought for me. I am not sure what to make of it, though. Passion comes from matter or what is material. I guess that is to say that passion does not come from what is immaterial. Why would that be important anyway? So what? Who knows about the immaterial – or perhaps that which can be called **spiritual**?

I have always believed that the soul – which might be considered **spiritual** – comes into the body or takes residence in a body for a time. Why would a soul do that? Perhaps it is because of that *passion* that arises out of the material. I guess souls want to use that passion and can't have it in their own form. I would suspect the same. This passion that comes from the material is good, but *it comes from what is contrary to nature* if we are to believe this verse. What would Jesus mean by that – passion being contrary to nature?

What is nature? No one really knows the answer to that. We are all in nature, but none of us really know what it is. It just is, that's all. Personally, I think nature should be capitalized because for me, Nature includes all – all of the so called **spiritual** and all of the material. I think only a fool will try to analyze Nature per se. We are in it. What does it matter how we arrived within it? It should be for us to be grateful for being in it and pretty much let it go at that.

Still, this verse does intrigue me. I think it does have some real meaning. How could passion that comes from the material be contrary to Nature when the material exists within Nature? It's confusing. Isn't it? Come to think about it, Jesus admits this – he said **and then confusion arose in the whole body**. But then he offered that we should not let our confusion discourage us. We can't figure it out – at least not mere mortals like me. I am quite happy being a mortal and I do not have to have all the answers to lead a good life. And Jesus would agree, for after he said that I would be confused, he said, **be encouraged in the presence of the diversity of forms in nature**. Never mind having to understand it. Just look at the diversity within Nature and be happy with that. Why not? I am part of that wonderful diversity. So why not be happy with that? Right?

In other words, I think Jesus is telling us that we should celebrate life for the diversity of forms within it. Look at the diversity of things, he offers, to note how well you fit in as one of the diverse forms. Look at a butterfly and be glad and be joyful. Look at a deer and be glad and be joyful. Look at a marigold and be glad and be joyful. Look at yourself and be glad and be joyful.

I know it has worked that way with me. If I find myself feeling down with myself, all I have to do is look around me and take in the mystery around me. Then knowing I am one of the mysterious, I want to jump ten feet high for joy. Look at the diversity about you, Jesus says, and find courage and joy in life. It is really easy to do that if you just take a moment and embrace yourself within the tremendous diversity of all.

I think, too, it is quite likely that Jesus did not understand it either. He could well have been one like me just speculating about things; but when he offered this “opinion” to others, he had already conjectured for some time about the matter. So it could have given the appearance that he had never been in doubt. I suspect, however, he had been in doubt and had resolved the confusion he encountered by looking out at Nature and concluding as he concludes here – **what does it matter? Let me be happy for being part of the diversity of it all**. And thus, later, when he had an opportunity to share his conclusion with others, he was ready. I think that is the way it happened. I do not think that Jesus was God in any way different than anyone else just because he seemed to answer with some degree of certainty. I think he seemed certain simply because he had thought about it all before where most of his audience had not.

I think it is also good to keep in mind that Jesus has been made a God because of the power associated with that. Jesus has been made a being of wisdom and of miracles that no other human has had mostly to make him a God so that those associated with Jesus can assume power because Gods have power.

It is fairly clear upon review that all that Jesus is purported to have done he did not do. Just look at the miracles of the regular Gospels. All those Gospels report Jesus performing miracles, but note that the greatest miracle of them all is only reported by one of the Gospel writers – John. All the Gospels show Jesus as superhuman, but only John tells of Lazarus being raised from the dead. If that miracle had really happened, you can

be sure that Matthew, Mark, and Luke would have reported it. All three wrote their Gospels long before John and omitted it. Why? Because they did not know of it or about it. How could they not know about the greatest miracle of all time? The only reasonable answer – because it did not really happen and only Dear John contrived it.

What that shows, however, is that a lot of what is claimed for Jesus may not have really happened. How many of the miracles claimed for Jesus really occurred? No one knows and no one can know because once one lie is told, all credibility is lost. Isn't it?

What happens when credibility is lost? What happens to the great speech that John has Jesus offering than none of the other Gospels do? What happens with the verse upon which most of traditional Christianity is based – ***I am the vine and you are the branches?*** What happens to that little gem when it becomes known that John may have contrived that to gain power or to be associated with power just as he contrived the raising of Lazarus from the dead in order to gain power or become associated with power? It all goes down the drain. No Lazarus – No God. No vine – no branches. **No God and no branches of the vine of Jesus – no power.**

But that does not mean Jesus did not live just because lies were probably told about him. It only means that those who told the lies either did not know Jesus well enough to know they were lies or wanted to use Jesus to gain power for themselves. Take your pick. Almost for sure since only the last Gospel writer of the **BIBLE** told about Lazarus, the tale of Lazarus being raised from the dead is probably fiction – and so is anything else reported in John. If he told one tall tale, he probably told all sort of tall tales, including, of course, the ***I am the vine and you are the branches*** jewel upon which most of traditional Christianity is based.

In all likelihood, Jesus was made a God because he may have seemed one for his seeming understanding of the world. Only Gods can understand. If Jesus understood, he had to be a God. Accordingly, if Jesus is a God, then it should be OK to attribute all sort of miracles to him even though those miracles are fable. What would it hurt?

I do not doubt that even John saw Jesus as a God because he wanted to be associated with power. We all do, I guess, until we come to realize that power is not what wisdom is all about. Wisdom is not about power. It is about accepting ourselves within the realm of Nature. It is not about becoming Nature and becoming powerful like Nature. It is about becoming comfortable with being a son of Nature, a child of Nature; and that discussion is just ahead. I think Jesus had thought about that a lot before he started what is called his “public ministry.” He went into that ministry well prepared with answers he had found from his own personal search; but he probably never intended to be made a God for that knowledge or understanding.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD – NOW & HERE

Then Mary Magdalene, if that's really the author of this gospel, says that ***when the blessed one said this, he greeted all of them and said, “Peace be with you. Receive my peace. Be careful that no one leads you astray by saying, ‘Look here’ or ‘Look there.’ The child of humanity is within you. Follow that. Those who seek it will find it. Go and preach the good news of the kingdom. Do not lay down any rules other than what I have given you, and do not establish law, as the lawgiver did, or you will be bound by***

it.” When he said this, he left them. Presumably, the reference to *he left them* refers to the death of Jesus.

I think he is telling us to never mind if we have not understood what my little brain has had a hard time pondering. Don't let anyone lead you astray, he says. Don't be deceived if one says – Look over here, I have the answers – or Look over there. Look at yourselves, he said. Look for the *child of humanity* within you. Those who seek it will find it, he says. That, in essence, becomes the rule I should follow – respect for the *child of humanity* within.

Once again, to repeat the warning of Jesus. Mary says he said: *Be careful that no one leads you astray by saying, 'Look here' or 'Look there.'* In **The Gospel of Thomas**, the warning is stated like this: Verse 113: *His disciples said to Him: When will the Kingdom come? <Jesus said:> It will not come by expectation; they will not say: "See, here" or: "See, there." But the Kingdom of the Father is spread upon the earth and men do not see it.*

I suspect we have failed as a Christian world to take heed of those warnings because we have been deluged since the time of Jesus with prognosticators warning us about the kingdom coming now or then or soon or whatever. Strangely, though we were warned and it was spelled out by Jesus, we have taken the Kingdom to mean something to come later when as Jesus says in the Gospel of Thomas that the Kingdom is already here, spread about the earth and men do not see it. The powers that be, however, have nothing to gain by us thinking the Kingdom has come and is here. To keep us in their control, the Kingdom must always be future so that the prospects of a future reward can always be available as a motivation for some controlled behavior. What is so sad about this is that we were warned about it happening – and we still fall for the claims of a future Kingdom.

SEEKING THE CHILD OF HUMANITY

Anyway, with the Kingdom of the Father now present, I am given to believe that I will be alright if I just concentrate on this theme that Jesus calls the *child of humanity*. What exactly is this image of spirituality that Jesus calls the *child of humanity* within us? Each of us must answer that for ourselves, but for me, it is nothing more than humanity itself. It is not, as one translator I read, intended to refer to Jesus. That translator (from a web site called **The Gnostic Society Library**) substituted the term **son of man** for what Marvin Meyer calls *child of humanity*. I repeat my introductory statement on that matter. It is Humanity that is the lofty thing we should admire – and each of us as human within that. The *child of humanity* is really the child of God. It is only that humanity is a child or a progeny of God. It is not to look for the **Jesus** in me, as some might think, but to look for that which is common between Jesus and me – our humanity. At least, it seems so to me.

It does not mean for me to look for the kid in me, either, but to look at my humanity as the child of God. Can anyone imagine a greater celebration than to celebrate what we are? That is what Jesus meant, I think. The *child of humanity* is a Jesus expression that says that humanity is a child. Jesus tried to teach that we should pay no attention to those who try to defame humanity or ourselves within humanity. People too often fail to understand that. It is a very simple concept and no concept is more important than our loving the humanity which is a child of God.

In other gospels, Jesus called himself the **son of man**. By that, I think he was trying to offer what a wonderful thing it is to be a human – a son of man, a daughter of man, a child that is human. I shake my head at people overlooking this wonderful idea and trying to diminish what we are as human by attaching impersonal sin to us – as if humanity by itself is less than lovable. Jesus tried so hard to elevate, not mankind, but our vision of mankind, in terms of asking us to realize that humanity is miraculous; and yet so many people look toward Jesus as claiming to perfect humanity. Not so! Humanity was perfect before Jesus, during the life of Jesus, and after Jesus. Jesus had nothing to do with that perfection. He only offered that it is perfect. His image of *child of humanity* is in my opinion the most misunderstood notion ever offered our humanity in the name of religion.

I suspect that Jesus may have called himself a **son of man**, too, in order to clarify that he was not the God that some of them thought him to be. It was as if to say, Look, I am no more God than you are. I am man like you. I am a son of man like you. Do not make me a God; for if you do, you will be overlooking your own glory and your own power of peace. If you make me different than you, then you will lose sight of becoming like me in terms of being comfortable with life. You come to me thinking you have a sin; but there is no sin in your natures. There is only sin in your dealings with one another if you allow yourselves to be distracted from your worth by thinking you need each other to be sacred.

What is the “rule” that Jesus supposedly offered as the only rule we need to attend? Again, though it can be translated as love of God and love of man and love of self because God is in them all, it can very succinctly be stated as Jesus states it – respecting the *child of humanity*. All law and all rule beyond that is not only useless, as Jesus would offer, but contrary to a Jesus kind of virtue.

LAWS –BAD FOR THE SOUL

He said, “**do not make any more laws and regulations**” other than the rule of adhering to the *child of humanity* within you; but Christianity has done just the opposite. It has created as many laws and regulations as did its forefather – Judaism. That is precisely what Jesus forbade; and yet church fathers, notably Peter and his successors, have marched on making law after law and claiming that Jesus authorized them and authorizes them to do so. Commandment kind of law does nothing to enhance the soul. In my opinion, those who believe it does enhance the soul have no understanding and real appreciation of Jesus.

In Mary, as in Thomas, Peter is presented as someone who does not understand the teachings of Jesus and offers resistance. In the Gospel of Mary, his misunderstanding is of the ideal of *child of humanity* – or simply loving humanity as divine – but in the biblical gospels, he puts himself above a mere rule of love and asserts himself as a legitimate law giver. Jesus said, *Do not lay down any rules other than what I have given you, and do not establish law, as the lawgiver did, or you will be bound by it.*”

Jesus may have been referencing Moses and any other person who has tried to mitigate the rule of love with an alleged law of God; but I think it is just as clear that true Christians should pay no more attention to present and future law givers than Jesus did to previous law givers. As Jesus may have stated in the statement about not establishing

law, what many do not understand is that to submit to any law is to be bound by it – regardless of a law being worthy or unworthy. Jesus warned us not to establish law because of the impact of it in terms of binding us.

Now, binding by law is just fine for those who want to control us, but it may be totally contrary to those who sincerely want to do right. Laws can be the single most dangerous impediment to the maturity of a soul. Jesus understood that and warned against it; but it seems to me we have ignored his warnings because Christian history is full of what might be called law givers using law to intimidate others into submission.

I think that the danger of law to suppress individual freedom has been demonstrated time after time in history. No greater example of that is the story of Galileo being required to submit to the law giver of his time. Here was a man that time has demonstrated was right; and he was intimidated by Christian lawmen via a Christian hierarchy which claimed their authority was God given.

Look what happened to Galileo. He did not agree with the law that bid that he had to renounce his claim that the earth revolves around the sun but he still went along with it. In spite of not believing in the law that was passed to reprimand him for what was considered heresy, he submitted to it. He believed that the lawmen in his case had divine authority over him – and like Jesus offered in the verse warning against law, because he believed in the authority of the lawmen in question, he was bound by their law. In effect, because he believed that others could make divine laws, inspired by God, even though the law was, in fact, unreal, he was still bound by it.

And there it is. The terribly sad thing about it all is that no law is necessary to decide morality – in terms of laws intended to guide a soul to God. Because of the Infinite Everywhere Presence of God, All are already in God and God is already in every soul. Any law that might be specified as some act necessary to gain access to God is on its face, invalid. **Religious law is nonsense.** Jesus knew this; but he also knew that those who might find religious law somehow relevant are automatically bound by it – no matter how untrue in reality it might be.

In essence, I think that Jesus taught that our natures are good – and as long as we see ourselves as whole and without need of aid by another to attain meaning and sanctity, all is well. It is when we insist that mingling and membership is a necessity to attain sanctity and divinity that we create sin for ourselves. There is no sin in our natures, however. The good came among us, Jesus said, to try to get us to realize our individual perfection. He said, look to your nature to find your meaning. Look to the *child of humanity* or the **solitary human experience** to know the good within you.

The emphasis here should be on **solitary**. Social human experience may actually prove harmful to a soul **if** the social interaction is considered necessary for individual perfection; but solitary human experience intended as an expression of individual wholesomeness can only always be right. Like Jesus may have argued, though there is no sin in any of our natures, we may well create sin for ourselves if we require mingling and membership with others as a requirement for individual perfection.

JESUS – NOT A SAVIOR (or MESSIAH)! ONLY A JOURNEYMAN WITH A MESSAGE OF FREEDOM

We have already touched on it, but I think this notion of the good coming among us seems to be an underlying message in all the gospels. I think it means that many who reside as souls who have realized their own sanctity by virtue of realizing that God is within them incarnate in order to help other souls realize the ideal of individual sanctity too. Jesus was probably one of those who incarnated to help others escape from the various prisons of self denunciation. Unfortunately, he has been viewed as commanding the very self denunciation that is contrary to health of soul. He has been viewed as offering that others can find meaning only through him. In my opinion, nothing is further from the truth.

