

The Rebirth of Spirituality

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I am writing this on Christmas Day. Samantha and Blaine, my little girl and little boy, are almost 8 and 6 years old. They eagerly tore into their presents shortly after dawn this morning, shredding paper and obliterating boxes en route to the hidden treasures. My job, groggy though I was, was to free the toys from the tangle of wires that bound them to their boxes and load them with batteries. Every toy nowadays, no matter how small or insignificant, requires a battery. Santa brought them an easy-bake oven, roller blades, a scooter, video games, dolls, cars, ...

The season is rich with symbolism of rebirth, spiritual rebirth, of good beginning to overcome evil. The winter solstice was a few days ago. Though shrouded in winter, the winter solstice is the point at which the days begin to get longer again. It is a symbol of rebirth, and as the sun is a symbol of spiritual light and life, the winter solstice is a symbol of spiritual rebirth. Christmas is, of course, a celebration of spiritual rebirth, a celebration of the birth of Christ. Christmas is a special season for children, and, indeed, every child is a symbol of spiritual rebirth- Every child is a symbol of hope; every child is a symbol that the rebirth of everything that is good and right with the world is possible.

The essence of spirituality is the idea that the Light within is the key to life. Life is nothing without joy, and true happiness is not possible without the Light within. The Light is love; the Light will not shine in a heart devoid of love. A heart without love is a heart without light and joy. When one opens one's heart to love without boundaries, one allows the Light to shine without obstruction. Spite begets darkness; love begets light. Many believe that the Light within is God or a universal energy known by other names. Even agnostics or atheists, however, can "believe" in spirituality. Although our minds are tied to our physical bodies while we live on earth, our conscious world is essentially non-physical, subjective rather than objective- joy, a conscious experience, a feeling, is the key to life, and love, another feeling, is the key to joy. Thus, love is the giver of life, "Lord" or "God", on earth, if not in heaven.

Gnosticism was an early Christian spirituality. Gnostics placed a strong emphasis on the idea that God, and the living Jesus, lied within the heart of humankind. They believed that we could know God by knowing ourselves. Gnosis means knowledge, and they used the word to refer to knowledge of God. Gnosticism flourished beside other forms of Christianity for centuries, but it was suppressed and its spiritual focus was sharply de-emphasized as early Catholicism became the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Spirituality has been discovered many times and within the framework of many different religions. Today, spirituality is being reborn as New Age spirituality. People all over the world are rediscovering the idea of the Light within. I truly believe that we are now entering an age in which humankind will again progress spiritually. By rediscovering ourselves, and the wealth that lies within, we may rediscover true peace and happiness, the hallmarks of this holiday season. The following lines are taken from The Gospel of Thomas, part of the Nag Hammadi library, a Gnostic treasure discovered in the Egyptian desert in 1945:

(3) Jesus said, "If those who lead you say to you, 'See, the kingdom is in the sky,' then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you. Rather, the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living father. But if you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty."

(24) His disciples said to him, "Show us the place where you are, since it is necessary for us to seek it."

He said to them, "Whoever has ears, let him hear. There is light within a man of light, and he lights up the whole world. If he does not shine, he is darkness."

(50) Jesus said, "If they say to you, 'Where did you come from?', say to them, 'We came from the light, the place where the light came into being on its own accord and established itself and became manifest through their image.' If they say to you, 'Is it you?', say, 'We are its children, 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 movement and repose.'"