

The historical Jesus

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We know how central a role the in-dwelling Christ played for John Main in his experience of the spiritual journey. In *'Moment of Christ'* he states *"The fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ and Christ dwells in us."* But what importance did he attach to the historical Jesus? In his introduction to Chapter Two of John Main's *'Essential Teaching'* Laurence Freeman says: *"John Main stressed the importance of the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth, who awakened to himself within the mortal limitations we all know.....He knew himself as the Son receiving and reciprocating the Father's love...And so his self-discovery has more than an individual significance. It is the "single and all-inclusive awakening" of human consciousness to its source in God."* This is so difficult to take rationally on board, as John Main himself expressed *'Moment of Christ'* *"If you live it at the level of words Christianity is unbelievable. We couldn't believe that it is our destiny to have such perfect access to the Father and the Spirit...It is only in the experience of prayer that the truth of the Christian revelation engulfs us."*

The early Christians shared John Main's view that the destiny of humanity was to *become like God, to be 'divinised'*. Bishop Kallistos in his chapter on Clement of Alexandria in *'Journey to the Heart'* (see below) quotes the 2nd century Church Father Irenaeus as saying *'He became what we are, that He might make us to be what He is.'* The implication is that Jesus through his teaching and his living example reminded his followers of their potential, which is at the same time their origin and the present ground of their being. Theirs and our 'ego' preoccupation with the world, material reality, causes confusion and illusion and blinds us all to this truth. Jesus encourages us to freedom from the dominance of the 'ego' and leads us to our *'true self'* in the centre of our being. *"If anyone wishes to be a follower of mine, he must leave self behind.... But if a man will let himself be lost for my sake, he will find his true self."*(Matthew 16:25-26) Jesus' teaching is meant to awaken us to the truth of our being and this is only possible through the immediate experience prayer affords. Hence John Main's emphasis on letting go during meditation off all thoughts and images that bind us to this plane of existence. The essence of Jesus' mission was not freeing us from sin but from ignorance of the truth of our true being and it is that which causes sin. This is the true meaning of salvation. Bishop Kallistos continues in his chapter: *"Equally salvation doesn't just mean imitating Christ through moral effort. On the contrary salvation means that we share in the life and power of God. This sharing results in a total inner transformation."* Laurence Freeman in *'Jesus, the Teacher Within'* sums it up by saying: *"Redemption [salvation] is knowing with our whole being who we are and where we have come from."*

'Journey to the Heart', the book based on the 'Roots of Christian Mysticism' Course edited by Kim Nataraja

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