It would be like my telling others that they need me to find their own sanctity. In no way is that true; and I think in no way is it also true that Jesus taught dependence on him for a sense of sanctity. He said to look inward and find the *child of humanity* within, unscathed with real sin. It is, in fact, my thinking that I am not complete and need another for that ideal that I “create sin” for myself. It is my thinking that I need to mingle with you to know my own sanctity that I sin. Nothing in me is sinful, however. It is only in the way I deal with a sinless life that I “create sin” for myself.

CHRIST – NOT A LAWMAN!

Many of the Christians who survived Christ offered themselves within a framework of law – just what Jesus rejected and asked those who could hear his message to reject. Peter went about making law and became just another law giver by initiating the process of dogma, denying completely the soul of Jesus in terms of his request that we attend to the *child of humanity* within us as **the only rule of life. No one needs any law – or dogma - to rule his or her life if they attend to the ideal of loving humanity.** How could there possibly be any other requirement of true virtue? Loving humanity covers it all and does not allow exceptions. If you love humanity, there are no exceptions – including so called justice and judgment.

That the world is filled with law, offered to guide us to Heaven, is a clear indication to me that Jesus was not understood as the proponent of self respect and other respect he was – and is. If I need ten ways to prove I love you, then clearly I have missed the boat in terms of knowing only one rule. Dogma is nothing more than stating a whole bunch of thou shalt and thou shalt nots in order to keep me within some rule of order. Jesus tried to teach us that we should throw out all the dogma of the past and live only according to one rule – the rule of living life respecting the *child of humanity* or **humanity as child** within us and others.

What have we done? We have not only retained all the old dogma, preserved from the Old Law, idealized by the **Ten Commandments**; but we have added volumes of new law in addition. Dogma was the way of life for the Jews when Jesus entered into their world; and dogma was the way of life for them when he left them. He came. They listened, but did not hear – anymore than we hear today.

As Jesus offers in **The Gospel of Thomas**, Verse 28, *empty we have come into this life and empty we seek to go out.* That is to say that we incarnate with a sense of

individual meaninglessness and we die without a sense of individual meaning and sanctity. **Empty we come in – and empty we go out.** At least, that seems to be the case with many. And a huge part of our empty is seeing Jesus as a requirement of salvation, as a savior, when he told us to attend only to the *child of humanity* within us as the only rule of salvation. Like he offered elsewhere, just calling on Jesus does not save us. The only thing that saves us is knowing and living like we are holy unto ourselves because we are complete unto ourselves – being divine expressions. All else is a form of empty.

THE DANGER OF LAW

Returning to the notion of not allowing ourselves to be subject to law, the consequences of obeying law, regardless of its source may well impact us past death. None of us know about that for sure, but I suspect that since souls are really the ones who make religious laws, if we live obliged to their law in life, we may have to submit to their control after life too. That should scare us into living outside of religious law as much as possible.

Why would I have to submit to religious law after death? Because I might be unaware that I actually died and may not know that the law of corporate life may not still apply. I do not know that such is so; but I can certainly imagine the possibility; and the possibility is quite enough for me to make sure I do not allow myself to be controlled by law in life – religiously.

It may well be in death what it was in life. In life, we circle ourselves with minds that agree with our values. In death, we may retain companionship with such minds. That may well be part of the justice of death. If I am greeted after I die, more than likely it will be by souls who divested themselves of law – or the need of it. That is, if that is the way I lived and the way I died. And if I lived thinking I need law to be complete, then most likely, if I am met by any souls or community of souls after I die, it will be by those who also feel a need for law. Even in death, those who live by need for law in life may still need law after death and be encompassed only by those with a similar need. I suspect that is the way it is, but I do not know for sure. No one does.

If such a notion of having to continue a state of mind after death is correct, however, only those who actually agree with Christ in reality will commune with him afterwards. That is to say nothing more than to live with me in the afterlife is to require that you are of the same mind as me – or Christ or anyone you might want to name. In truth, it may well be that to live with any desired soul – or be a companion thereof – I will have to be like that soul in order to be attracted by him or her or it. By our selection of conduct and mindset, we may well be selecting our friends of a next experience. I expect that to be so.

KINGDOM OF HEAVEN – MANY HOUSES INCLUDING *THE KINGDOM OF JESUS*

Like Jesus was reported to have said elsewhere, however, it is good to know that what we might think of as Heaven is likely comprised of many houses – or mansions. One house may contain some who do not need law for completion. Another house may contain some who do; and there may be many rooms of varying mindsets within any

given house. Though Jesus may not actually show up in a given law bound abode, those living there may still anticipate such a visit. It is like that in life. It may be like that in death. I guess that is to say, even bound by law after death may not be any worse than being bound by law before death.

And what a beautiful notion justice is. All of those who think they are getting away with crime in life may find themselves communing with fellow criminals in the hereafter; and those who shared a sense of compassion in life may well find themselves communing with like minded compassionate. The house or mansion or **Kingdom of Jesus** is only one of many possible experiences any of us can choose; but it's all Heaven – even if it's Hell because in it and through it, God is.

As Jesus says in **The Gospel of Thomas**, Verse 113, **the Kingdom of the Father is spread upon the earth and men do not see it.** “Father” here probably means “The God of All.” Jesus may have added: **The Kingdom of the Father is spread about in the afterlife too and many do not see it there either.**

That which is considered the Kingdom of Jesus is often considered to be the same as the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of the Father. You have to treat a word within its context, of course, and sometimes Jesus may have offered the Father as God and other times as a Kingdom he represents. In my mind, I see the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of the Father as used in Verse 113 of **The Gospel of Thomas** to merely represent **everywhere. The Kingdom of the Father is wherever God is. Since God is everywhere, then so also is Heaven or the Kingdom of the Father.**

Within the Kingdom of the Father or Heaven, however, there are many homes, so to speak. One of those homes could be called the **Kingdom of Jesus**. Everyone belongs to the Kingdom of the Father, given understood as Heaven, because everyone is where God is. Everyone does not belong to the **Kingdom of Jesus**, however. To belong to that, you have to be like Jesus and, in essence, live the ideal of loving the **child of humanity**.

I think that in the first verse of **The Gospel of Mary**, Jesus is really only defining his own ideal and asking us to consider it. That ideal is to see humanity as wholesome unto itself because it is of God. Others are free to choose the ideal they want, but Jesus is recommending his ideal as the best of possibilities. He offers that the way of law in terms of having to obey some edict outside of just respecting the **child of humanity** within us (**or our humanity as a child of God**) is to set ourselves up to being bound by the law and lawyers we accept.

Personally, I think that so many experiences that members of humanity have that offer some direction from what is considered **God** are nothing more than directions from some **community of saints** or souls who are bonded by some measure or other. I use the term **saint** loosely as descriptive of “**any soul who thinks they are doing what they should.**” Most of us are probably **saints** of our various communities. I suspect that souls who are outside of incarnation or fleshly housing have some ability to relate to those within bodies. We may know them as **angels** or **devils**. There may be a great deal of power related to any given community of saints or souls; and it could be such power that is often interpreted as **coming from God – or Satan** - when in actuality, it is only from some community of souls or some soul of bodiless status.

We should consider ourselves free to attend whatever ideal we choose, but if the ideal we choose is one of law, then quite likely we will bind ourselves within that community attending the law we choose – and it may not stop with death of body. By

our choice of morals and companionship and companions, we may choose the ideal we want – and by it, our companions of the future as well. I suspect it is that way, though I do not know it for sure.

JESUS – ONLY AN ANGEL FOR HIS OWN COMMUNITY OF SAINTS

Jesus probably represented an **angel** from his own community of souls who think of God as merely the **Blessed of all**. Many do not act in life like we are all of God because of thinking that God is something that we must earn. Jesus knew that God is not something to be earned; but rather something infinite that is present in all. No one has to earn that which is already in them. His is a community of souls which are probably the most free of all souls in not having to abide by any law imposed from without. I believe that Jesus lived to try to free souls captive by law by encouraging them to live their lives free of law and bound only by the simple rule of respect for the *child of humanity* within us.

Most Christian churches do not agree, however. They see Jesus as being an extension of the **Laws of the Old Testament** and the completion of those laws. In my opinion, nothing could be further from the truth. **Jesus did not come to complete any law or set of laws related to attaining God or pleasing God. He came to challenge the laws that were – not confirm their authority.** And the reason? Because of the less than ideal quality of being bound within a structure of law.

Laws bind. Rules guide. At least within the context of this discussion, a law is a regulation or directive for which violation is punishable by an outside of self entity. A rule is a directive for which violation is not punishable by an outside of self entity. Violating a rule only concludes in the violator not reaching some worthy goal. Violating a law concludes – or can conclude – in some punishment of a violator. **The Kingdom of Jesus** is not about laws and no one will be punished for failure to comply with a Jesus directive. **The Kingdom of Jesus** is only about one rule – according to **The Gospel of Mary** - and that rule is to live life respecting the *child of humanity* or **our human nature** because it is of God. To violate the rule is not to be subject to punishment by Jesus for doing so. To violate the rule is simply to not qualify for **The Kingdom of Jesus**.

Unfortunately, many Christians know Jesus as a **Lawyer** or **Judge**, rather than as a **Ruler** – in terms of one who offers guidance. But as we know him, as lawyer or ruler, we will be claimed by a respective **communion of saints**. I see Peter as a lawyer – or judge or one given to law and wanting to bind by law and punish those who fail to obey his law. I see Jesus as a ruler – or one with a rule for himself that he wants to share with others – a rule that liberates a soul from being bound by some form of captive law. Peter can condemn because failure to obey a law can be met with some arbitrary punishment. Jesus cannot condemn because failure to obey his rule only concludes with failure to know a life of virtue.

PETER – LIKELY MISUNDERSTOOD JESUS

It is somewhat curious that people who condemn often blame that which is thought of as **The Holy Spirit** for their acts. As an example of that, in the fifth chapter of **Acts Of The Apostles** of the **BIBLE**, Peter condemns a couple who had just joined the new church for only giving half of their property to the new church. It was his judgment that this couple – Ananias and Sapphira – or a close spelling thereof – should give all their property, not just half of it. When he found out they had held back half of their donation, he called them to him and spit hell and damnation at them, but offered that it was **The Holy Spirit** who was really condemning them, not him, Peter. Peter literally scared them to death as each of them, one after the other, fell dead at his feet. Peter claimed it was **The Holy Spirit** who claimed them in death for *lying against The Holy Spirit*. We need go no further in the annals of Christianity beyond this story to know that it was not the Spirit of Jesus that Peter was following. Jesus would have been thankful for any gift, not demanding of any gift and then judgmental if less than 100 % is offered.

I get the sense from **The Gospel of Mary** that Peter had a hard time trying to understand Jesus; and because he had a hard time trying to understand him, in all likelihood, he never did. The story of Ananias and Sapphira in the fifth chapter of **Acts** proves that. In his ignorance, however, Peter may have assumed that no one could understand Jesus. Thus, one's misunderstanding of him is no worse than another's misunderstanding of him. He probably had no idea that others may have understood Jesus because he couldn't go there. In spite of having no real grasp of Jesus, however, he proceeded like he had known him and perhaps hoped that in some mystical Heaven, real understanding would come.

I suspect that is not the way it works, however. Real understanding probably does not come in the future if it is not experienced now. Sadly, Peter probably took his misunderstanding of Jesus and used an assumed love of Jesus as authority to create a church in the name of Jesus. Near as I can tell, that is most likely what happened. The church as we have it today as one with a great love of law and willingness to punish or threaten punishment for disobedience is not what Jesus was about. At least, I do not believe so.

It is a bit sad, but it is also just. It's sad because souls are not being liberated from living bound by law as Jesus wanted. It is just because many who think that they will see Jesus in Heaven but who live according to law probably will not see him – or be with him. They will be with their own kind, but not with Jesus. Regarding the issue of being able to join what might be called **The Kingdom of Jesus**, in the end, it won't matter if one of us claims he is Christian or not. It will only matter that we will have found liberation of soul by attending to the rule of loving the *child of humanity* within us – and within everyone. Notice in that expression the emphasis on the individual. Jesus says, look for the one child in you, not in the family of man.

THE INDIVIDUAL – THE ONLY PROPER FOCUS FOR A TRUE CHRISTIANITY

Between you and me, I suspect that which derailed a true Christianity was the idea that it was inherited through Judaism. Judaism put a tremendous emphasis on holiness

through racial membership and family membership. The individual was lost in Judaism, near as I can tell. Just look at **The Ten Commandments**. Every emphasis in all those laws deals with one associated with another. In those commandments, the individual does not exist – from being bid to honor thy father and mother to not stealing another’s wife. It is this accent on meaning by relationship with others that I think Jesus tried so hard to dispel; and what most of the early fathers of the church tried so hard to maintain.

People ask me, do you mean that you do not believe in **The Ten Commandments**? My answer to that is they are not needed for one who sees him or herself as independently holy. I have no interest in dishonoring my parents, but neither is it a concern. They have their life; and I have mine. Respect is sufficient; and respect is automatic if I know my worth because my worth is their worth. I have no interest in stealing another’s wife because I have no need of any wife. Why would I want to steal a wife of another if I don’t need any wife? I do not need a wife to complete me in my holiness because it is the Presence of God in me and in one who might be my wife that makes me holy. I certainly do not need a wife to attain holiness. So, you see, by accenting the holiness of the individual, every single one of the so called **Ten Commandments** are *obeyed* without any attention in doing so – and without the terrible control of law.

This is what Jesus tried to teach, I think; but because independent holiness would not serve the agents of power for releasing all souls from power, Jesus had to be squelched. Jesus was a Jew by heritage, it seems; and so, it almost naturally followed that in choosing Judaism as a birth place, he was sanctifying Judaism. That became the argument in order for those in power to retain it. In my opinion, as if you did not already know it, Jesus placed **NO importance on race or family** because his was an emphasis on individual holiness, totally independent of racial, national, or family ties.

Unfortunately, some erratic Jews offered Jesus to the world. I do not think they understood him in his plea for individual holiness and integrity. They had been racially, nationally, and family oriented and rather than allow Jesus to stand for the individual, they merely continued the Jewish customs of racial, national, and family importance. From that, we continue with all the insane ideas about man having to subject him or herself to the greater good. Thus, Christ becomes a head of a family in Christ, just one step away from head of a Jewish race – or nation. Now you have everything slanted away from the individual and individual worth and right back to the nonsense that Jesus tried to dispel – **that holiness is dependent upon a social context**.

