

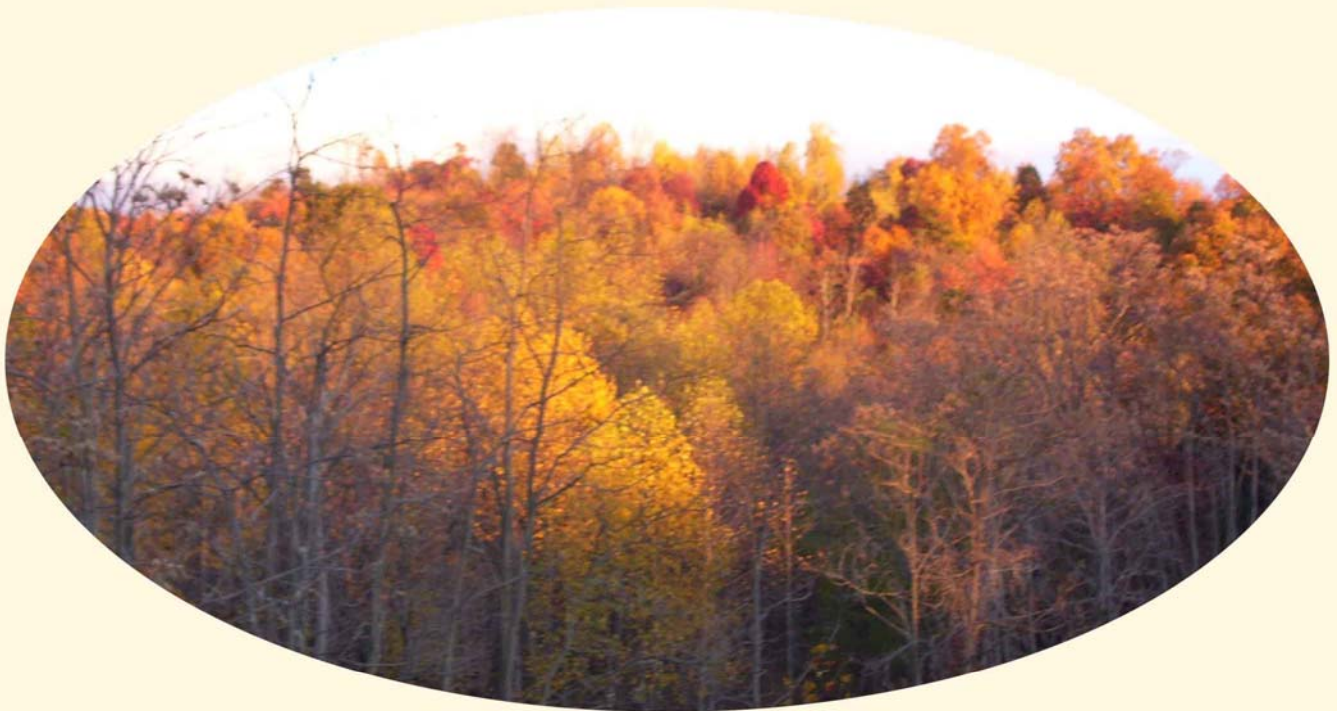
Spirituality & Community

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www.spiritualityandcommunity.com

On Good and Evil

Bob Kezer



The Gospel of Philip

The Gnostics

Matins

George Herbert

Jarvis the Duck

The Comic Strip

Kurt Venables

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Who We Are

www.spiritualityandcommunity.com

Welcome! Seeking spiritual fulfillment? True happiness and mental wellness? Well, that's what we're all about. Spirituality & Community is a magazine, web site, and online community for those seeking answers to life's deepest questions. ***We are dedicated to promoting spirituality, true happiness, mental wellness, and appreciation for a diversity of spiritual beliefs.***

A New Age of Light

Our focus is spirituality, which we view as an inner search for happiness and fulfillment. We are concerned with what lies within the heart. ***We believe that within everyone lies a pure love that we call the Light or the Lord within. We believe that one must open one's heart to the Light to attain spiritual fulfillment and that only this brings true happiness and mental wellness.*** The Light is the essence of humanity. ***Ultimately, we find our way by casting our gaze inward.*** We will search this inner world over until we find our home:

