

THE ONLY SALVATION ON OFFER

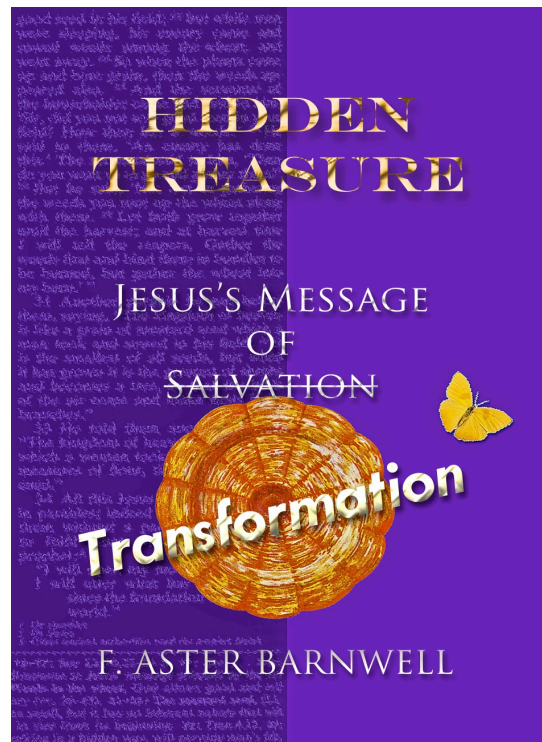
WHY TRANSFORMATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS IS THE ONLY SALVATION PROMISED IN THE CHRISTIAN GOSPELS

F. ASTER BARNWELL

In *Hidden Treasure—Jesus’s Message of Transformation*, I present a detailed exposition of the presence of a transformational psychology in the Gospels. This psychology is organized around a framework of a seven-level model of human consciousness found in Eastern religious philosophy, typically Hindu and Buddhist. According to this framework, the human body contains a network of subtle energy channels, together with seven main energy distribution sites, called *Chakras*, located along the axis of the spine, from the tailbone to the top of the head.

Although we’re not ordinarily aware of this subtle system, of which the Chakras are an integral part, it serves as a *nexus*, or connection, between Matter and Spirit, helping us to find a point of balance in our experience of life between the material and the spiritual. In reality, however, human life is expressed along a continuum between the two polar extremes, though most of us cluster towards the lower end. In this role of Spirit-Matter liaison, each of the seven major Chakras defines our perspective on the world and how we interact within it. And as such, each gives rise to different “qualities of engagement” in life.

When our consciousness—which defines our habitual patterns of thinking, feeling and acting—is limited to the first three Chakras, we tend to focus on issues concerned with our physical survival, sexual expression, and social position and status respectively. As our consciousness moves higher, we express progressive refinements in our emotions and interactions with one another, such that, at the seventh Chakra, we would be expressing more of our Divine nature, which, though part of our endowment as human beings, lies well beyond our perceptual grasp when our consciousness is confined to the lower Chakras. Hence, the goal behind all the various spiritual disciplines is to encourage and assist us in moving our consciousness toward the higher Chakras, or up “the ladder of being”—a challenge generally referred to as the transformation of consciousness. It is this



transformation, or refinement, that's the ultimate aim of the Christian message, in common with other major world spiritual traditions.

A "Gospel" of Transformation

Hidden Treasure methodically demonstrates that the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels, particularly as contained in the Sermon on the Mount, and the parables dealing with the Kingdom of Heaven in the Gospel of Matthew, offer step-by-step instructions on how we can move our consciousness to higher Chakras. Once we become familiar with this transformational program laid out in the Gospels, it becomes obvious that what Christians at large interpret as a *promise of salvation* for believing in Jesus Christ, is really nothing more than an invitation to undergo a transformation of consciousness.