Dear, Dear Paul was very sincere, I think, in thinking he had it right in trying to emphasize the family – as would a good Jew. He could not let go of his Jewish doctrine, elevating family and race over the individual. He thought he was being very respectful of Jesus by claiming that Jesus was the head of a family in Christ. It sounds good; but it is not the basic message of Jesus. At least, I don’t think it is.

It is, in fact, a derailment of true Christianity because individuals cannot stand on their own for their sanctity. They must depend on the head of the family – Jesus. With that dependence goes any sense of individual worth. Instead of souls going forward looking for the *child of humanity* within them as Jesus bid us to do via Mary Magdalene, we are set to look for the family of Christ and to be a member of the family of Christ. No one can go forward and claim sanctity outside of being a member of the family of Christ.

SOCIAL CHRISTIANITY – NOT ALL BAD

It is not all bad, of course. There is some good in thinking that way. Perhaps by sensing a family relationship with Jesus as head, his doctrine of compassion does filter down in some. In others, however, who have no real compassion but think they are of the family of Christ, these are lost to their own whims and to the whims of their respective **community of saints**. For those communities – or families of souls – well, I guess they hold on to their own; and maybe that is the way it should be.

I think it good to keep in mind that membership in the **Kingdom of Jesus** is an option, not a requirement. No one has to belong; and, in deed, many are probably not well suited to belong;

but what a wonderful world it would be if we were all members! Would you not agree?

JESUS VIA MARY COMMENTARIES

THE END

WAKE UP

A rousing, fast beat song or hymn

By Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

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REFRAIN:

Wake up, my friend.

Wake up and cry.

Wake up and know you are Divine.

Wake up and see.

Wake up and be.

Wake up and love your Divinity.

As I see it, God's all around.
Everywhere, It can be found.
It's inside and outside of everything;
and that should make us all want to sing.
It's in the skies. It's in the seas.
It's in the birds. It's in the trees.
It's in our pets, just begging to be;
and, of course, my friend, It's in you and me. ***Refrain.***

I wonder why people don't realize
God cannot separate lives.
God must be for all to exist,
but what we do is up to each of us.
God is not a judge, rather only a source.
It's up to each to choose a course;
but the course we choose we'll have to keep
because the way we were will become our seed. ***Refrain.***

As I see it, my life's a gift.
I should be aware every day I live.
To embrace my gift and to celebrate
is the purpose of me every single day.
But it's God within that makes me proud
and urges me to shout out loud.
I'm in Heaven – won't you come on in?
Praise the God in you and you cannot sin. ***Refrain.***

Some think they can see God face to face
when they die and go to another place;
but I wonder how that can be
if God is really only Infinity. ***Refrain.***

I urge you, friend, to look at you.
Realize you're a miracle and you cannot lose.
Throw up your arms and exult life
to know the God Which makes you so Divine. *Refrain.*

ENDING: (At least 8 times).

Wake up and love your Humanity!
Wake up and love your Divinity!

THE REAL & THE SURREAL

An essay & song

By

Francis William Bessler

June, 2009

(16 Pages)

Like everyone in this world, I am a gambler. I am gambling that concentration on the real is the best conduct for a soul; however, I am only of a small number in this world who is making such a gamble. Most – the vast majority – are gambling on just the opposite – that concentration on the surreal is the best conduct for a soul.

Who is right? That is the big question, isn't it? The vast majority of people in the world are hoping upon hope that I am not right because it would mean they are wrong.

What is it exactly that I am talking about? What is the real; and what is the surreal? In my mind, *the real is simply what naturally is*. The surreal, then, is what unnaturally is. **Surreal** simply means “**outside the real**” or “**beyond the real.**” Both the real and the surreal deal with what is, but the real comprises that which is not a fabrication of man. The surreal is all caught up with the fabrication – or fabrications – of man.

Questioning the Surreal

Why do those who believe in **surreality** believe it is so ideal? Perhaps there are many reasons that the vast majority in this world are **surrealists**, but I think it is worthwhile to probe the question. As I see it, people are caught up with what man makes rather than what man is because they don't see what man is as fulfilling. They want something more than what man is – naturally. So they comprise an alternate reality to satisfy them in this life. They want something more because what they are is not sufficient.

I think it is quite easy to fall into a trap of wanting more than what is. I find myself wandering in that direction quite often – even daily – but I think I differ from most in that I realize that life and all existence are absolutely astonishing. Then I stop wandering in that direction and become full of and in the present. The present for me is so full of awesome existence that, upon pondering life, I realize that I am part of a wonderful – though mysterious – creation. In other words, the real world becomes the focus of my fascination; and by comparison, the surreal world of man's comprising seems almost empty.

If I am in a position to do so, off comes my clothes so that I can realize the reality I have chosen to adore even more. Let's face it. Man fabricates his own reality in order to pursue an alternate reality – that which I call a **surreal** identity; but when one is happy with one's own **real** identity, then the surreal is not only not needed, but is superfluous – if not detracting.

Sadly, when people choose the surreal over the real, it is like becoming lost in a whirlpool of neglect of the real. When people start down that road and do not realize the direction of their journey, they become blind to what is real. No journey in life is without consequence. There is always more of what you choose in the future of what you have chosen in the past. In essence, to choose the surreal is to deny the real – just as to choose the real is to deny the surreal.

So, why do people choose the surreal over the real – or why do people choose the unnatural over the natural? Because they have no eye for the natural and have become convinced for any number of reasons that they are much better fulfilled by seeking the unnatural.

Natural Versus Supernatural

Earlier in life, I was what could be called a **Supernaturalist**, but I do not consider myself such any more. I believe that Nature itself is “super” because I see it as so fulfilling and entertaining, but I do not need to see more than that. I see Nature as complete. Thus, I do not need to seek for explanations beyond Nature – and the natural. Being honest, earlier when I was a **Supernaturalist**, I was so because of a need to see more to life than what happens every day. I wanted more than what happens every day; and thus, I fell into a trap of assuming there could be more just because I wanted more.

From that need of wanting more than this life, it was really easy for various traditionalists around me to convince me that more does exist. That **more** – or need of more – led me to accept the widespread notion that there is more to life than life itself. That more – or need for more – translated into **needing a supernatural**. Once I decided that a supernatural – or better than the natural – is needed, then it was an easy step to fashion a God Which somehow supervises that supernatural.

I think it is safe to say that most people of the past and present saw and see the natural as I used to see it. They see a natural that is not sufficient. They have wanted and want more; and thus they have been and are **Supernaturalists**. Indeed, there may be something more than what I have and what I am. I do not deny that; but I think that if there is something more, the way to achieve it is not by denying that life now is fulfilling. Sadly, most **surrealists** are counting on **more of life** as being **more of something else** – not more of life itself. In fact, they do not want **more of life**. They want **less of life** because they see life itself as terribly unfulfilling; and thus they become **surrealists** in their search for **an alternate experience**.

The Supernatural – and God

Is that **supernatural experience** that they seek really supervised by a **Supernatural God**? I do not know. I used to believe in the existence of a **Supernatural God**, but that was when I believed in the need for a **supernatural**. In lacking any need for a **supernatural** now, I guess I have also dumped the need for a **Supernatural God**. That is not to say that one does not actually exist; but it is to say that the way I see life now does not require one. If a **supernatural** is not needed, then neither is there need of a **Supernatural God**. Makes sense – right?

Personally, however, I do believe that God exists, but *my God* is only an abbreviation of *Good*. I am *good*. You are *good*. Everything and everyone is *good* because everything and everyone is part of a real world that is *good*. I guess you could say from that perspective that *Everything is God* in that *Everything is Good*.

I can't explain it, but neither do I need to explain it. I see life as fantastic and I am satisfied with life as being fantastic. I have no need for anything more. My life and all life is good because I can't imagine it not being so. If there is an individual God – other than Goodness Itself – then by loving the life that such a Goodness is rendering, I cannot but be loving that God. So if there is an individual God, I am still saved within Its Grace. As it see it, being a true *realist* and embracing *reality* is salvation because whatever is real is of *God* – or is *Good*. *By embracing reality – which must be of God (or Goodness) - how can I not be embracing God?*

The Value of the Surreal

Is the surreal bad? No, I would not say it is bad; but I would say it is less than the real; and by comparison, the surreal is of much less value to me than the real. I am in love with reality in terms of being in love with creation and being satisfied with creation. In comparison, moments spent in and with the natural for me overwhelm moments spent in and with the unnatural. I am much more caught up with the mystery of a flower than I am with a debate as to which of my fellow man is better than another of my fellow man at this or that.

Let's face it. The world of competition is a **surreal** world. It's like comparing making a living with living itself. ***Life is real; making a living is surreal.***

Of course, making a living is necessary. I do not deny that. I have competed with my fellow man in terms of making a living. May the best man win, so to speak. Earlier in life, I programmed computers for a living. Perhaps I did that better than some who may have tried it – however, I tried not to get lost in my profession. My profession was of **surreal** character in that it was of the manufacture of man; however, when my “professional day” was done, it was off with the surreal and on with the real – as much as possible.

Unfortunately, most do not pursue the real when their job is done. They merely transit to another surreal experience. Why do I say that? Because most stay clothed with the fabrication of man even when alone and warm. Most are not really fascinated with what they are as I am; and, in fact, want to get away from what they are as much as possible.

All my life, I have tried to get away from the surreal as much as possible, realizing as I have that the surreal is nothing in comparison to the real; but most people that I know concentrate on escape from the natural and the real. I do not think they know what they are doing – or they wouldn't do it. I guess there is a lot of Socrates and Jesus in me in that regard because I think that both **Socrates and Jesus believed that the examined life is the best life.** But how do you examine life by pretending it is not good enough for you and that you need something more?

Of course, I could be wrong about Jesus, but having studied him as I have in life, I do not believe he taught that the natural life is not the good life. ***I see Jesus as having***

taught that my life is as good as that of a lily, for instance; and if a lily is full of splendor and wonder and majesty, how is it possible that my life can be less.

Jesus & The Surreal

Many are counting on Jesus being a surrealist rather than a realist. That is because surrealists adopted Jesus as one of their own; but that adoption does not make him one of their own. I admit that I may be prejudiced in believing in Jesus at all, given that I do not see him as a surrealist at all; but I think I would not be true to my real perception of Jesus by ignoring him.

When I was young, I believed in the need for a **supernatural** – probably because I was taught there is a supernatural. Accordingly, when my parents or priest taught me that Jesus should be seen as some special one of that supernatural, I went along with it. I did not challenge the idea that Jesus may have represented the supernatural because I believed in a supernatural; however, when I awoke in life and realized that there is no need for a supernatural, then I also realized that the tales of Jesus as representative of a supernatural are probably wrong too.

I think it is wise to realize that people are products and slaves of their perceptions. If a perception is wrong, then so also might be an interpretation of someone within that perception. Who told me about Jesus? My Christian church. And what was the perception of my Christian church? That life is not good as it is and that there must be something more than life to make the life of a soul fulfilling. Early Christian writers and notables - **Mark, Matthew, Luke, John, Peter, and Paul** - all shared that perception of life. Thus, they could only see Jesus in that light – as a fellow surrealist – as one who believed that more than life is needed.

When I left my surrealist outlook on life behind, however, I realized that I could have interpreted things wrongly. I was the product and slave of my own perception that the surreal is the ideal. Could anyone escape that trap – including all who think they knew Jesus and wrote about him in the light of their understanding or impression of life?

Is it possible that Mark, Matthew, Luke, John, Peter and Paul all did not know Jesus and only thought they did? Well, I thought I was right when I was young, but now realize I was not right. Mark, Matthew, Luke, John, Peter and Paul are no different than I was – and am. **We are all subject to misimpressions and misunderstanding.**

Part of the reason that I did have – or could have had – misimpressions and misunderstanding of Jesus, however, was that I was not exposed to all the stories of Jesus when I was gaining my impressions. Little did I know it then, but many stories of Jesus had been censored by the surrealists of the early Christian church – or churches. Little did I know it then, when I was first gaining my impressions about Jesus, but some who wrote about Jesus in the first century may have been much more of the realist type than the surrealist type. They may not have been near the realist I am, but much more realist than surrealist.

Two of the early works about Jesus, for instance, were considered gospels by those who saw themselves as disciples of those works. Those two works – and there may have been more – were gospels according to the apostle, Thomas, and another who may have been an apostle, Mary Magdalene. The surrealists of the early church believed – and honestly so, I think – that these works were illegitimate or heretical. **Some like Bishops**

Ignatius and Polycarp of the 2nd Century found the works attributed to Thomas and Mary Magdalene as pathetic and if they could have banned them, they would have. Ignatius and Polycarp both argued for the denunciation of the works attributed to Thomas and Mary, but until Constantine rose to power as Roman emperor in the 4th Century, denunciation of the works attributed to Thomas and Mary could only be encouraged, not commanded because there were only churches then and not just a single church. Various churches could believe as they found fit to do so; however when Constantine came to power, things changed dramatically.

Like any who are enthralled with the idea of power, Constantine did not want dissension among the ranks of those he ruled. Thus, in deciding to make Christianity the favored religion of the empire, like he did by the year 325 A.D., he encouraged the bishops of the new state sponsored church to settle on a single canon – or perception of Jesus. Of course, that makes a lot of sense from the standpoint of order and power, but it makes no sense from the standpoint of freedom to believe. Does it?

Anyway, Constantine and his bishops embraced only a single canon alright, in terms of allowing only those books about Jesus that presented him as a champion of a surrealist view of life, but in the process, they banned works that embraced Jesus as a realist – as one who found the real or natural as sufficient unto itself. Perhaps Jesus was really a surrealist – as one who believed the natural is not sufficient unto itself - but I strongly doubt that. I have no reason to believe that Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John did not sincerely believe that Jesus was a surrealist, but given alternate works by Thomas and Mary, I have plenty of reason to suspect that Jesus was not a surrealist – and was not considered a surrealist by many of the early fathers of the Christian churches. I do admit again, though, that my own prejudice about life, coupled with a belief in Jesus, may be leading me to make Jesus like me. That is possible.