***We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
T.S. Eliot, Little Gidding***

We believe that mankind is entering a new age, an Age of Light. We see a growing spiritual crisis in the world today. Our culture has brought us unprecedented material well being, but we seem further away than ever from true spiritual wholeness. We also perceive an increase in mental health issues in our society and believe this to be linked to spiritual detachment. Many wander endlessly in search of the material gratification that will bring them happiness. Many have lost faith in religions and traditions. Others sincerely believe in traditional religions but remain unfulfilled spiritually and unhappy. Unfortunately, too many are so close-minded they refuse to ask what is missing from their lives. Yet, many hunger for spiritual wholeness and are searching for answers. ***We believe that we are entering a new age of enlightenment in which genuine spiritual progress will be made and that spiritual development depends upon a genuine appreciation for a diversity of spiritual beliefs.*** An appreciation for diversity of belief provides us with a fresh view of the beliefs of others, allows us to take from each set of beliefs that which rings true, and enables us to synthesize a personal spirituality that makes sense for each of us. When we view the beliefs of others with our hearts, we see truth shine through. We look with the highest regard to traditional beliefs and religions for guidance, and we also look forward. ***We believe that the past is not the end but the beginning.***



What We Do

Spirituality & Community produces a magazine and encompasses an online community. Both aspects serve as the basis for bringing together those who share our aspirations and beliefs, to meet each other and exchange ideas. We provide many opportunities for exploring spirituality and communicating with others:

- Spirituality & Community magazine*
- Features on the site*
- Online chats* (as interest arises)

The magazine is based on a Reader's Digest® type model. It is comprised primarily of reader submitted material. It is the primary mechanism for a member to both explore spirituality and communicate his or her ideas to others. Features are also posted on the site. When interest is sufficiently high, we will hold chats online. *We sincerely hope that you will find truth within, and we wish you only the best on your own personal journey!*

The Gospel of Philip

(excerpts)

The Gnostics

The Nag Hammadi Library
Translated by Wesley W. Isenberg



The leather bound codices found at Nag Hammadi

Gnosticism was an early form of Christianity. The Gnostics placed a heavy emphasis on the idea that one could find God, and the living Jesus, within the heart. They believed that we could come to know God by profoundly knowing ourselves. Gnosticism flourished beside other forms of Christianity for centuries, but it was suppressed as early Catholicism became the official religion of the Roman Empire. The Nag Hammadi library, a collection of Gnostic texts, was found in 1945 in the Egyptian desert. The Gospel of Philip is one of the better known and more comprehensible texts in the library. The physical texts in the library have been dated to 350-400 AD; however, original versions of The Gospel of Philip may significantly predate this. For more, see: www.gnosis.org/naghamm/nhl.html.

...

Christ came to ransom some, to save others, to redeem others. He ransomed those who were strangers and made them his own. And he set his own apart, those whom he gave as a pledge according to his plan. It was not only when he appeared that he voluntarily laid down his life, but he voluntarily laid down his life from the very day the world came into being. Then he came first in order to take it, since it had been given as a pledge. It fell into the hands of robbers and was taken captive, but he saved it. He redeemed the good people in the world as well as the evil.

...

Before Christ came, there was no bread in the world, just as Paradise, the place where Adam was, had many trees to nourish the animals but no wheat to sustain man. Man used to feed like the animals, but when Christ came, the perfect man, he brought bread from heaven in order that man might be nourished with the food of man. The rulers thought that it was by their own power and will that they were doing what they did, but the Holy Spirit in secret was accomplishing everything through them as it wished. Truth, which existed since the beginning, is sown everywhere. And many see it being sown, but few are they who see it being reaped.

...

No one will hide a large valuable object in something large, but many a time one has tossed countless thousands into a thing worth a penny. Compare the soul. It is a precious thing and it came to be in a contemptible body.

...

Some are afraid lest they rise naked. Because of this they wish to rise in the flesh, and they do not know that it is those who wear the flesh who are naked. It is those who [...] to unclothe themselves who are not naked. "Flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Co 15:50). What is this which will not inherit? This which is on us. But what is this, too, which will inherit? It is that which belongs to Jesus and his blood. Because of this he said "He who shall not eat my flesh and drink my blood has not life in him" (Jn 6:53). What is it? His flesh is the word, and his blood is the Holy Spirit. He who has received these has food and he has drink and clothing. I find fault with the others who say that it will not rise. Then both of them are at fault. You say that the flesh will not rise. But tell me what will rise, that we may honor you. You say

the Spirit in the flesh, and it is also this light in the flesh. (But) this too is a matter which is in the flesh, for whatever you shall say, you say nothing outside the flesh. It is necessary to rise in this flesh, since everything exists in it. In this world, those who put on garments are better than the garments. In the Kingdom of Heaven, the garments are better than those that put them on.

...

