

Searching for the Precious Jewel

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I quoted Laurence Freeman as saying in one of the recent *'Weekly Teachings'* that in John Main's view the importance of the historical Jesus of Nazareth was that he *"awakened to himself within the mortal limitations we all know."* Laurence Freeman then continued to underline the importance of this awakening for all of us, as the *"single and all-inclusive awakening of human consciousness to its source in God."*

Jesus showed us our potential, but we find it difficult to believe the truth he pointed us towards. Hence the importance laid in the teaching of John Main, Laurence Freeman and the early Christians on growing towards self-knowledge, becoming aware of this treasure within us. The experience of contemplative prayer, meditation, is a great help on the road to this discovery. The following story illustrates our condition and necessary search beautifully:

In a remote realm of perfection there was a just monarch who had a wife and a wonderful son and daughter. They all lived together in happiness. One day the father called his children before him and said: "The time has come, as it does for all. You are to go down, an infinite distance, to another land. You shall seek and find and bring back a precious jewel."

The travellers were conducted in disguise to a strange land, whose inhabitants almost all lived a dark existence. Such was the effect of this place that the two lost touch with each other, wandering as if asleep. From time to time they saw phantoms, similitudes of their

country and the Jewel, but such was their condition that these things only increased the depth of their reveries, which they now began to take as reality.

When news of his children's plight reached the king, he sent word by a trusted servant, a wise man: "Remember your mission, awaken from your dream, and remain together." With this message they roused themselves, and with the help of their rescuing guide they dared the monstrous perils which surrounded the jewel, and by its magic aid returned to their realm of light, there to remain in increased happiness for evermore.

Our lack of knowledge and acceptance of who we truly are is often described in the writings of the early Christians as the condition of being asleep or drunk. Our pre-occupation with our surface self, our ego, hides not only the true reality of ourselves but also that of Ultimate Reality behind our ordinary limited material reality.

The same sentiment is expressed in the 'Gospel of Thomas', an important early Gospel with a collection of sayings of Jesus in oral circulation at the time: *Jesus said, "I took my stand in the midst of the world, and in the flesh I appeared to them. I found them all drunk, and I did not find any of them thirsty. My soul ached for the children of humanity, because they are blind in their hearts and do not see, for they came into the world empty, and they also seek to depart from the world empty. But now they are drunk. When they shake of their wine, then they will repent."* (Logion 28)

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