Commenting briefly to perhaps clarify things a bit, many writings and gospels of the early years were banned by the Christian church by the end of the 4th Century A.D. Not only were those writings and gospels banned, but they were also commanded to be destroyed as heretical and contrary to the needs of church and state. Many were destroyed, but some were hidden to escape destruction. Among those hidden in a cave off the Nile River in Egypt was **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS** and others too. I am not sure about **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARY MAGDALENE**. It was not hidden in the same place that the gospel of Thomas was hidden, but it was hidden, allowing it to resurface in time.

My own favorite gospel, however, **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS**, stayed unknown in that cave off the Nile River in Egypt until 1945. Sixteen hundred years after it was stashed in that cave by the end of the 4th Century, purely by accident, it was discovered in 1945 – in a huge jar. A peasant was stumbling about in that cave and stumbled upon the jar containing the Gospel of Thomas – along with other writings that were probably banned by the powers that were in the 4th Century. The Gospel of Thomas was written in Coptic, an Egyptian language, but has since been translated into many languages, including the English language.

So, there it is – how we even have an alternate gospel with which to compare the canon gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John of the **BIBLE**. For 1,600 years, the world did not even know anything about them. So, before 1945, there could be no room for speculation about an alternate more *realistic Jesus*, but with the discovery of 1945,

we can now begin to speculate – and reconsider our impression and understanding of Jesus. **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARY MAGDALENE** was discovered by the end of the 19th Century, however I am not familiar with the details of that discovery. Suffice it to say, it, too, was found after being hidden to escape destruction for probably at least 1,500 years.

Jesus & The Real

What “proof” do I have that Jesus may have been a realist and not a surrealist? Many of the verses of **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS** at least hint at that idea. One verse of the Gospel of Thomas has Jesus telling his disciples that they would recognize him for what he was – or who he was – when they *could take off all their clothing without being ashamed*. That is the notion of a realist, as far as I am concerned. It is saying that we should accept ourselves as we are and not be ashamed of ourselves as we are. That is the dictation of a realist – one who is not looking for something better than we are and one who is a believer that we are good as we are. I think Jesus was offering by that statement that he could only be known by those who were like him. To know him required a sense of shamelessness and acceptance of the body as a shameless vehicle of the soul. It takes one to know one comes into play. *The shameless know the shameless; but one who is full of shame cannot know one who is without shame.*

I can understand that because I think life is without shame. I can *take off my clothing without being ashamed* because I see no shame in life itself. Thus, if I had been there that day when Jesus offered the condition of knowing him, I may well have qualified because one realist can know another realist; however a surrealist cannot know a realist because he or she has no common base with the other. As such, if a surrealist is to comment about a realist, it is entirely likely that he or she will get that realist wrong; and I think that is exactly why Peter and those who believed that life is sinful could have misinterpreted Jesus. They may have done the best they could to try to understand him, but in not sharing a common base of shamelessness, they had no way to really know him. Unfortunately, they probably did not know that they did not know Jesus for what he really stood for – and then went about preaching tales of Jesus to make Jesus look like he was “above life” for not being saddled with the same misery of shamefulness with which they were saddled.

In another verse in the Gospel of Thomas, apparently Jesus is found in the desert by Thomas and the suggestion of the verse is that Jesus was naked. It does not say Jesus was naked, but it implies it – at least in my opinion. Jesus comments to Thomas: *What did you come out into the desert to see – a reed shaken by the wind, a man clothed in soft garments? Your kings and great ones are ones clothed in soft garments and they cannot know the truth.*

As a realist, I think Jesus is only saying that if Thomas expected one who was clothed, he was expecting one who could not know the truth. Kings and great ones – or ones considered great by society – generally separate themselves from others by virtue of clothes in order to be distinguished from those others. One who is caught up with the equality of individuals, however, has no need for such distinction. Only surrealists can believe in inequality because only surrealists live as if they need to be distinguished. Kings and great ones of social stature are automatically surrealists by virtue of their

insisting on a sense of superiority. They are not really superior, but they carry on as if they are – probably believing they are. In that belief that they are superior – or have a right of superiority – they skip by the real truth of their real equality. Thus, they live as surrealists, not realists.

The real truth is that kings and great ones are equal to those they may think they have a right to exceed and maybe control. They do not live in the real world of real truth – and that is why they cannot know the truth. I can go naked because I do not have or need a sense of superiority. ***My nakedness is expression of my true equality.*** I can know the truth – unlike kings and great ones – the truth of the true equality of man simply because I do not need to set myself apart from others by implying with dress that I am different than they.

A realist also is one who is willing to look at life and from his or her observations, conclude truths about it – as opposed to a surrealist who believes that life itself cannot tell us enough and that we need some revelation about life from the supernatural. In the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus is presented as telling us to ***know what is in your sight and what is hidden will be revealed.*** That is the notion of a realist – one who believes that anything that may exist beyond our sight is only an expression of the same process or source that may have produced us. ***To know ourselves, then, is to know anything and anyone we do not know.***

If the Gospels of Thomas and Mary Magdalene had not been written, I would have had no reason to suspect that Jesus may have taught this; however, given that such works were written, there is room to believe Thomas and Mary Magdalene may have had a different perception of Jesus than the others.

Sin & Surrealism

Surrealists, looking to blame their natures for their own failures, also believe in sin. Sin – and the belief in it – is central to their dogma of life. But did Jesus believe in sin? The canon gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John would have us believe he did believe in sin because it was his purpose to erase it as a special son of God; however in **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARY MAGDALENE**, such a belief is very suspect.

In Mary Magdalene's Gospel, Peter is presented as asking Jesus about sin. Jesus is presented as answering: ***there is no such thing as sin, except that you create it, as in adultery.*** One may argue about what Jesus meant by ***adultery***, but it is clear that the Jesus of Mary did not believe in sin as in being inherited within one's nature. Only a surrealist would have need to believe that life as it is lacks goodness and has sin.

Continuing to Question Jesus as a Surrealist

Those are just a few examples that imply at least that Jesus may not have been the surrealist he was presented as being in the canon gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John. Why do I take the time to present this argument? Because so many who think they know Jesus also champion surrealist notions about life, presenting Jesus as one who believed in their surrealist notions that life is not fit as it is; but did he? I cannot answer

that question for anyone but myself; but at least you should know that I have plenty of reason for thinking as I do.

Also, I think it is worth noting that the *realist gospels of Thomas and Mary Magdalene* concern themselves only with what Jesus taught, not with what Jesus allegedly did – as in healing the blind and the lame and raising people from the dead. From my *realist* standpoint, given that Thomas and Mary offer no tales about Jesus performing miracles, I am much inspired to believe that the miracles that the others offered are additional fabrications. **I doubt very much that Jesus healed anyone beyond encouraging others to believe in their own powers of self-healing.** The Gospels of Thomas and Mary make no mention of healings. If Jesus did heal people in the way the canon gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John claim, then I can't imagine Thomas or Mary not mentioning them.

Why would the canon gospel writers claim healings for Jesus if they did not happen? Because the canon gospel writers were surrealists – looking to inspire a following of Jesus – and themselves – with surrealist tales. That is the very nature of surrealism. **Many surrealist writers are only novelists who have no reluctance to dress their characters with attractions that inspire belief in those characters.** That is my opinion. I have read so many stories of novelists who offer a real life as a main character of their story, but then fabricate all sort of myth and fantasy to fit that real character – or character that actually lived.

There is no reason for me not to believe that many of the tales about Jesus in the canon gospels are only novelist tales intended to inspire a following. If they had happened, Thomas and Mary would have told them about them. Why didn't they tell such tales? Probably because they never happened.

As *realists*, intended to stick to the truth, *Thomas and Mary* could not tell tales that never happened; however **surrealists** like **Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John** could tell such stories – even though they knew they were false – and not give a second thought about it. They did not think they were **lying**. They were only **illustrating** that if Jesus wanted to heal people, he could have. That **could have** may have become a **did** because for a surrealist author intending on telling a tale that convinces and not necessarily a tale of truth, all is fair. If Jesus **could have** healed the blind and the lame, then as far as surrealist authors are concerned, it is fair to say Jesus **did** what they think he could have done.

And therein is the trap of **surrealism**. People can get so caught up in their fantasies that they begin to see those fantasies as real. Then later people like you and me read those fantasy reports and think they were real. **How many people would drop Jesus like a hot potato if he had not been dressed up in extraordinary happening?** At least **surrealists** do not want ordinary. They want extraordinary. If Jesus had not been dressed with extraordinary happening and had only been offered like Thomas and Mary offered him – as much like a Socrates urging wisdom, Jesus may have died on that cross and may have never been heard of again.

That which is so sad about dressing a real Jesus with fantasy offering is that the real Jesus is lost. For me, that is almost stunning for its compromise of the truth that we are all equal children of the same God – Jesus included. I think Jesus taught wisdom like Socrates taught wisdom and encouraged his listeners to “imitate him” in his wisdom.

That wisdom was primarily caught up with the virtue of kindness. Jesus taught kindness. Who cannot imitate that?

But who can imitate healing a blind person or a lame person? Who can imitate a person who raises people from the dead? No one! And that is the tragedy of whimsical tales about Jesus. **Surrealist authors like Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John defined Jesus in such outlandish ways as to make imitating him impossible.** Did they know what they were doing? I don't know. They may have been willing to tell nice lies about Jesus because they may have thought they were in the last days and that time was of the essence, so to speak. **If a "nice lie" could convince someone to give their life to Jesus before time ran out, then why not?** That may well have been their thinking.

If that was their thinking, however, the world didn't end. Did it? And all of history may have been shattered with their **nice lies**. Now we have been given a false Jesus, a Jesus that did not do the things claimed of him – or we may have been given such a false Jesus. It is hard to know what was true of Jesus and what was a fabrication about Jesus when we have had to learn about Jesus from **surrealist** authors, convinced that life as it is lacks worth, but that somehow some outside of life grace can be added to life to make it worthy.

I realize that some who are reading this are questioning my claim that the canon gospel writers may have made up things about Jesus in order to more assure a following of him, but let me offer one example of a miracle that John claimed of Jesus that probably did not happen; and if one claimed miracle did not happen, how many of the others did not happen either?

Three **surrealist** authors wrote gospels about Jesus before John wrote his story. It is now believed by many canon gospel experts that Mark wrote the first canon gospel – probably several decades after the death of Jesus. Then Matthew wrote his story many years later; and many years after that, Luke wrote his version of Jesus. All three of these writers offered stories of Jesus healing people, implying at least that they thought such tales were useful; however none of the three told about Lazarus being raised from the dead. Only John, good ole **surrealist John**, told about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. I admit that **surrealists** could believe that three could write tales about Jesus and make no mention of the so called **greatest miracle of all time**, but *realists* like me cannot. It is possible, but very improbable. ***Realists like me can only conclude that in all likelihood, John made up the tale of Lazarus.***

Did Jesus really heal people? Probably not, but because we were told he did, we have believed it. In believing it, however, we have lost the real Jesus. Jesus taught the wisdom of kindness to all. It is so easy to imitate a virtue like kindness; but it is impossible to imitate an extraordinary act like healing a blind person or making a lame person walk or raising a dead person from his bed of decay. When was the last time you ever saw someone imitate that?

Jesus spoke of a kingdom from which he came and represented. He offered that any who "imitated" him could belong to that kingdom. That kingdom, however, is a metaphorical or figurative kingdom – not an actual physical kingdom. **Amazingly, realists seem to realize that Jesus is only speaking of a metaphorical kingdom – of kindness among members; however surrealists think he was speaking of a real physical kingdom.** Thus they expect they will someday be admitted to that kingdom simply by claiming belief in Jesus as Lord; but it was not belief in Jesus as Lord that

Jesus taught is necessary. It was – and is – belief in his teaching of kindness to all – and in believing – doing. Jesus taught that if we believe what he taught – which is what he lived – we would imitate him – not call on him to do for us what we alone can do for ourselves. ***Salvation is not calling on another to do for you, but doing for yourself.***

In another of the verses of the *realist* Thomas, Jesus says: ***that which you have within you will save you. That which you do not have within yourself will destroy you.*** Unfortunately, in the 4th Century, surrealists banned such statements as having come from Jesus - and the result has been that we have been led to believe that Jesus taught we must call upon him as our personal savior and lord to enter his kingdom (of kindness).

In the end, it is to each, his or her own. A *realist* can understand that. A *surrealist* may not.

The Surreal and The Soul

Does my being a *realist* lead me to deny the existence of a soul in each? I think the soul is a very important consideration and I should answer that. No! I do not think that realistically I can deny the existence of a soul. On the contrary, I do believe in the existence of a soul in each, but not as something **implanted by God**. If I do have a soul, it can only be an entity that envelops or indwells within my body; however such an indwelling can be explained rationally and not assumed irrationally.

How can I explain my soul? By looking at the real. I can go into a house. Can I not? I can go out of the house. Can I not? The whole me can go into and out of a house. That is clear. Realism tells me this. If the soul exists as some temporary occupier of a body house, then there is no reason why it should not be able to go into and out of that body house.

I do not claim that realism leads to answers about everything, but I do claim that it can provide all the answers I need to live a full and moral life. Again, I am like Socrates and Jesus in that. Socrates held that knowing about life should give us all the information we need to lead good and moral lives – as long we pay attention to what we learn. Socrates observed that people continue to act as they acted before. Based on this “evidence in life,” he believed that if he had a soul and that soul at some time departed his body, it would only likely continue as it was before departing the body. That is the notion of a realist; and Socrates was a realist. He concluded about the unknown by observing what is known.

Was Socrates afraid his soul would go to Hell? No – and neither am I for the same reason that Socrates was not afraid. In life, Socrates was his own manager – regardless of the conduct and rules of others who may have lived in Athens where he lived. Socrates took hemlock as he was sentenced to do so by an Athenian court for “corrupting the youth” and “failure to worship the gods of Athens.” He was calm, though, when he took the hemlock because he believed that his soul would only continue as it had been in life. Socrates lived 400 years before Christ – and he believed in the existence of a soul. I think such a belief is only rational because it is predicated only on the idea that there is a before and after. Such a thought is clear when looking at life; and such a thought is far more realistic than surrealistic – or at least as much realistic as surrealistic.

But I can learn from Socrates – just as I can learn from Jesus or anyone. I can review their observations and agree with them or disagree with them. In agreeing or disagreeing,

however, I do so based on what my mind tells me – not what some mind outside of me would have me believe. That is realism – not surrealism.