Believing in a historical Jesus does not save us any more than someone is entitled to a diploma simply by enrolling in a college program. All that enrollment does is demonstrate that you're ready to master the curriculum of study necessary to qualify you for the desired diploma. So, though you may get a student card with your enrollment, that is not the same as a license to practice your anticipated profession just yet. Likewise, with the Gospels, the salvation that appears to be on offer is really only a proxy for the transformation we're supposed to engage and foster within ourselves. The Gospel writers used the story of Jesus's birth, heroic life and sacrificial death to "hook" us at an emotional level, with the hope that once we believe the story, we'd put the Gospel teachings into practice, the core of which is showing *equal* love for God and fellowman. As we apply these teachings to ourselves, we would begin to undergo a spiritual awakening, marked by a deeper sense of connectedness with life. The Gospel writers likely did not anticipate untold millions of people not making it past "believing" the story, expecting instead that believers would advance to the next stage—applying themselves to the transformational program contained in the Gospels. These "believers only" are in a similar situation to our college student who gets his student card but neglects going to class or learning the curriculum.

Accessing Our Higher Self

The key to understanding the transformational psychology embedded in the Gospels is to realize that the Christ Jesus of the Gospels is *a symbol* for each individual's own *Higher Self*, which, for most of us, exists as a potentiality only. It is obscured by our egoic consciousness which narrows our frame of reference for interacting with life. Hence, we're psychologically conditioned to viewing life in terms of separation rather than unity, and to opt for conflict with each other over cooperation (in the expectation that we'd secure a personal advantage over the other). Because, with egoic consciousness, it's "me" versus the world, "us" versus "them."

This me-centered world view of egoic consciousness is the result of having our consciousness limited to the concerns of the first three Chakras, which, as said before, are physical survival, emotional gratification, (especially as this is expressed through sexuality), and social position and status (i.e. personal power). In the vocabulary of popular culture,

these three-Chakra preoccupations are often represented as desires for money, sex and power, or MSP. When our consciousness is confined in this manner, we're living out of our *Lower Self*, as opposed to the Higher Self, which is accessed when our consciousness is stabilized at the fourth Chakra and above.

We are "saved," spiritually and psychologically, only when we outgrow egoic consciousness by bringing our Higher Self into expression. The split of the seven Chakra system into categories belonging to the Lower Self—consisting of the first three—and the Higher Self, consisting of the higher four, highlights the significance of the change we undergo when we're able to advance our personal consciousness beyond the third Chakra. Some spiritual traditions would even say that this is when we "put off" our animal nature and become fully human.* In the Gospels, it is this "rite of passage" that is symbolically captured in the temptations drama of Jesus's encounter with the devil, or Tempter. In the encounter, the three temptations which Jesus undergoes (Matthew 4: 3-11) symbolize the challenges we must each overcome to raise our consciousness from first, second, and third chakra preoccupations.†

How do we contact the Higher Self, and where do we begin? I would venture the following in response to these questions: *We access the consciousness of our Higher Self each time we defer to the highest good we can perceive from the events of our life, and from our interactions with each other.* Though simply stated, this maxim represents the focal point and apex of all the spiritual knowledge and discipline we've acquired. Because, irrespective of our spiritual background, training, and level of knowledge we've acquired, the work of transforming consciousness boils down to how we conduct ourselves in the moment, whether in our interaction with others or in our reflections on our own achievements or disappointments. These are usually times when our self-definition comes under its greatest challenge, giving us the opportunity to open to the higher reaches of our nature, such as our aspirations and ideals.‡ Above all, since "the highest good" is not something that is readily known in a given situation, we're challenged to consider all possible outcomes of an activity or interaction, both from our own, and the points of view of those we're involved with. This makes it an absolute necessity for us to always reflect on our motives and to weigh the needs of others against our own desires before we decide on a course of action.

If we approached all our interactions mindful that the highest good may at times diverge with our personal desires and wants, we would find ourselves becoming more open, more accepting, and more compassionate. It also means that it's only to the extent that these changes become entrenched and start to feel *natural* for us, that egoic consciousness becomes supplanted by the consciousness of our Higher Self. This is what

* St. Paul talks about someone forsaking their "carnal nature" and putting on Christ.

† Please see my article, *Seven Chakras and Seven Levels of Consciousness—The View From the Gospels*.

‡ These are also opportune times to discard old outlooks and attitudes that do not serve the higher possibilities we intuit for ourselves.

transformation of consciousness entails, and it is this “awakening,” to a higher consciousness that is the ultimate aim of the Christian message, in common with other major world spiritual traditions. Once we realize this, we will see that this process of transformation is the only salvation on offer in the Christian Gospels. This is how it’s always been and shall ever be, as it’s our only means of escape from our animal nature.