Jesus took them all by stealth, for he did not appear as he was, but in the manner in which they would be able to see him. He appeared to them all. He appeared to the great as great. He appeared to the small as small. He appeared to the angels as an angel, and to men as a man. Because of this, his word hid itself from everyone. Some indeed saw him, thinking that they were seeing themselves, but when he appeared to his disciples in glory on the mount, he was not small. He became great, but he made the disciples great, that they might be able to see him in his greatness.

He said on that day in the thanksgiving, "You who have joined the perfect light with the Holy Spirit, unite the angels with us also, as being the images." Do not despise the lamb, for without it, it is not possible to see the king. No one will be able to go in to the king if he is naked.

...

There were three who always walked with the Lord: Mary, his mother, and her sister, and Magdalene, the one who was called his companion. His sister and his mother and his companion were each a Mary.

...

What the father possesses belongs to the son, and the son himself, so long as he is small, is not entrusted with what is his. But when he becomes a man, his father gives him all that he possesses.

...

God is a dyer. As the good dyes, which are called "true", dissolve with the things dyed in them, so it is with those whom God has dyed. Since his dyes are immortal, they become immortal by means of his colors. Now God dips what he dips in water.

...

When the pearl is cast down into the mud, it becomes greatly despised, nor if it is anointed with balsam oil will it become more precious. But it always has value in the eyes of its owner. Compare the Sons of God: wherever they may be, they still have value in the eyes of their Father.

...

Glass decanters and earthenware jugs are both made by means of fire. But if glass decanters break, they are done over, for they came into being through a breath. If earthenware jugs break, however, they are destroyed, for they came into being without breath.

...

The Lord went into the dye works of Levi. He took seventy-two different colors and threw them into the vat. He took them out all white. And he said, "Even so has the Son of Man come as a dyer."

...

As for the Wisdom who is called "the barren," she is the mother of the angels. And the companion of the [...] Mary Magdalene. [...] loved her more than all the disciples, and used to kiss her often on her mouth. The rest of the disciples [...]. They said to him "Why do you love her more than all of us?" The Savior answered and said to them, "Why do I not love you like her?"

When a blind man and one who sees are both together in darkness, they are no different from one another. When the light comes, then he who sees will see the light, and he who is blind will remain in darkness."

...

He who comes out of the world, and so can no longer be detained on the grounds that he was in the world, evidently is above the desire of the [...] and fear. He is master over [...]. He is superior to envy. If [...] comes, they seize him and throttle him. And how will this one be able to escape the great [...] powers? How will he be able to [...]? There are some who say, "We are faithful" in order that [...] the unclean spirits and the demons. For if they had the Holy Spirit, no unclean spirit would cleave to them. Fear not the flesh nor love it. If you fear it, it will gain mastery over you. If you love it, it will swallow and paralyze you.

...

The Lord did everything in a mystery, a baptism and a chrism and a eucharist and a redemption and a bridal chamber. [...] he said, "I came to make the things below like the things above, and the things outside like those inside. I came to unite them in the place." [...] here through types [...]and images.

Those who say, "There is a heavenly man and there is one above him" are wrong. For it is the first of these two heavenly men, the one who is revealed, that they call "the one who is below"; and he to whom the hidden belongs is that one who is above him. For it would be better for them to say, "The inner and outer, and what is outside the outer". Because of this, the Lord called destruction the "the outer darkness": there is not another outside of it. He said, "My Father who is in secret". He said, "Go into your chamber and shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father who is in secret" (Mt 6:6), the one who is within them all. But that which is within them all is the fullness. Beyond it, there is nothing else within it. This is that of which they say, "That which is above them".

...

Through the Holy Spirit we are indeed begotten again, but we are begotten through Christ in the two. We are anointed through the Spirit. When we were begotten, we were united. None can see himself either in water or in a mirror without light. Nor again can you see in light without mirror or water. For this reason, it is fitting to baptize in the two, in the light and the water. Now the light is the chrism.

...

Is it not necessary for all those who possess everything to know themselves? Some indeed, if they do not know themselves, will not enjoy what they possess. But those who have come to know themselves will enjoy their possessions.

...

Spiritual love is wine and fragrance. All those who anoint themselves with it take pleasure in it. While those who are anointed are present, those nearby also profit (from the fragrance). If those anointed with ointment withdraw from them and leave, then those not anointed, who merely stand nearby, still remain in their bad odor. The Samaritan gave nothing but wine and oil to the wounded man. It is nothing other than the ointment. It healed the wounds, for "love covers a multitude of sins" (1 P 4:8).

...