Needless to say, believing and teaching realism can be dangerous – as the lives of Socrates and Jesus have demonstrated; but such demonstrations have also been really good for a realist like me. I may be condemned, too, for “corrupting the youth” and “failing to worship the gods of surrealism,” but like Socrates and Jesus, such condemnation cannot kill my soul. Whatever it – my soul - is, it will continue just as it chose to be. **My soul can be commanded to no Hell or ushered to no Heaven that I do not choose.** That is what realists believe – or at least what this realist believes.

The Surreal & Sex

Is sex realistic or surrealistic? It depends on the circumstance, of course. In my view, sex is realistic when conducted for the natural process of procreation. It is surrealistic when conducted for any other reason. I think life is much simpler and much more fulfilling when we conduct ourselves within the range of design and do not assume to act on our own without regard to design.

Surrealists, however, tend to think of sex as recreation and often convince themselves that copulation was designed for pleasure, not procreation. In thinking that way, sex becomes a real hot button – and so very complicated. Men get up tight about being able to please their ladies and ladies get up tight about being able to please their guys. *When it's all about pleasure rather than design, no one is sure about anything; and the confusion that reigns often destroys most of the pleasure that was sought.* At least, that has been my experience – though I will admit that being the realist I am, I have almost always restricted sexual intercourse to intended procreation. My take that sex is confusing outside of intended procreation is based on observation of others who deal with sex as mostly recreation, not procreation.

One of the reasons, I think, that sex is so misunderstood and so often and blatantly pursued outside of intended procreation is our social ban on the naked. Consequent of that ban, people do not go naked except to have sex – and that confuses sex with nakedness. We ban nakedness because it's sexual, but confuse the sexual with the naked in doing so. That's another plight of surrealism – of living outside of the real world and making the real world all wrong while making the contrived world of man all right.

Many disagree with me, of course. They argue – at least some of them do – that natural design allows for man and woman to come together in coitus just for the sake of coming together. A baby may happen, but it does not have to happen. There is nothing wrong with two in love sharing their bodies and experiencing rhapsody and rapture in doing so, they say.

My response is – I agree that two in love should experience rhapsody and rapture in sharing their bodies, but I do not see why that should require sexual intercourse. Requiring intercourse can make things so complicated because it places intercourse in a different realm than natural coitus intending conception. If a baby is not wanted, a guy has to fret about a condom or a lady has to fret about a pill. Of course, again it's to each his or her own, but personally I don't think all the fretting is worth it. Is the prospect of venereal disease – including such things as AIDS - worth the risk of acting outside the normal? I certainly don't think so.

Realistically, I can have an orgasm by myself. Realistically, I don't need another. Do I? So, why can't I simply do the same thing for a lady friend that I might do for myself? And why can't a lady friend do for me what I might have done for myself – with a little variation – if that is of mutual interest? I don't need to define things in better detail than not. People can be adventurous with each other without requiring sexual intercourse – and the pleasure will still be there. The real design of man and woman is to come together in sexual intercourse to bond male and female seed into one to make a baby. It is my opinion that we should stick with that design – and avoid all the fretting that may have ensued; but then I try to live according to the real world. Life is so much simpler that way.

Welcome to the Real World!

Oh, how I love the real! I do like much of the surreal world of man, too, but compared to the real – Sorry – the real world and the real me always overwhelms the surreal for me. When I was a kid, I used to get naked all I could and play in the mud and splash in some nearby creek. I am still that way – except that now at the age of 67, I am even more that way.

When I was a kid, I had to sneak away to the natural world to become natural because I was brought up in a home that believed the natural is naughty. Thus, I could never go natural in the house. I had to go out into the wilds someplace and find my own privacy and get with it. Like Jesus had to go to the desert to go natural because his Jewish race and religion frowned upon accepting the natural as Godly, I, too, had to go to a desert of sorts – or someplace where no one was expected. But every chance I had to go into the wilds and get natural, I did. Sadly, very few kids did what I did – and very few adults do what I do now.

I think I owe it to a process of reincarnation, however, that I was able to see clearly as a child within a family environment that frowned on my secret pleasure of loving the natural – including the natural in me. Perhaps I am my greatest evidence that souls must exist before they come into bodies and more than likely continue after the death of the body to pursue another adventure in another body. How else explain my acting as a kid considerably different than my seven siblings and parents acted? **Yes, I think I am my own proof that souls exist and souls continue; and I am my own proof that souls only continue as they were. How else explain me? How else explain you?**

I am a firm believer in Socrates and Jesus – two of my all time favorite heroes. I am sure glad they lived because stories of their adventures have enlightened my own journey through life. **Socrates was 71 when he took hemlock as sentence for his “disobeying the surrealistic gods of his time,” but he was confident that his soul would continue just as it had lived. That is the really important tale of Socrates for me.** Socrates taught that mankind is capable of wisdom by virtue of observing reality. He taught that we should question everything that another man offers and make up our own mind about things based on our own experience. When he died, he died calmly, expecting that death is but a portage to another adventure. He gave into death for not fearing it.

My other hero, Jesus, did likewise. He pretty much taught the same thing that Socrates did 400 years before Jesus – and pretty much suffered the same fate for doing so. He taught his listeners to question the orders and commands of others. True freedom

of soul demands that. I cannot live a free life if I bow to disagreeable orders. I must examine orders of others to assure that I am not wrongfully captive of them. I must examine life – and all the controls over life that others may think they have a right or duty to impose. **Jews and Romans of the day of Jesus did not care for anyone questioning their authority; and thus, like Socrates, Jesus was condemned to death, at the age of 33.**

I do not know what happened to the soul of Jesus upon death, but it may be true that somehow, he avoided death or rose again after he died. I was not there when Jesus passed – anymore than I was there when Socrates passed. We all die, however, and in the end, we all probably continue just as we were before we died – at least in attitude.

In **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARY MAGDALENE**, Mary offers that upon finishing his instructions to his disciples, Jesus *left them*; but Mary does not say where Jesus went. Presumably, he went somewhere after suffering some ill treatment, including possible crucifixion, from the reigning Romans, but Mary offers no further details. She merely offers that Jesus *left them*.

Surrealists believe that Jesus ascended into what they think is Heaven, but why would he do that? There is likely nothing in the air that is more *Heavenly* than what is on the ground if God is everywhere as I believe. So, for what purpose would Jesus “ascend” into the air or lift up from the ground? What’s **up there** that is more sacred than what’s *down here*?

In **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS**, Jesus said: *If those who lead you say to you: “See, the Kingdom is in heaven,” then the birds of the heaven will precede you. If they say to you: “It is in the sea,” then the fish will precede you. But the Kingdom is within you and it is without you. If you (will) know yourselves, then you will be known and you will know that you are the sons of the Living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you are in poverty and you are poverty.* Concluding from this statement, Jesus would not have been of the mind that Heaven is up. On the contrary, he would have believed that Heaven is only a state of mind that realizes we are sons of what he called the *Living Father* and the *Kingdom* for which we seek is *within* us and *without* us – or *outside* of us. So, why would he have ascended in some sort of bodily form into the air as if going someplace up to go to Heaven? It might make some sense in some surrealistic way, but it makes no sense realistically. Does it?

Personally, I like the way that Mary Magdalene offered the departure of Jesus. She says he *left them*. It is enough for me to leave it at that.

They Called Me “Sonny”

They called me *Sonny* when I was a child. *Sonny* saw fit to *go to the desert* a lot as a child because in all likelihood, *Sonny* was only continuing a journey that another *Sonny* had lived; and when this *Sonny* passes on – from old age or whatever – another *Sonny* will continue. Death cannot stop *Sonny* anymore than it stopped Socrates or Jesus. When the next *Sonny* lives again, again he will get naked and romp with the natural – even if he is born within a command of the unnatural.

In the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus said: *the old man in days will ask a child of seven days about life – and he will live.* I think that is only to say that the old man in days will soon return as another child and continue his journey. So why fret about death?

In truth, what little *Sonny* sensed as a child, he probably knew previously as an old man. We cannot forget our past as easily as some may think. We have to continue on. The wise person will not allow lack of examination of surrealistic methods and rituals to control him or her. ***The wise person will choose – not be commanded.***

I am no longer a child, but I still act as I did when I was one. I still seek the natural, though I must admit that being head of house, I no longer have to ***go to a desert*** to seek privacy. I embrace the real openly in my house – and have done so all my life. Even with children about, I have lived in acclamation of the real and the natural – though I must admit that my embrace has also led to several divorces. **None of my three wives have divorced me, but I have divorced them because of a sense that my way of life disturbed them.**

I am not much into disturbing others. Thus, if I sense I am disturbing others, I simply do not stay in their company. That attitude has led me to divorce three times in life, but my principles are still in tact; and as far as I am concerned, that is the most important of all.

As I see it, we all have to make our own way through this world and beyond. One's example may inspire others, but it may fail to inspire too. People have to be ***ready*** to hear. I think that is why Jesus was said to have said so often: ***let him (or her) hear who has ears to hear.*** He realized that people have to be ready to hear.

Personally, I don't think many about Jesus who thought they knew him really were ready to hear. I don't think Peter was ready to hear, for instance, because if I am to believe a tale about Peter from the 5TH chapter of the **Acts Of The Apostles** in the **BIBLE**, even though Peter heard Jesus telling him that one must forgive without end – meaning one should not judge at all – Peter condemned Ananias and Saphira for keeping half of their property to themselves when they had previously committed all.

I can understand Peter being disappointed that some ones changed their minds, but I cannot understand his condemning them for doing so. Condemnation of others was not the way of Jesus, but according to the story about Peter in the **Acts Of The Apostles**, it was OK for Peter. Peter condemned Ananias and Saphira to Hell (though he claimed it was the **Holy Spirit** that did the condemning). Upon Peter's judgment of them, Ananias and Saphira both fell dead at his feet, one after the other.

Therein is a perfect example, I think, that you have to be ready to hear. **Peter heard, but apparently he did not understand** – or he would have said thank you for half of what Ananias and Saphira were willing to give and not judge them as irresponsible as he did. Jesus would have said, ***thank you***, not ***damn you!***

A Final Blessing

My Dad and I had a conversation shortly before his passing in 1966. Dad and I had previously discussed my thoughts that embrace of the natural should be the ideal. All through my childhood, now and then, it would come up. ***I did not understand how someone could claim to love God and hate their own body – which supposedly comes from God.*** Dad mostly countered that it was just the way it is and urged me to keep my ideas to myself because those ideas suggested open nakedness. As head of house, Dad forbid that practice – though now and then I asked him to consider it.

Dad finally surprised me, though. In our final discussion when I was 24, at Christmas time in 1965, prior to his passing from an auto accident in July of 1966, Dad confided that he agreed with me that it makes no sense to claim love for God and hate the things of God. He told me that he did not think I could change any minds intent on suppression of the naked, but he said: *if it means anything at all, you have my blessing to try.*

I have always been grateful for that final blessing – and perhaps it has spurred me on to remain true to my own principles – but I also often wonder what would have happened if that blessing at come at the age of 14 and not 24. If Dad and I could have started to *testify* in our home when I was dancing about with siblings, I think the world would have been different today. Who knows?

But a late blessing is better than no blessing at all. *Perhaps we can change this world to start recognizing the beauty of the natural and the real and the Godly – if we don't wait too long.*

Welcome to the Real World

A song by
Francis William Bessler
(*Sonny*)
Written June 17th, 2009

REFRAIN:

*Welcome to the real world.
Please do not be shy.
You belong to the real world
and you really are Divine.
God is not apart from you
anymore than God's apart from me.
So, let us rejoice in what we are
and enjoy our Divinity.*

Everything's Divine
including all the birds of the air.
So, let's be like all the birds
and find our lives are fair. **Refrain.**

Look at what you see
and wonder about it with awe;
and you will find what you wonder about
is a reflection of our God. **Refrain.**

Our bodies are like temples
in which our souls roam about.
It's best to know our bodies
as hosts of which we're proud. **Refrain.**

Life is like a garden
to which we all belong.
Our diversity should please us
and urge us to sing this song. *Refrain.*

I'm sorry some are mean,
but I pledge to be kind.
Feel free to welcome me
as it comes to your mind. *Refrain.*

I welcome you to join me
as freely as you will;
and hopefully, you will know
some moments that fulfill. *Refrain.*

God is not apart from you
anymore than God's apart from me.
So, let us rejoice in what we are
and enjoy our Divinity. *Refrain (several times).*

THE REAL & THE SURREAL

THE END

LEO'S MOUNTAIN

By Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

Written July 1, 2009

Dedicated to the memory of my Dad, whose name was *Leo*.

REFRAIN:

I'm standing here on Leo's Mountain.

On Leo's Mountain, I'm learning to care.

*I'm standing here on Leo's Mountain;
and Leo's Mountain is standing here.*

I'm standing here on Leo's Mountain.

I'm pondering life's grand mystery.

I delight in all I see around me;

and I have little doubt of my Divinity. ***Refrain.***

I'm standing here on Leo's Mountain.

I'm watching the birds flying in the sky.

I'm so glad I can be among them

and learn that all I need to do is try. ***Refrain.***

I'm standing here on Leo's Mountain.

I'm talking to God and I'm wondering why

people don't realize we're all God's children.

Why is there between us such a great divide? ***Refrain.***

What you may ask is Leo's Mountain?

It is where a lion becomes like a lamb.

It is where all anger is forgotten.

It's where the meek meet to understand. *Refrain.*

I'm standing here on Leo's Mountain;

and I'm calling from here to all mankind.

Let's give up our fears and embrace in kindness

because, in fact, we are all Divine. ***Refrain.***

FINISH: (Repeat last verse:)

I'm standing here on Leo's Mountain;

and I'm calling from here to all mankind.

Let's give up our fears and embrace in kindness

*because, in fact, we are all Divine. ***Refrain (twice).****

DON'T BE IN A HURRY

Written July 14th, 2009

By Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

(an idea suggested by my friend, Orval)

REFRAIN (in a moderate pace):

Don't be in a hurry – to get there.

Don't be in a hurry, my friend.

*Don't be in a hurry – to get there -
or you'll miss some of life's full blend.*

Don't be in a hurry – to get there.

Slow down, slow down, my friend.

Don't be in a hurry – to get there.

You've plenty of time – to reach your end.

Enjoy what you see, my friend –
as you pass through life.

And as the Jesus of the Gospel of Thomas would say –
become a passerby. **Refrain.**

People wonder why they are here – and some
think life is meaningless;
but every time I think of my heart beating,
that notion I do dismiss. **Refrain.**

Many live their lives, storing things –
as if there will always be a tomorrow,
but, of course, for each, time will run out
and there will be no more time to borrow. **Refrain.**

Life is a miracle – and for me –
it's the Heaven for which I seek.
Knowing that God is where I am
is the meaning of Heaven for me. **Refrain.**

Enjoy the wind – in your face.
Soak in the warm sunshine.
Put a smile upon your face
and wave at the people when you go by. **Refrain.**

When it comes for me – time to die,
I will peacefully pass on
to whatever adventure that's next in line -
with the same notion of right and wrong.

