

From ignorance to knowledge

By reading Jesus' teaching in the Gospel of Thomas contemplatively, as *Lectio Divina*, combined with meditation, contemplative prayer, we are led to see Reality as it truly is. We experience that in our essence we are already one with the Divine through the consciousness of Christ that dwells in our hearts. But Jesus is very aware of our difficulty to do so: "The Father's Kingdom is spread out upon the earth, and people do not see it." Since we have covered over our Divine essence within us by being focused on our material body and its needs, we are "drunk" and "blind":

"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 off their wine, then they will repent."

This Gospel challenges us to let go of our habitual ways of perception, to 'repent', to experience a 'metanoia', to change our way of seeing and being. This requires the humility and honesty to let go of our false images of ourselves, our 'ego' masks, our "clothes":

"His followers said, "When will you appear to us and when will we see you?" Jesus said, "When you strip without being ashamed and you take your clothes and put them under your feet like little children and trample them, then you will see the child of the living one and you will not be afraid."

This is really not so dissimilar to what Jesus said in the Synoptic Gospels: "Anyone who wants to be a follower of mine must leave self (i.e. the 'ego' illusions) behind." Once we break through the constraints of the 'ego', we will be free, no longer imprisoned. All we need to do is to wake up and discover who we truly are. This search is the most important element in our life:

Jesus said, 'Let one who seeks not stop seeking until one finds. When one finds, one will be troubled. When one is troubled, one will marvel and will rule over all.'

It is troubling to realise that the reality we have accepted as the only objective and permanent reality is in fact impermanent, subject to constant change, shaped by the thoughts, images and needs of our material being. But if we persevere in meditation, we can part the veil of these illusions and become aware of our true nature and the true nature of reality. The result will then be a real sense of wonder, we will 'marvel'.

From these few sayings from the Gospel of Thomas it is clear how Jesus' teaching here corresponds to what we have been talking about. Self-knowledge obtained in the silence of deep contemplative prayer leads to knowledge of the Divine Reality, which is Love, and consequently to compassion for others: "There is light within a person of light, and it shines on the whole world."