The human being has intercourse with the human being. The horse has intercourse with the horse, the ass with the ass. Members of a race usually have associated with those of like race. So spirit mingles with spirit, and thought consorts with thought, and light shares with light. If you are born a human being, it is the human being who will love you. If you become a spirit, it is the spirit which will be joined to you. If you become thought, it is thought which will mingle with you. If you become light, it is the light which will share with you. If you become one of those who belong above, it is those who belong above who will rest upon you. If you become horse or ass or bull or dog or sheep, or another of the animals which are outside or below, then neither human being nor spirit nor thought nor light will be able to love you. Neither those who belong above nor those who belong within will be able to rest in you, and you have no part in them.

He who is a slave against his will, will be able to become free. He who has become free by favor of his master, and has sold himself into slavery, will no longer be able to be free.

...

Farming in the world requires the cooperation of four essential elements. A harvest is gathered into the barn only as a result of the natural action of water, earth, wind and light. God's farming likewise has four elements - faith, hope, love, and knowledge. Faith is our earth, that in which we take root. And hope is the water through which we are nourished. Love is the wind through which we grow. Knowledge, then, is the light through which we ripen.

...

As long as it is hidden, wickedness is indeed ineffectual, but it has not been removed from the midst of the seed of the Holy Spirit. They are slaves of evil. But when it is revealed, then the perfect light will flow out on every one. And all those who are in it will receive the chrism. Then the slaves will be free and the captives ransomed. "Every plant which my father who is in heaven has not planted will be plucked out." (Mt 15:13) Those who are separated will unite [...] and will be filled. Every one who will enter the bridal chamber will kindle the light, for [...] just as in the marriages which are [...] happen at night. That fire [...] only at night, and is put out. But the mysteries of that marriage are perfected rather in the day and the light. Neither that day nor its light ever sets. If anyone becomes a son of the bridal chamber, he will receive the light. If anyone does not receive it while he is here, he will not be able to receive it in the other place. He who will receive that light will not be seen, nor can he be detained. And none shall be able to torment a person like this, even while he dwells in the world. And again when he leaves the world, he has already received the truth in the images. The world has become the Aeon (eternal realm), for the Aeon is fullness for him. This is the way it is: it is revealed to him alone, not hidden in the darkness and the night, but hidden in a perfect day and a holy light.

The Gospel According to Philip

On Good and Evil

Bob Kezer

Believing evil is something to fight against leads our world to one future: knowing wrong cannot be confronted that way takes us to another. We can never be forced to love our neighbor; non-violence can be imposed only within confined periods. The responsibility for true peace resides with us – the world's citizens - and it is only through changing ourselves first that we can expect to abolish war.

There is no evil per se: no entity is opposing God or trying to dominate our minds. There is perfection of love - the essence of our Creator - on one end of the scale, and then the absolute lack of the divine - manifested as human fear - on the other. In-between these two extremes everything else is relative: each act, person, or situation scaled in direct relation to the degree of divinity it contains.

To consider evil as real - something to be fought against - redirects our focus. Many times we find the same fear-based concepts being used by both sides. The result is greater darkness, which is better understood as less light. Hate, anger, revenge, and intolerance - when used against themselves for whatever reason - always lead to more of the same: that involved in bringing about a new system, remains.

Achieving different results means breaking the cycle – countering fear with love. Ours is an obligation to mature, as individuals and as a race. The ways of the past have not worked: to continue to use them labels us insane. We require a greater understanding of God, and the resultant higher level of conduct this knowledge produces. This changes the ratio between that divine and that not. Light obliterates darkness, but fear only adds to itself.

Change cannot come quickly: the events of the past all bear consequences. For some groups of people, generations will be needed to release their resentment and pave the way to forgiveness. This is difficult, but not impossible. Throughout the process those who know must remain committed to maintaining a higher order of being: only by responding to fear with love can we some day hope to extinguish the flames of hatred consuming our planet.

To know God as absolute perfection of eternal truth, divine beauty, and infinite goodness is to know our Creator as pure love, the essence - the binding force - of creation. For us to some day join with God in this state of divinity, we must become as this Original Source: something imperfect cannot join with that perfect, and have the sum remain the same. Only that of love has eternal reality – nothing else can survive.

Any soul participating in this long journey to perfection knows baggage cannot be carried forward: we choose to forgive, or we stay behind. Those times where once grudges and human emotions predominated become nothing more than gaps in our consciousness, while those periods of love we did experience form our eternal memories. To forgive is to forget - forever: as it is with God, so must it become with us.