And when it's my time – to be reborn,
I'll be the same ole me
that I was in this life
when I walked the world with thee. *Refrain.*

Repeat Verse 1:

Repeat *Refrain* in a very slow pace.

Then repeat it again in the normal moderate pace.

ENDING:

Yes, you've plenty of time to reach your end.

Slow down, slow down, my friend.

You've plenty of time - to reach your end.

You've plenty of time - to reach your end.

You've plenty of time – to reach your end.

CLARA'S HILL

By Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

Written July 19, 2009

Dedicated to the memory of my Mom, whose name was Clara.

REFRAIN:

Be careful where you step,

but step where you will;

and you will find yourself

upon Clara's Hill.

Be careful not to stumble,

but when you do,

get right back up

and know it all belongs to you.

Hey, My Friend, life is out there,

but it's not a distant thing.

No matter where you are,

it should make you want to sing.

Just take time to look at it

and be amazed how it grows.

Then lose your self in all of it

and what you see you will know. ***Refrain.***

The wonder of life as I see it
is that it is filled with mystery.

There is no way I can see sin

because all I see is Divinity.

If all you see is full of God

there is no way to be sad;

Put your hands together and applaud

and let your heart be glad. ***Refrain.***

Stand upon a hill and loudly shout,

Hey, God, I'm your little kid.

I'm so glad to be about

being happy without sin.

I think it's such a waste of time

to shudder and fail to embrace.

It's so much better to see life as fine

and love it without shame. ***Refrain.***

So, God, I accept your gift to me
of the life that's standing here.
I pledge, my God, to believe
that what I am should be dear.
I am as worthy as a flower
that grows so brightly on a hill
to receive whatever shower
of blessings you choose to instill. ***Refrain* (several times).**

I'M A FREE SOUL

By Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

Written August 6-8, 2009

REFRAIN:

*I'm a free soul. It's easy to be.
All I need to do – is know I belong to everything.
I'm a free soul - wandering where I will,
knowing all life is right
and in that knowledge, being fulfilled.*

They ask me why in this world
I seem to get along
with everyone – and seem to be always
singing a happy song. ***Refrain.***

I ask why do others
not get along in this life.
I think it's because others
do not see all life as right. ***Refrain.***

How can anyone be truly free
who sees life as a pain –
and believes no one is good
and all should be constrained? ***Refrain.***

Love is not something, my Friend
that can't be restricted to a few.
It's something you offer everyone
because everyone's the same as you. ***Refrain.***

Jesus lived a long time ago
and taught that Heaven is at hand.
That's because Heaven's only knowing
that God is where I stand. ***Refrain.***

All I need is to look about me
and the evidence is all around.
Wherever there's children playing,
it's where my heart is found. ***Refrain.***

The key to being free, I think,
is to know that you belong.
With that in mind, let me repeat
the message of this song. ***Refrain (several times).***

THERE'S A RAINBOW

By Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

Written September 30, 2009

REFRAIN:

There's a rainbow on my left side.

There's a sunny sky on my right.

It is raining now on my left side.

On my right side, it is bright.

There is no way I should be sad

wandering through this life (for initial refrain and last refrain)

roaming through this life (after 1st verse)

prancing through this life (after 2nd verse)

dancing through this life (after 3rd verse)

because there's a rainbow on my left side

and a sunny sky on my right.

1.

Well, my friends, it's sprinkling now
and soon the rain will make me wet.

But that rain will wash away –
all of my regrets.

I 'll stand in the rain and drink
of Nature's lovely brew;
and I'll let that rain tell me of
some of Nature's wondrous truths. **Refrain.**

2.

Well, my friends, it's chilly now
and the snow is beginning to fall.

Soon the winds will come
and drifts will make white walls.

But as I prance through the snow
and leave my footprints behind,
I can't help but wonder
about the Great Divine. **Refrain.**

3.

Well, my friends, it's sunny now
and my heart is all aglow.

Soon the warmth will come
and make all the flowers grow.

But as the flowers grow and bloom,
so will my love inside.

And as the flowers, I'm inclined
to enjoy all my life. **Refrain.**

Repeat 1st verse.

ENDING: Initial Refrain – then:
*Yes, there's a rainbow on my left side
and a sunny sky on my right.*

I AIN'T GOT ME

By Francis William Bessler
Laramie, Wyoming
Written Oct. 12, 2009

REFRAIN:
*I got Buddha.
I got Moses.
I got Mohammed – to begin with, you see.
I got Peter – pretending Jesus,
but what I ain't got, I ain't got me.*

People live their entire lives,
placing their confidence in someone else.
They think those others will take them to Heaven,
but where they all end is more like Hell. **Refrain.**

Oh, Peter, why could you not hear
what your friend, Jesus, told you so plain?
He said that to know him is to know yourself
if you know yourself without shame. **Refrain.**

The key to finding happiness in life
is to know that all are equally good.
If you think another is better than you
then you do not know yourself as you should. **Refrain.**

So, my friends, take off your clothes
and know that you need no disguise.
Bow to no one, hold up your head
and quietly tell yourself, I am Divine. **Refrain.**

RAMBLING ONE

(Inspired by a comment from a friend, Joe)

By Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

Written November 6-7, 2009

REFRAIN:

I'm a rambling one. It's what I've always done.

I ramble on and on – as I sing my song.

I think it will be – just that way for me

I'll keep on rambling – for all eternity.

*Yes, I'm a rambling one – and I'll keep on rambling on
till this life on earth is done – and another one has begun.*

Yes, I think it will be – always that way for me.

I'll keep on rambling – for all eternity.

I think the key for loving life
is to know that it's Divine.
It doesn't matter if it's raining –
or if there is sunshine.
No matter where I am,
no matter where I may go,
I'll always find life is fine
because it's *wonder* that I know. **Refrain.**

I think the key for finding peace
is to love the singular in me –
to know that I belong as free
to a *wondrous* humanity.
I think each of us should delight
in what we find in our life –
to know that what we are
are just little beams of light. **Refrain.**

My main desire in this life
is to be grateful for the gift –
to embrace my life joyfully
every day that I live.
But, my friends, I'm not alone.
You're the same as me.
We all share the gift of life
and its *wonderous* (wondrous) mystery. **Refrain.**

Final REFRAIN: (Because, rambling is really “wondering”)

I’m a wondering one. It’s what I’ve always done.

I wonder on and on – as I sing my song.

I think it will be – just that way for me

I’ll keep on wondering – for all eternity.

*Yes, I’m a wondering one – and I’ll keep on wondering on
till this life on earth is done – and another one has begun.*

Yes, I think it will be – always that way for me.

I’ll keep on wondering – for all eternity.

An Invitation To Joy

A brief essay by
Francis William Bessler
Laramie, Wyoming
December 16th, 2009

I have a motto, or standard, by which I try to rule my life. That motto is *by invitation only*. It's a wonderful way to live because I am never in the way of others. That leaves me free to pursue me and find in myself what most try to find in others. I think no one is as free as those who go only where they are invited.

I think, too, that sadness is only being of a mind that you are lacking an invitation to enjoy life. I know that when I am sad, when I think about it, I'm feeling so because I am feeling *left out*, as it were. Everyone wants to belong – and so without an invitation to belong, people get sad.

Accordingly, a key for enjoyment is to feel like you are being invited to something good. It's really as easy as that. But think about it. **Is not life itself inviting? Is not just being in life and with life an invitation to live?**

Every day of my life I begin my day by standing without obstruction in front of a mirror – that is, naked. In that way, I review the life that is before me; and without exception, immediately I feel like I am invited. It's obvious when I look at me. That which is me is as fantastic as any created thing in this world. How can I not feel invited when I am already in the me that is so fantastic?

I think it's good to realize that I am not more fantastic than anything else, but I am on a par with everything and everyone. Everything is majestic. Everything is fantastic; and everything is worthy; and how can that exclude me? Am I not part of Everything?

In truth, everyone has the same life as I do, but how many feel like they are *invited* to enjoy it? How many refuse to even look at it and excuse themselves with some alibi such as what they are is not worthy of consideration or appeal? **Isn't it really sad that many people live excusing themselves from life and proceed in life as if they have been lacking an invitation to attend a worthy banquet when they are already sitting at the table?**

Personally, I think that Jesus lived to communicate an idea of the worth of life itself. I think he lived to tell us all that life itself is the banquet for which all yearn an invitation; but even if Jesus did not live to teach that life itself is a banquet, I believe it because when I look upon life, I am filled with awe. What a wonder it is! How can I believe it doesn't deserve my praise – and my gratitude? I believe we need to look at life and be aware of the majesty and mystery of it – and know that with every moment of our lives, we are being *Invited to Joy*.

IT'S A LOVELY DAY TODAY

By Francis William Bessler
December 20th, 2008

REFRAIN:

*It's a lovely day today – as I wander all about.
I look at life with wonder – but I wonder without a doubt
that it's all lovely – from the old to the new.
It's a lovely day today – and you are lovely too.*

I thank my lucky stars – for being here with you.
I thank the God that's in them – for the wondrous moon.
I thank the earth for the dirt – that makes up your flesh and bones.
I thank you, dear, for being here – in this wondrous home. **Refrain.**

The time is now to appreciate - the mystery of life.
There's no better time than now – to embrace what's right.
But what is right is all there is – because all is Divine;
and that includes you, my friend, for your soul of light. **Refrain.**

I'd like you to be my darling – and share with me today.
I'd like you to know, my friend – my love in every way.
But all you need to love me – is first to love the one that's you.
Since we are the same, to love yourself – is to love me in truth. **Refrain.**

So, come along with me, my dear – and share with me what's yours -
because what is yours is mine – underneath our sparkling stars.
We all own the world that's here – because that world belongs to us.
We are children of a single God – and in each other, we should trust. **Refrain.**

The Naming Of Me

By

Francis William Bessler

(Frank, Will)

Laramie, Wyoming

January 19^h, 2010

Note: This brief article was inspired by an elderly person about 85 years of age. Joce Shaw is his name and he lives about a mile from me. It is Joce who labeled me by one of my many names – Clarence. I decided to write this little essay in a way to set the record straight. I hope that Joce and his lovely wife, Nancy, will find it somewhat endearing that they so inspired me; but I also hope that this little testimony of me will inspire others to search for themselves – by virtue of their names – given or wanted.

Thanks, Joce – and Nancy. FWB (January 20th, 2010)

I believe I have been privileged to know so many wonderful people in this life; but the ones who know me better than others are the ones who have named me. I find names – and the whole process of naming – one of the most significant of all human endeavors. It is, perhaps, my love of names and the naming process that endears me to all the names I have been given throughout life.

My first name – *Francis William Bessler* – is my favorite, if I had to pick a favorite, because it was the first name of my life. My loving parents, *Leo & Clara*, tagged me that for their own reasons which I will not detail. I think Dad suggested the *William* – as Mom tugged with the name of *Ferdinand* – after a grandfather of hers by that name.

I was born on Dec. 3rd, 1941; and it was initially agreed by my parents to name me *Francis William Bessler* for the benefit of deciding on a birth certificate name; but according to Mom, Dad agreed to change the *William* to *Ferdinand* for my Christian baptism on Feb 2nd, 1942. Thus, I became *Francis Ferdinand Bessler* for my baptism, although Dad & Mom did not go through the legal steps of changing my name to *Ferdinand* until Oct. 12th, 1942. On that date, legally, I became *Ferdinand*.

As it happened, I did not know that until April of 1977. Mom visited me then at an apt where I was living in Denver, Colo. – and she had my original birth certificate with her. I had always seen the amended version before that and had no idea whatever that I had been given the name of *Francis William* at birth; but there it was in an original birth certificate – *Francis William* – and not *Francis Ferdinand*.

Being one who is fascinated with names and the naming process, I decided that if Mom & Dad had originally called me *Francis William*, then that is probably who I really am. So, on May 30th, 1978, I appeared in Colorado court and had the name legally changed. My life long pal, *Ferdinand*, was gone; and this new fellow, *William*, took his place.

After that, I decided to introduce myself to most new folks as *Will* – perhaps to make up for lost time. After all, I was 35 when I found out I had been a *William*; and I felt I needed to find out who this *William* is. So, I called myself *Will* to accelerate the knowing process. I think it worked real well, too, in more ways than coming to know

myself. I believe it was a dynamic that helped me to find out about, not only my soul - but all souls. There is something about knowing the middle you – represented by a middle name – to get to know the center of you – your soul.

How many really know who they are? How many even have a glimpse inside the idea of the soul in the first place? How many believe that such knowledge is at all helpful? I had long been interested in the soul, however, before finding out I am a **Will** – and not a **Ferdie** as an old neighbor, **Bernie**, used to call me.

Bernie & Shirley were neighbors to my first wife, **Dee & I**, and we played lots of games together when we were neighbors back in the late 60s and early 70s. Bernie is the only person to call me by my former middle name, **Ferdinand**. Since he knew me as **Ferdinand**, he called me **Ferdie**. Bernie & Shirley have long been deceased, but ole Bernie may have turned me on to the idea of accentuating a middle name.

Bernie is not alone in naming me something, though. I think naming someone something, anything at all – call me **Clarence** as a current friend calls me – is a most endearing thing to do. **Joce & Nancy Shaw** know me as **Clarence**. I suspect it is because **Clarence** may sound like **Francis**, but whatever his reason, Joce (sounds like Josh) says it's because I remind him of the angel, **Clarence**, in Frank Capra's great picture of 1946 – **IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE**. I have no idea why Joce would say that; however, I find it very endearing indeed to have a friend call me what he likes. It is like a special bond of friendship that develops between those who name and those who are named.

One of my endearing names came from an older brother, Denis. He heard Dad sing a song to me while sitting me on his knee when I was but a mere child. **Climb upon my knee, Sonny Boy - though you're only three, Sonny Boy**. Well, Denny thought Dad was calling me “**Sonny**” and he started calling me **Sonny**. Then the whole family – Mom, Dad, and 7 siblings – all started calling me **Sonny**. The family still calls me **Sonny** today.

