

# An Esoteric Christian

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In answer to the question whether I am a believer or a Christian, I tend to answer in the spirit of that it depends on what is meant by the word believer or Christian. If it is the conviction that someone historically died and thereby actually took my sins -that I am currently committing- on his shoulders; that all I need to do in this life is believe in his Name and I will go to some eternal heaven and that this is literally *the truth*, I decline. I am not saying that there is no truth to be found in this statement, but that its *literal* explanation is to me unacceptable.

Why? Quite simply, because it robs me of all responsibility for my own actions and makes me dependent on someone or something outside of my own being and control. Simply put, it is downright disempowering.

In my opinion religion is about empowering people. Religion gives purpose to our lives. Religion comes from the Latin word meaning to bind back. To me that means to reconnect with our Source. Religion is not about comfort, it is about development. Personal development. Empowerment is more than *allowing* people to take responsibility for their actions. It is also about creating conducive circumstances so that they actually *do* something. It means helping them see that a pro-active mindset provides the impetus to create and fulfill their lives. It means teaching them that they are able to exert influence to alter their experience of everyday life.

## **Does being a Christian then preclude empowerment? What then is an esoteric Christian?**

Esoteric means hidden, in contradistinction to exoteric, which means outer, or visible. The one cannot exist without the other, as the exoteric is the vehicle for the esoteric. A story, for example, can be interpreted on many levels - the individual words, the sentences, the story and the message. The words and sentences are the exoteric vehicle for the story; the story in its turn is the vehicle for the underlying message. An esoteric approach is therefore directed at understanding layers of meaning. What is this story trying to tell me? Jesus' parables are an excellent example. He also tries to teach that it isn't about the story itself, but the message contained within that story.

An esoteric Christian is therefore someone who values the Christian tradition, yet does not interpret this tradition in a literal sense. An esoteric Christian reads between the lines - is someone who attempts to find the underlying layers of meaning in a passage. The purpose is to see how a particular story can give insight into the processes and experiences encountered in daily life. The emphasis is not about rules (thou shalt not...), but on understanding.

But this is not the end of the story. Understanding something implies that we change the way we think. The way we think influences the way we feel. The way we feel has a direct result in how we act. These aren't statements of rhetoric. Modern scientific research corroborates that our attitude dictates –via the hypothalamus in the brain– which neuropeptides are released into our body. These neuropeptides in turn determine our emotional state of being. Understanding this process means we understand the power of the mind. By consciously utilising our minds we make ourselves creators, or co-creators with God.

The ramifications of embracing an esoteric approach to life –and hence to Christianity– are immense. It makes teachers of our religious leaders. Seen from this point of view the first duty of a priest is to make himself or herself redundant. The task at hand is to help people develop the tools so that they can make their own connection with God. It makes leaders of their followers, makes them independent – they no longer require an intermediary to plead their case. This necessarily poses questions about power, authority and responsibility that extend into how we arrange our organisations. I believe that the early Christians were fully aware of these issues. Before Christianity became an organised religion and was used as a political force, small communities with different forms of expression co-existed. It wasn't about one, sanctioned way but about the true and valid experience of each and every individual.

### **What then is an Esoteric Christian today?**

I think the best summary runs something like this: An esoteric Christian is someone who takes the teachings of Christ seriously. Not the word of the teaching, but the implication. The teaching translates into attitude towards life. An esoteric Christian is someone who seeks Christ in all creation, in all people. Someone who applies what has been learnt in this process and accordingly changes the way he or she lives. Someone who not only takes responsibility for their actions but also dares to step out of the box, to try new things, to become creators. Being an esoteric Christian is not a state of being but an on-going process of ever deepening insights, an ever-clearer sense of how to fulfil this life in this time and in this place. To sum up, it is not about the destination, it is about the journey!

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