

MAGDALENE CHRISTIANITY

Mary's Gospel
Inner Themes
#7



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LIVING WITH CHRIST

The upper room – mystical conversations with the Christ

The inner reality of the I AM sayings was a significant part of my teacher Mario Schoenmaker's revelation of the Christ Way. And for many years I was privileged to experience his Easter meditations into the profound Christ mystery as portrayed in the Gospel of John. Known as 'the spiritual gospel' its writing emerged from the awakening and recognition in the soul of the disciple Lazarus who would become John the Beloved.

In this gospel the last supper in the upper room differs from the other gospels. There is no establishment of the eucharist, and the meal takes place at a different time on the night of Jesus's arrest and trial. John does not specify who was there. I have no doubt that it included disciples other than 'the twelve' of tradition. Women certainly would have been present, including Mary Magdalene, spiritual sister to the Beloved Disciple.

Significant for the Way, the supper involves a long discourse by Jesus – although this emerged in a post-Easter 'upper room' of the spirit that reveals the disciple's mystical inner eucharist with the risen Christ, awakening knowledge of the reality of this high being.

The discourse includes the last two I AM sayings.

I AM the Way, the truth and the life (Jn 14:6).

I AM the true vine (Jn 15:1).

The first is followed with, 'No one comes to the Father but by me.' The second with, 'And my Father is the vine dresser.' This points to a specific route and a specific destination. And an elephant that needs to be sent out of the room:

Why the Father?

Patriarchal emphasis in language has drastically distorted spiritual reality. As well, centuries of church doctrine have given us a remote father figure, a god beyond 'his' creation, looking down from outside and shaking his hoary head. To reach that father we must find him outside space and time, perhaps only in heaven when we die.

The origin of such an idea lies in Greek philosophy which in New Testament times had spread through the Roman empire. It included Plato's concept of an ideal spiritual realm of Forms, of which the physical was a lesser copy – a profoundly influential teaching which hung on and led inexorably to a perception of the divine as ever separate from creation.

Jesus's statement comes from Judaic thinking which in the first century still bore the marks of its origin in Egypt. There Atum the prime mover, the male-female beginner of all, is also creative in the flux of the world. The same ground of being, the source, the power active both beyond and within creation is what John's gospel calls the Father.

Then we have 'by me'. This is I AM, the Sun Being, known as Egyptian Ra, the biblical 'I AM that I AM', and the Christ. This divine spirit incarnated in the world through Jesus. Christ does not belong exclusively to Christianity but to all humanity. The Christ is now the spirit of the earth embracing the world soul and united with very ground and purpose of existence. This is the meaning of the saying, 'I and the Father are one.' (Jn 10:30).

The Way of Truth and Life



At Easter time the Pope washes the feet of twelve people. Christians pour into Jerusalem to walk the Via Dolorosa in the footsteps of Jesus. Others walk a symbolic *via* or even re-enact the bloody events of the crucifixion. Through physical imitation the intent is to connect with Christ.

'I AM the way, the truth and the life' points to a different kind of 'imitation of Christ', about the inner path of the soul. It echoes the experiences of the few friends whose love gave them the courage to follow Jesus to Golgotha – his mother and just three disciples, Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife of Clopas and Lazarus-John. So close to their Lord, the events came alive within their whole being. The living closeness of those beloved ones led to further and deeper experiences of the Christ impulse within the self and of the Christ within the macrocosm.

The Way has been undertaken over the ages by saints and mystics and no doubt by others whose profound experiences history has not recorded. Their experiences direct us to an inner path we too can follow. It became known as the mystical way of the Passion, which is also the way of love.

The word passion comes from the Latin *passio* meaning ‘suffering’. Suffering happens through what we feel within our souls, so this is a path of feeling and a gradual experience of mystical union with Christ. It is not so much about strengthening and fine tuning our inner qualities as a complete metamorphosis, to be ‘born again’ in the true sense of a new self emerging. It is an initiatory path that echoes the death and resurrection of Christ.¹

The True Vine

All the I AM sayings are there to guide us and to reveal the Way. When we listen to the I AM and hear its truth, we are directed towards the future, as we work towards our destiny as a fully realised human being. We are learning to walk the way of truth and life over many lifetimes. Yet every life with its struggles and learnings is transforming us. Our soul aligned with the spirit will enable the transformation of our whole being, including the mind, the senses and the physical body. Mario described this potential as ‘the soul completed and harmonised’, the outer with inner, the lower with higher, the body with spirit.

The experience of the fully initiated person united with the Christ is beautifully depicted in, ‘I AM the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser’. The work of a human vine dresser is to monitor and shape the plant to enhance nature’s fruitfulness. The divine vine dresser is similarly active within the earth’s rhythms of coming into being and dying, and within the rhythms of our life and death.

The mighty destiny of the human being is to become a spiritualised individual who participates creatively within the realm of the Father. Our potential humanity is life on this level. But we must be ready for the pruning and shaping to take place through the unfolding of our I AM. It may take us until the end of this world, but if we can achieve this initiation, we will gain what is known as eternal life, that is life beyond and free of the physical. We attain the angelic level and assume the tasks currently performed by our guardian angel.

It is an awesome story but importantly even if we travel slowly and every step tests our endurance, our soul’s progress enables us to participate in the earth’s spiritualisation to the extent we are able.

Contemplating our destiny

The gospel says, ‘God so loved the world that he gave his only son ... not to condemn the world but that the world might be saved by him.’ (John 3:16-17) It is through the divine love of the Father that Christ came into the world. And through the mediating love of the Christ spirit, we are able to continue to walk the long narrow Way that will return us, like prodigal children, home.

There is a simple chorus that sums up the purpose of the I AM:

Let's be what we're meant to be.

Isn't this our destiny?

When we speak the affirmations for the I AM sayings, and especially these last two, they are really prayers that we become who we are meant to be, to answer 'yes' to our destined roles in creation.

- I AM the way, the truth and the life – May my inner journey to the cross on Golgotha, bring me like Christ to oneness with the Father.
- I AM the true vine – May my fruitfulness enrich friend and stranger as I seek to manifest the good through union with divine love.



¹ *The Way of the Passion encompasses seven stages depicted in the gospels. They are known as the foot-washing, the scourging, the crowning with thorns, bearing the cross to Golgotha and crucifixion, mystical death and entombment, resurrection, and at last becoming one with the Father.*

If you would like more information about the seven mystical initiatory stages, I have gone deeply into them in a Magdalene Christianity Community post, called Initiation and the Inner Way of I AM. You are welcome to join the community.