I studied for the Catholic ministry for 5 years at St. Thomas Seminary in Denver, Colorado after high school in the '60s. One of my favorite people there was a **Father Brakhuis** (sounds like 'brock house'), a Dutch priest. That may not be the correct spelling of his name, but call him Father Brakhuis. I guess a nick name for **Francis** in Spanish is **Paco**; and Father Brakhuis taught Spanish. Father Brakhuis and I became very close and he and I were both saddened upon learning that the faculty of St. Thomas saw in me too much of a rebel to be a Catholic priest. At least a small part of the friendship between Father Brakhuis and I, however, I think stemmed from him calling me **Paco** – even in class. It is like we had a bond between us. Father Brakhuis was my spiritual advisor at St. Thomas – as well as Spanish teacher. When I left St. Thomas behind at the bidding of the faculty in 1966, I also left Father Brakhuis behind, however I will always see a **Paco** in the mirror when glancing at the figure standing there. Names, I think, are that endearing.

If you really want to get to know someone, find out their real name – and then call them according to a name they are not used to being called. The purpose of that is to help them bring out a facet of themselves that may lie hidden. I think we all have hidden selves that often beg for being known. **If you really want to know someone, out of cordial motive, give them a name they might love; and watch them find a facet of themselves they did not know.**

LONG, LONG WAY TO GO

By Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

Written 5/11/2010 – 5/19/2010

REFRAIN 1:

***I may have a long, long way to go,
but that way must be paved with what I know.
It's all so very clear – that my destiny is near,
though I may have a long, long way to go.***

People think the future is distant
and removed from their command,
but, in truth, the future is only
one moment away from at hand. ***Refrain 1.***

Though the details of life may vary,
the basic truth remains the same.
I'll wake up to be tomorrow
the same soul that I am today. ***Refrain 1.***

The one thing that's sure about life
is the one who survives will be me.
I'll take me along wherever I go;
and where I'm going is eternity. ***Refrain 1.***

Let those who are listening to this tale
know they are precious as they can be.
Like a bird flying in the heavens,
know that you were born to be free.

REFRAIN 2:

***You may have a long, long way to go,
but that way must be paved with what you know.
It's all so very clear – that your destiny is near,
though you may have a long, long way to go.***

ONE WITH THE BREEZE

By Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

Written 5/12/2010 – 5/21/2010

REFRAIN:

*I'm gonna review thought of all kind
so I can make up my own mind.*

*I'm gonna open my eyes so I can realize
all the gifts of Divinity.*

*I'm gonna love it all and be enthralled
as I walk among the trees;
and I'm gonna be one with the breeze.*

When I was a kid, I liked school a lot
because I liked to learn.

For one like me, there was no better friend
than the written word. – ***and so I said: Refrain.***

When I grew up, I still yearned for ideas
just as I had in my youth.

But ideas are good only if they lead to wisdom
and to the real truth. – ***so: Refrain.***

If you will then, let me offer this advise,
your mind is your best friend.

Trust that it will make the right decisions
if you offer it a proper blend.

MODIFIED REFRAIN:

*You need to review thought of all kind
so you can make up your own mind.*

*You need to open your eyes so you can realize
all the gifts of Divinity.*

*You need to love it all and be enthralled
as you walk among the trees;
and you need to be one with the breeze.*

Now, I'm older. I've reviewed much thought
and I have found my own way.

Life's much simpler than I was taught
in my younger days.

FINAL REFRAIN:

*I've reviewed thought of all kind;
and I have made up my own mind.*

*I have opened my eyes and have realized
all the gifts of Divinity.*

*I have loved it all and have been enthralled
as I've walked among the trees;
and I have been one with the breeze.*

LIFE & DEATH

A Brief Essay

By

Francis William Bessler

September 28, 2010

I just called my cousin Ida and told her I was sorry to hear of my cousin, Jim's, passing. Jim did not survive a triple bypass heart surgery. Ida is a cousin by marriage to Jim, who was my blood cousin. I told Ida that I wish her well in dealing with the passing of her husband, Jim; and she said, ***Francis, Jim was at peace.***

Yesterday, my brother, Denis, called to tell me that our near sixty year old niece, Dianne, has a brain tumor. Doctors give Dianne from six months to a year to live. My first response to Denis was – ***I am glad Dianne is at peace.*** At the risk of sounding insensitive to the idea of death, I find myself these days very comfortable with that eventual event – both for myself and others.

Cousins Jimmy and Freddy and my near age siblings, Denny and Bobby, and I grew up together in the 40s & 50s. We lived on farms in northern Wyoming no more than a quarter a mile apart. It seemed we were always together. The last thing that came to any of our minds is that we would someday die. We were much too caught up with having fun to consider such a thing as death as but only a possibility.

Now one of us has gone – and the others of us are not far behind; and my basic reaction is ***it's just fine.*** If it had been me instead of Jim, my guess is that Jim's reaction would have been the same as mine when I learned of his passing. ***It's just fine.*** One of us has gone, but the others are very close behind – considering the youngest of the five of us is in his late sixties. We had a really good time growing up together. I must admit that in life we drifted apart – each going our own ways – but in death, as in youth, we are all back together again.

I won't be there at Jim's funeral on the last day of September; but my peace will be. Even though Jim and I took different roads in life – and I must admit that not long ago, Jim quipped, ***Francis, you're full of shit*** – our different roads come together in the end – as long as peace is the end for us both. I really believe that to be true.

Growing up with Bobby and Denny and Jimmy and Freddy, I had a completely different attitude. I thought that peace comes after life and that somehow peace is something that is given as a reward after life is over. I was very much into ***life everlasting*** – after life – but not before death. Since those days of seeing death as somehow some beginning of ***life everlasting***, I have come to see it as only an ***interim*** within life – or at least, within existence – as it is. It has become for me like a blip between now and then, between here and there, between experiences in some grand unending path of being.

Of course, I could be wrong, but when I see that everyone and everything dies, I am left with a tremendous confidence that death should be nothing to fear. If it were true that some things do not die, then I would not have such a comfort with death; but it is the universality of death as perhaps part of life that leaves me pretty much without sorrow when I hear of a friend's death – or ponder my own. I almost feel apologetic in saying,

I'm sorry – because more and more, as one passing follows another, I am *not sorry*. In fact, I am far more *jubilant* than sorry. I think to myself, *Wow, you did it. Pal, thanks for leading the way! I'm coming soon!*

Cousin Jim, I'll not forget you in death; but I will be mindful of your passing when it comes my time to pass along as well. Jimmy & Freddy & Denny and Bobby and Sonny (me) will keep on going – depending upon how we all lived. That is what I believe now. If death were payment for sin – as I was taught in my youth – then passing death into an afterwards might be construed as unfortunate; **but I believe now that the only thing that is unfortunate about dying is not having lived in peace – if such be the case.**

Cousin Jim might disagree with me – and probably would – but I doubt very much that anyone really waits for me after death but me alone - that is, in a way that really matters. I do not mind the thought that someone might be waiting for me *on the other side*, but I don't think it really matters. As far as I am concerned now, the only thing that will matter with my death is that the person that passes is fond of who he is – and, of course, will be.

I grew up believing that if Jesus was not there waiting for me when I die, then my life will have been without worth – and so will be any continuance of me – worthless, that is. But oh how wrong I think I was when I believed such a thing. Again, if death were really some payback for doing wrong, then I would have reason to fear death; but realistically, if all things die, death cannot be *payback for doing wrong*. Otherwise, our pets would never die because they have certainly done no wrong. Have they? **Death cannot be payback for doing wrong because all things die.**

What is it then? Ah, Cousin Jim knows that now – and I will know it soon enough. I do not know what to expect with death, having not experienced it myself – in this lifetime, at least – but because death is so universal, **I KNOW it is nothing to fear.** Jesus may be there, waiting for me, but probably not. Who will be waiting for me? There is only one **I KNOW** will be there – *me*; and as long as that me is peaceful in life, how could it be that the me that is peaceful will not continue – given that I do continue?

So, Cousin Jim, thanks for the memories and the fun and being there with me for awhile. We may meet again – or we may not. It doesn't matter; but the peace we both have learned in life does matter. In fact, for me, that is *all that matters*. You got yours. I have mine. In that, we will continue.

Niece Dianne, be comfortable in peace the rest of your days. We all have to follow. We all have to die. The best we can do is know real peace in life – and let that real peace be our companion in death as it was in life. **If we want to know what to expect after death, given that we continue, let us look in a mirror. The one looking back is the one who will be going forward.**

Fear not death because in all likelihood, it is only a blip between now and later, between here and there, between two who are me – or in your case, two who are you.

The End Another Beginning!

Note: My niece, Dianne, passed away on June 15th, 2011. May she always be at peace!

PUT A SMILE IN YOUR EYES

**(Inspired by a thought from Mary Jean Honeycutt –
Director of a seniors singing group in Laramie called “The Melodees”)**

By Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

Written 12/17/2010

REFRAIN:

Put a smile in your eyes – when you walk through this world.

Put a smile in your eyes – say hello to all the boys and girls.

Put a smile in your eyes – never hesitate to laugh.

Put a smile in your eyes – forget the ills of the past.

Put a smile in your eyes – just think of life as great.

Put a smile in your eyes – there’s no need for hate.

Put a smile in your eyes – know yourself as fine.

Put a smile in your eyes – because you are Divine.

Just think of yourself as Adam
or if you are a girl, you are Eve.
You have a chance to get it right
if only you’ll believe.
It only takes a step
to head in the right direction.
All you need to do
is to find the right connection. ***Refrain.***

It was a long long time ago
Michelangelo carved his David
to share his vision with the world -
how he saw life as splendid.
Michelangelo led the way
for all of us to follow.
Look at his David, friends
and become one with that fellow. ***Refrain.***

One thing does remain though -
Michelangelo’s David needs to smile.
No one really enjoys his life
who lacks a twinkle in his eyes.
So, our friend, David, listen here -
we will add ourselves to you.
Our lives will imitate your art
and together we’ll find the truth. ***Refrain.***

So, thank you, Michelangelo
for your insight of the past.
It's time we left old sins behind
and learned how to laugh.
We should take our lives seriously,
as children of our God,
saying thank you for the gift of life
while ourselves we applaud. **Refrain (several times).**

ISN'T LIFE GRAND, BABE?

By Francis William Bessler
Laramie, Wyoming
Written Dec 27 – 28, 2010

REFRAIN:

*Isn't life grand, Babe?
Yes, isn't it grand?
I sing the same songs, Babe,
that I did back then.
Isn't life grand, Babe,
grand right to the end – and beyond?
All I need to do -----
is treat life as a friend – and a song.*

There has long been a debate
about how life came to be.
Some think it was by way of chance;
others think it was by Divinity.
Well I think it was a mixture of the two
that best accounts for the truth.
but however it happened, friends,
the result is me and you. **Refrain.**

I think the greatest mistake we make
is that somehow God selects -
when it must be, God's in all
and within all, God must set.
So, whatever is our truth,
one can't be better than another.
Though a bird is not a bee,
both have life as a mother. **Refrain.**

When I look out at life,
I see miracles galore;
and it becomes clear to me
just what I should adore.
It's not any one in life
that should command my respect;
but rather it should be all of life
with which I should connect. *Refrain.*

It is also clear to me
that everything in life does die.
Death is only part of it all –
and to all, it does apply.
Whatever happens after death
must be wonderful
because the miracle of it
extends to one and all. *Refrain.*

Let's not fear what we can't see
because the process is the same.
Life & death continues on
and is our common fate.
Let us know all is well
and let that be our belief.
Life is our common bond -
and our wondrous mystery. *Refrain (at least once).*

PASSING THROUGH

By Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

Written March 2, 2011.

Modified slightly on April 5th, 2011

**A song inspired by the name of a play of the same name
but with a different theme – presented in Laramie in March/April of 2011 -
written by Mary Jean Honeycutt & Susan McGraw**

I'm just passing through this life.
It's the way I want to go.
It's best to keep moving on.
That's by far the better show.
I like to take time each day
to reflect upon the truth;
and the truth I find is we're all Divine;
and that includes me and you.

I'm just passing through this life –
and what a life it is.
I'm caught up with seeing miracles
and I have no time for sin.
Sin, I think, is seeing dark
where only light exists.
Look at the sun and know you're one
of creation's wonderful list.

I'm just passing through this life
keeping my eye on the prize.
The prize I find is life itself.
There's nothing better to realize.
Some think that life needs saved,
but I wonder how that can be
if all I know is a wonderful show
and is filled with Divinity.

I'm just passing through this life,
taking in all the sights,
listening to lots of songs of love
and knowing all life is right.
I like to be amazed as I go
and be a grateful one.
Life's a gift, giving my soul a lift
as I go about having fun.

I'm just passing through this life –
as Jesus says, being a passerby.
The truth is that God's in all;
and nothing should be despised.
If I were to meet Jesus on the street,
he'd tell me to be free.
He'd say, my friend, there is no end
of life's precious Divinity.

I'm just passing through this life.
I have no desire to be grim.
I want to watch the clouds go by
and to enjoy being Nature's whim.
Life is far too precious
to pay attention to neglect.
Let me live like there's nothing to forgive
as I go forward with respect.

I'm just passing through this life.
It's like going round and round.
There are no corners to get caught
if everywhere God is found.
I don't quite understand
why so many fail to see
that life's a toy all should enjoy
as we live and love in liberty.

MIRACLES GALORE

By Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

Written: Refrain: Jan. 3, 2011; Verses: April 8, 2011

REFRAIN:

*There may be miracles beyond this life –
miracles we should see.*

*There may be miracles beyond this life –
miracles for you and me;*

*but that shouldn't diminish
the miracle of this life*

*because the same God is residing here;
and if there are miracles galore,
there should be no room for fear.*

When I look up into the sky,
I see wonder everywhere.

I cannot imagine that my God
is not residing there.

If I could, I would sprout wings
and fly up there so high;
and if I could, I know I would
find what is Divine. **Refrain.**

I find myself finding God
when I look at trees & flowers.

I'm amazed how it can be
that I'm part of all that power.

Let me plant a seed today
and watch it grow tomorrow.

Yes, let me spring among such things –
and bypass what is sorrow. **Refrain.**

When I take off all my shame
and play freely in the dirt,

I realize that there is
Heaven here on Earth.

From the dirt all things come,
mixed with light from the Sun.

I'm so proud to be among the crowd
that runs about having fun. **Refrain (several times).**

LIFE IS A GIFT – NOT A LOAN

A Brief Essay – with Song

By

Francis William Bessler

June 12th, 2011

I am a firm believer than I am a soul that is being privileged to have a body. My body is not me. My soul is me. My body, however, I see as a gift to my soul. I see my body as “*being given*” to my soul – **not loaned** to my soul. In that light, I see my life itself as a gift and not a loan. I guess I see my body & soul as a unit – even though I see my body as being possessed by my soul. In a way, I see my body as an “extension” of my soul in that I can do for my soul by treating my body.