To think that there’s a path to God apart from working to transform our consciousness is a delusion. There is no magic set of beliefs which can do the work for us, as God doesn’t do side-deals. It’s the same for everyone, whether we’re Christian—Catholic or Protestant, Hindu, Buddhist, or whatever. This means that identifying with a religion cannot be a substitute for the work we must each do, day-by-day, personal interaction by personal interaction, to transform our egoic consciousness into one more sensitive and responsive to our connectedness. The path to God and our deepest and truest reality is beyond dogma and is only found through the process of transformation.

Religion Made for Man and Not Man for Religion

So what’s the function of religion then? Before we explore this question, let’s pause to reflect on what religion is not. If we spend a little time in contemplation of Jesus’s statement in Mark that “The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath,” (Mark 2: 27-28) we should quickly arrive at the conclusion that this statement also applies to religion. Once we understand that it’s the transformation of consciousness that’s the goal of our spiritual aspiration and practice, we will see that simply *belonging to* a religion—if by that term, we mean some prescribed or codified set of beliefs about the ultimate purpose of life—doesn’t do anything to advance our mission. Instead of deferring to religion, treating it as our master with an entitlement to our allegiance, it should be the other way around.

Religion should be facilitating our transformation, by helping us develop our latent faculties of *conscience* and *will*. For if these faculties are lacking, it would prove impossible for us to give representation to the Higher Self in our daily existence. Plus, it is only when these faculties are functioning that we can fulfill the requirement to love our neighbor, or be able to do good without feeling like we’re making a sacrifice. With conscience, we’re able to feel for others and empathize with them; and with will, we’re able to voluntarily undertake tasks that will facilitate our own growth. For example, we won’t need the enticement of “going to heaven” to undertake spiritual work because we will understand that spiritual consciousness represents the ultimate ripening of human life, and as such, is its only meaningful outcome.

Another valuable role for religion is to serve as *living libraries*, functioning as repositories of various spiritual symbols and rituals that can be incorporated into spiritual exercises to help us activate other latent faculties. On the other hand, when we use religion to sow and foster division and hate, instead of helping us transform egoic consciousness, it

causes us to regress. When it's misapplied in this manner, the spiritual effect is equivalent to a soccer player kicking the ball into his net.

As we progressively bring the Higher Self into expression in our daily lives, we'd discover that *the other* is really just another aspect of the *One Universal Life* and Self. As the *Bhagavad Gita* puts it: "... when a man sees that the God in himself is the same God in all that is, he hurts not himself by hurting others." [This is the condition Christian scriptures refer to as having the Law written on our hearts.] To the extent that we are estranged from this reality of the Higher Self, we are alienated from each other and therefore from God, for the Higher Self is nothing other than a spark of the Divine resident in each Soul. The challenge for every human being is to find some access to this reality and bring it into expression.

Though transformation of consciousness might seem a very daunting challenge, we need not feel discouraged, as this work is rarely fully achieved in any one person's lifetime. However, the good news is that no effort is ever wasted or lost. Whatever gains we make at transformation are preserved as Soul memory and natural gifts and inclinations for future lifetimes.

Conclusion

In closing, let's reflect on the consequence for us when we continue to interpret the Christian message as something to be "believed" only, (and for which we expect eternal salvation in the bargain) rather than something to be put into practice. We would simply miss out on the transformational potential inherent in the message, which is only realized as we become engaged in practicing the Gospel message of *equal* love for God and fellowman. But that's not all, for by missing out on a transformed consciousness, we miss out as well on the depths of intuition and understanding that accompany this higher state. It is this deeper understanding that enables us to distinguish what is to be interpreted symbolically as opposed to literally as we read our scriptures, and, when it's lacking, we are left to cling ever more tightly to a literal interpretation of symbolic messages in scriptures. Perhaps, this is the reason for the growing ranks of fundamentalism in our various religions. We're simply paying the price for not keeping pace with Life's unfolding transformational agenda for us all.

F. Aster Barnwell
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The Higher and Lower Self