While mortals rushing through space on the material worlds perceive the movement of time, for God, our universe's entire process of reaching perfection is but one instantaneous event. We who are experiencing creation may perceive something as evil, and the effects of it are real for us, but in eternity it carries no weight: nothing but love survives the creative flash that in one moment contained our entire past, present, and future.

This is our most powerful tool for directing the evolution of our planet: only love-based actions possess the substance that can move us toward peace. While defense is appropriate, love can still prevail: only that force needed to stop further harm is allowed. Any violence beyond that is based on human reasoning, not cosmic truth. A better future will only result from helping people, not hurting them.

For a planet to evolve requires increasing divinity in the world. Imagine a sphere with billions of inhabitants, each possessing within themselves an individual entity from God that is also one and the same with God. Each person with a mind capable of discerning right from wrong becomes a portal through which our Creator's love flows into the space, and each is a focal point through whose senses God experiences creation.

We do not receive light from without: we radiate it from within. There is no need to ask God to come into our lives - this has already happened. While our future is to reside with our Creator, we only accomplish this journey because our indwelling fragment of God first finds us, takes up residence in our minds, and over time guides us back to the original source from which that spirit came.

We exercise free will through the decisions we make: our choices either move us – hence to a slight degree our world – forward or backward. Those determinations conditioned by the divine traits of love – such as mercy, tolerance, forgiveness, compassion and empathy – add light to the world; those based in human emotions of fear – such as hate, anger, greed, jealousy and intolerance keep it at bay.

Viewed from without, our world's spiritual evolution is shown by the light it radiates. Humanity is a sum total - one race sharing the same planet with none having divine favor. While today the Earth resembles a dark unreflective ball, as more people trust the process of allowing their spirit to pour forth we will illuminate our space. This choice is personal, available to everyone, and a prerequisite to be effective in greater work.

Seen from within, some regions improve sooner than others. This contrast is important: the generation that redirects our course can only do so if the results of past decisions are clear. This is becoming easier for people to discern. Violence resides where anger, revenge and intolerance are allowed to trump patience, forgiveness and good will. Two wrongs never make right: only love can bring forth light and eradicate darkness.

Peace is a result of an environment conditioned by love: it can never be forced, imposed, or mandated if expected to last. As we find that our personal lives improve as we mature into more loving people, so will we see our world become less violent: as with the parts so goes the whole. While the scale differs, the requirements remain the same – making conscious decisions based in love.

Violence works to maintain the status quo: war is necessary to support today's world system. True peace will require new leadership, world federation, and diverse religions existing under a single sovereign Creator. This responsibility for non-violence resides with us, the world's citizenry: we possess the greatest power – the ability to love. Free will is our divine right, global citizenship our future, and peace our greatest legacy – if we so decide.

Returning to college in 2002, Bob earned degrees in International and Religious studies from the University of Oregon. Working to become bilingual and also present in Spanish, he writes and speaks on God, religious tolerance, and our tools for abolishing war. His book, *God Refined: A Proposal for Peace*, (<http://stores.lulu.com/bobkezer>) became available March 1st. He has one son and lives in Eugene, Oregon.

Jarvis the Duck

The Comic Strip

Kurt Venables

Jarvis is a young duck that lives on a small pond in The Great Poplar Forest. These are the chronicles of his adventures.

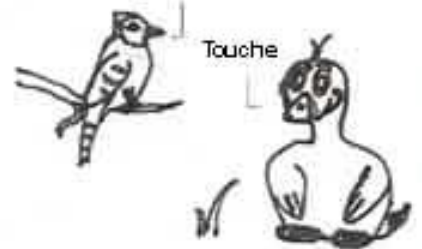
So many of the ducks at The Pond are searching for happiness by looking for this rare object or that special comfort.



The way I see it, Jay, is that the true path to happiness lies in simply finding The Light within your heart.



Why is it that creatures have the hardest time finding the things that are right under their noses?



Matins

George Herbert

(1593-1633)

I cannot ope mine eyes,
But Thou art ready there to catch
My morning-soul and sacrifice:
Then we must needs for that day make a match.

My God, what is a heart?
Silver, or gold, or precious stone,
Or star, or rainbow, or a part
Of all these things, or all of them in one?

My God, what is a heart,
That Thou shouldst it so eye, and woo,
Pouring upon it all Thy art,
As if that Thou hadst nothing else to do?

Indeed, man's whole estate
Amounts (and richly) to serve Thee:
He did not heaven and earth create,
Yet studies them, not Him by whom they be.

Teach me Thy love to know;
That this new light, which now I see,
May both the work and workman show:
Then by a sunbeam I will climb to Thee.