What I do for my body, I am simply doing for my soul. It is why I take such pride in embracing my nakedness. Without a shameless embrace of my body as it is – by itself – my soul cannot tell my body with any authenticity at all – Thanks for the Gift!

I think it is really good to take some time and ponder the matter. I don’t think that many do. I don’t think that many take time out of their day to ponder their soul – or their body. Most of us simply take our body for granted, paying no attention to them except maybe to complain about them or use them as tools to get something done in life. I don’t think it is very wise to see my body only as a tool that can be used to get something done. I think it is much wiser for me to see my body as a gift that my soul can experience – simply by being what it is.

How many that you know see things that way? How many that you know are more for being than for doing? I will admit, however, that if I do not watch it, I can track that way too. I can look at my body only for what it can do for me – rather than simply accept my body to be what it is – and enjoy the ride.

The way I see it – or try to see it – is first, be aware I am a soul – and then second, be aware that I am soul with a body. As a soul with a body, I see myself as having a huge responsibility to take care of my body because it belongs to my soul. I want to be a wise steward, as it were, of my life and always be as gracious to my host, my body, as I can. To do less, I think, is to be an ungrateful guest of my body. My body is my host – not the other way around. I – that is me as soul – am the guest; and what proper guest will dishonor his host?

Perhaps it is a lot like visiting a friend who is having you over to dinner. You might be licking your chops for prime rib, but your host serves you bacon & eggs. How polite is it to tell your friend and host that you are disappointed he is not serving you prime rib? As a polite guest, you gratefully sit down at your friend’s table – and not only feast on his offering of bacon & eggs, but you take special delight in enjoying the meal.

That is the way of a polite guest. Right? You accept what you are served and tell your host thank you. I see my soul and body in the same light. My body may be serving me bacon & eggs when I hoped for prime rib, but it is not for my soul to act disgracefully and refuse what it is offered.

You see, the truth of the matter is that whatever meal I am offered by my friend, that meal is pure bonus. I do not deserve any meal at all at his or her table. It is all gratis. Is it not? And that is how I see Life in General. It is all Gratis. My soul deserves none of it – and should be grateful for whatever it is served.

Notice that I called my soul an “it.” My particular body is masculine, but I see my soul as being neither masculine nor feminine. My soul is simply an “it.” Maybe this time around, my “it” soul has been “invited” into a masculine body; but maybe next life “it” will be “invited” into a feminine body. That just goes to show me – as a soul – that gender does not really matter a whit. I – that is, my body – may be male or female – but such detail is only for delight, not for concern or use as a tool.

It is the times that I do not think of my body being a host to my soul that I experience some difficulty in life. I think it is really good – if not essential – to be aware that each of us is really two, not one. Each of us is a soul with a body, but it is much like each of us is two in one. It’s like my soul is the twin of my body because the way I treat my body is what I do to my soul. In a way, since my body and soul are really two, it is like they are two persons that are – or should be – more like twins than anything else.

Ideally, I think, that is what a soul and a body should be – twins. When my soul looks at my body, it should see a friend and not an enemy. When my body looks at my soul, it should know that a true Brother (or Sister) has hitched a ride.

But how many body and soul combinations are like that? How many souls go through life and pay no attention to their body hosts? How many souls hitch a ride with a body and act like they have been hijacked rather given a home? How many souls take time to tell their body that they are really appreciated? How many souls look at their body host – or host body – and complain?

To that last notion, I will admit some guilt. At times I will look at my body and complain about one feature or another. In wanting prime rib instead of bacon & eggs, sometimes I do tend to not see the forest for all the trees in it. I look at my belly – which is a bit rotund at this time in my life at nearly the age of 70 – and wish it were not so; but if I am wise, I will not linger on my little dissatisfaction. Instead, I will turn it around and tell my body host that I am truly glad it is a bit rotund. That is just not to offend my host. ***A wise person is always aware that their soul is a guest of a body; and no proper guest goes about complaining about being served bacon & eggs even though a preference would be prime rib.***

I try to take a great deal of delight in my body because it is just not wise or proper to do otherwise. My soul has this wonderful gift – this fantastic twin. It is not for me to slap my host in the face and concentrate on some regret. It is only for me to tell my dear, dear host of a body that I am so appreciative of it – be it masculine or feminine – and that I am so grateful for the gift.

Some think of their body as being some kind of loan. I do not. I see only gratuity. I see my soul as being a generous gift to my body and I see my body as being a generous gift to my soul. Neither owes to the other, but each deserves gratitude & respect; and that is how I see Life in General too.

God gives existence and existence gives life. There is no loan to it. God does not expect something in return for the gift because God gives freely; and as God and Nature & Life give freely – without expectation of return – except for a great big Thank You – that is how I should conduct my life as well.

LIFE IS A GIFT

A song of life by
Francis William Bessler
Written June 9th, 2011

Note: I wrote the Refrain and first two verses of this walking to Burger King in Laramie, Wyoming. While at Burger King, I encountered a young mother holding a bundle in her arms. In that bundle was a 1 month old baby named Victoria. After looking at Victoria, I proceeded to my booth and wrote the third verse. So, let me dedicate this song, my 140th and intended last, to little Vickie and all the mothers & babies in the world.

REFRAIN:

*Life is a gift, My Friend.
There's no need to moan.
At least in my opinion, that is so.
I like to treat my wonderful body
that my soul does own
like it's a gift from God & Love –
and not a loan.*

Who should treat a gift
like they are (they're) ashamed of it?
Who should treat a gift
like it is full of sin?
Who should treat a gift
like it's a bomb in disguise?
Let's all celebrate our lives
by praising them with delight. ***Refrain.***

I wonder why it is
we've seen life as wrong
when it should be so clear
to any singing this song
that life has always been
right for animals & plants.
So, Let us humans follow
that same worthy path. ***Refrain.***

I didn't make my life
and neither, Friend, did you.
Just think back to your birth
and you can know the truth.

All life comes from another
and that makes all life a gift.
So, let us all be thankful
as we live and let live. *Refrain* (several times).

EPILOG:

FORGIVE TO BE FORGIVEN

I don't blame the Apostle of Jesus, Peter, for misunderstanding his friend, Jesus, but life has taught me that he probably did. I think Peter was of the impression that forgiveness of sin or fault is strictly a matter of authority. Thus, only those can really forgive who have been given authority to forgive. By whom? By God – and in the case of Peter – by Jesus.

In my opinion, Peter was wrong on both counts. First of all, forgiveness is not **“authority based”**; it is **“self based.”** I will explain. Secondly, however, I don't think Jesus had any authority – even if forgiveness is “authority based.”

Sadly, I think, Peter mistook Jesus for “authority” when I think that Jesus was almost “anti-authority.” I may be wrong on that, but given the alternate **Gospels of Thomas & Mary Magdalene** – which we previously examined in some detail - I have the impression that the last thing Jesus was about is authority. I don't think he wanted it or claimed it for himself – and if he did not claim it for himself, it is very unlikely that he would transfer what he did not have to another. Would he?

The problem is that Jesus probably appeared to have authority for his lack of needing authority. His Independence of Jewish Law – and maybe even Roman Law – may have given the impression that Jesus had some authority he did not actually have – that is, authority over others. One who is independent of others and seems to thrive on his or her own may well give the impression that he or she is a person of “great authority.” How else explain such independence and such magnificent self-esteem?

But why was Jesus so independent? Why did he seem to not need authority to make his way in life? I think it was because he realized that each is responsible for his or her own life. Regardless of why he believed that, I think it is likely he did believe it. Everything I know about Jesus points me in the direction that he taught that each of us must do for ourselves, not rely on others to do for us. Jesus taught that we must love ourselves and then love others as we love ourselves. That is emphasis on do yourself, not rely on someone else to do for you. You must love – not someone else.

Loving yourself and others is an expression of “personal responsibility.” When one takes responsibility for his or her life, then that one may seem to be independent of others in a way in which authority is implied. “Independence of” may come across as “Authority over.”

When Jesus told others to “love yourself as you love others,” I think he was really basing that on his own experience. He found that loving himself liberated him – and thus he was confident in “advising” others to do as he had done. Perhaps you have found likewise in your life. It is the same thing. As you may have found that the key to loving others is first to love yourself, you may well come off as “authoritarian” if you advise others to do the same. It “seems” like you have authority over others when, in truth, you are only claiming responsibility for yourself – and encouraging others to do the same.

Now, let's take that a step further. Part of loving others – as well as yourself – is to bypass finding fault. Finding fault becomes the great obstacle for anyone who really wants to love life. I know I have found that to be so; and I suspect that Jesus did too. So, what do you “advise yourself” if you have taken personal responsibility for your own life

and find yourself “finding fault”? The rather obvious course is to avoid that obstacle and not find fault. But how best to do that? Focus on the blessing of life, not some supposed fault. When that happens, presto, a thing called FORGIVENESS occurs; but in reality what happens is that you have not so much “forgiven” others of some fault you may find in them, but you have “forgiven yourself” for looking for fault in the first place by focusing on the blessing of life. Thus, it follows: To be forgiven (or to forgive yourself), you must forgive. You must bypass looking for fault by looking for something else. See how simple it is – if you are one to take responsibility for your own life. As Jesus might say it – don’t waste your time judging others when you should be attending to your own virtue; but by attending to your own virtue, you stop “finding fault”; and that, virtually speaking at least, is forgiveness.

Proceed on! I am with Jesus and he is trying to tell me about forgiveness. He says, Francis, forgive or you will not be forgiven. What sins you retain (because you have not released them), they will be retained and what sins you forgive (because you have released them), they will be forgiven. You see, that makes all the sense in the world if you understand forgiveness and realize that it is not near as “other related” as it is “self related.” I must forgive for the sake of myself – not for your sake or for another’s sake who may have offended me. When you take responsibility for your life, it is you who must do – not someone else.

But you see I understand that because I have chosen to take responsibility for my life without relating that to any command of or over anyone else. The problem with Peter is that he probably did not understand the notion of forgiveness – or even the command of loving others as you love yourself. Thus, when he heard the counsel of Jesus I would have heard, he heard something else.

Let’s backtrack. What did my speculative Jesus say to me? Francis, forgive or you will not be forgiven. In effect, my being forgiven is conditioned upon my forgiving. To that, I tell Jesus, Yes, I understand – because that has been my experience too. Now, what did Peter “probably” hear? **Peter, I am counting on you to share my message of love & forgiveness with others – and Remember, what sins you forgive, they will be forgiven and what sins you may retain, they will be retained.**

But Peter “probably” misunderstood. He thought that he was being given some authority to forgive another of his sins – in the name and place of Jesus. He did not realize – or probably did not realize – that Jesus was not talking about another. He was talking about Peter because he was talking to Peter. It was Peter’s sins that Jesus was addressing, not another’s. Peter, what sins of your own that you refuse to dismiss will be retained, but what sins of your own you choose to resolve will be resolved. That is what Jesus intended, but Peter heard that Jesus was giving him authority to judge others – in effect. Sad, but I think – true!

Fast forward to Ananias & Saphira in the tale told in the 5th Chapter of **The Acts Of The Apostles** in the **BIBLE**. Ananias & Saphira were a married couple who had some degree of property. In wanting to join “Peter’s new church,” they agreed to give Peter all their property; however, Saphira had some second thoughts and convinced her husband, Ananias, to give Peter and his church only half of their property. When Peter hears of this “betrayal” of a promise, he calls the couple to him and condemns them for “lying to the Holy Spirit” and for doing so, they are going to be condemned. No second chance, no

hint of forgiveness – just plain ole damnation. One after the other, they both fall dead at Peter’s feet – presumably from heart attacks or shock.

Where was the real Jesus in this little scene? Nowhere. Peter had even asked Jesus earlier how many times one must forgive. Seven times? He asked. Jesus told Peter – no, not seven times, but seven times seventy. That was only to express that forgiveness is a “state of mind,” not a numbers game; but even asking the question in terms of numbers, Peter suggested his own misunderstanding of the issue. Peter supposedly heard that forgiveness is a requirement of a wise or virtuous soul because he indicated he heard by asking Jesus how many times must I forgive; but apparently he did not hear what “Francis” heard when Jesus told him that to be forgiven one must forgive. All that Peter heard when Jesus asked him to share his counsel with others was that Jesus had given him authority to act in his stead. As a “man of authority” then, Peter could do what he wanted and Jesus would approve. Again, sad, I think – but probably true.

But it doesn’t happen that way. It never has and it never will. Peter may not have understood it, but Jesus was not about having authority over others; and he certainly would not have given to Peter what he did not have himself. He was about liberating others to have authority over themselves by taking responsibility for their own lives.

In truth, I think, Jesus was about taking responsibility for life. He was about do yourself, not expect others to do for you. You must love – not someone else. You must forgive – not someone else. It has nothing to do with authority. It is all about personal responsibility for the sake of self. At least, I think so.

Well, that will do it for another volume of my ***OUT IN THE OPEN*** writings series. **I want to Thank You for lending an ear.** My main mantra in life is – **ISN’T LIFE FANTASTIC!** Notice I did not end that little statement with a question mark. I may have seemed like I was asking a question because I “asked” for a response – but, in truth, I wasn’t asking a question. I was only stating an opinion. **LIFE IS FANTASTIC!** That is what I was really saying. Just goes to show expressions don’t always mean what they say – or seem to say. Do they?

One more volume remains – one entirely devoted to song. **I don’t write songs (or lyrics) to entertain others as much as to “teach myself.”** But that is no different than why I write essays and stories. I do that to “teach myself” too. Does any of this that I have “taught myself” mean much to anyone else? I do not know. Maybe, Maybe not! ***I can only judge what appeals to me; and that is where I choose to leave it.***

Join me – if you wish – for 140 songs – presented mostly in alphabetical order. For these past 7 volumes, songs have mostly been presented in chronological order – or in the order in which they were written – but for the final volume, it is A to Z.

Thanks so much for joining me so far. I hope you have enjoyed my thinking to and for myself somewhat. Again, Thanks for lending an ear!

See You Next Time!

Gently,

Trying to Live In A State of Forgiveness (and Focus on Blessings and not Faults),

Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming, U.S.A

June 13th, 2011

OUT IN THE OPEN

Volume 7 of 8

(Featuring works written in 2009 – 2011)



THE END