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Divine Incarnations:
God's Emissaries



“*F*ather, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

With these words, Jesus placed his signature on a unique life that enthroned him everlastingly on the altar of worshipful hearts as the incarnation of God's loving compassion. The Good Shepherd of souls opened his arms to all, rejecting none, and with universal love coaxed the world to follow him on the path to liberation through the example of his spirit of sacrifice, renunciation, forgiveness, love for friend and enemy alike, and supreme love for God above all else. As the tiny babe in the manger at Bethlehem, and as the savior who healed the sick and raised the dead and applied the salve of love on the wounds of errors, the Christ in Jesus lived among men as one of them that they too might learn to live like gods.

For mere mortals to cope with a life of unsolved and unsolvable mysteries in an inscrutable universe created by the omnipotence of God, of the omniscient essence of His omnipresence, would indeed be an overwhelming challenge were it not for divine emissaries who come on earth to speak with the voice and authority of God for the guidance of man.

Aeons past, in ancient higher ages in India, *rishis* enunciated the manifestation of Divine Beneficence, of “God with us,” in terms of divine incarnations, avatars—God incarnate on earth in enlightened beings. The eternal, omnipresent, unchanging Spirit has neither a corporeal nor heavenly form called God. Nor as the Lord God Creator

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does He fashion a form in which He then deigns to dwell among His creatures. Rather, He makes Himself known through the divinity in worthy instruments. Many are the voices that have intermediated between God and man, *khanda avatars*, or partial incarnations in God-knowing souls. Less common are the *purna avatars*, liberated beings who are fully one with God; their return to earth is to fulfill a God-ordained mission. The Lord in the sacred Hindu Bible, the Bhagavad Gita, declares: “Whenever virtue declines and vice predominates, I incarnate as an Avatar. In visible form I appear from age to age to protect the virtuous and to destroy evildoing in order to reestablish righteousness” (IV:7–8). The same one glorious infinite consciousness of God, the Universal Christ Consciousness, *Kutastha Chaitanya*, becomes familiarly apparelled in the individuality of an enlightened soul, graced with a distinguishing personality and godly nature appropriate to the times and purpose of the incarnation.

Without this intercession of God’s love come to earth in the example, message, and guiding hand of His avatars, it would scarce be possible for groping humanity to find the path into God’s kingdom midst the dark miasma of world delusion, the cosmic substance of human habitation. Lest His benighted children be lost forever in creation’s delusive labyrinths, the Lord comes again and again in God-illuminated prophets to light the way. The glory of Christ in the form of Jesus made visible the Invisible Light that leads to God.

Because the periodic recurrence of divine incarnations is a part of God’s creative enterprise, signs of such a birth are imprinted in the Grand Master Plan. Sages, through their awakened soul intuition, can read the heavenly inscriptions; and if it be in accord with God’s will that such a future event be made known, they prophesy in plain or veiled revelations. This is one of the many ways in which God assures His children of His awareness of their need for His presence amongst them. Of the future coming of Lord Jesus, several references in the Old Testament are cited by devout Christians and Biblical scholars. From the book of prophet Isaiah:

The mission of divine love that Jesus came to fulfill

“The Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel” (7:14).*

* “Which being interpreted is, ‘God with us’” (Matthew 1:23).

My servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high....So shall he sprinkle many nations (52:13, 15).

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all....He was taken from prison and from judgment...he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was he stricken....He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors (53:6, 8, 12).

Divine intercession to mitigate the cosmic law of cause and effect, by which a man suffers from his errors, was at the heart of the mission of love Jesus came to fulfill. Moses brought the law from God to man, emphasizing the awful justice that befalls willful heedlessness. Jesus came to demonstrate the forgiveness and compassion of God, whose love is a shelter even from exacting law. Similarly, Jesus was preceded by Gautama Buddha, the “Enlightened One,” whose incarnation reminded a forgetful generation of the Dharma Chakra, the ever-rotating wheel of karma—self-initiated action and its effects which make each man, and not a Cosmic Dictator, responsible for his own present condition. Buddha brought heart back into the arid theology and mechanical rituals into which the ancient Vedic religion of India had fallen after the passing of a higher age in which Bhagavan Krishna, India’s most beloved of avatars, preached the way of divine love and God-realization through the practice of the supreme spiritual science of yoga, union with God.

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”* Such was the exceptional mission shouldered by Jesus. Intercession by intimates of God is the palliative elixir that gives a weakened mortal the necessary strength to rise and conquer the forces of cosmic law he has roused against himself by disobedient behavior. The interceder stands with the devotee, offering him defense in the form of impermeable wisdom, and sometimes deflecting onto himself a portion of a devastating onslaught.

Jesus came in a darkened age that was little able to appreciate him; but his message of the love of God and his intercession on behalf of suffering humanity was not only for that time but for all ages to come—that God is with man in his darkest moments as well as in enlightened times. He reminded a world fearful of their Creator as a God

* John 15:13 (see Discourse 71).

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of wrathful judgment that, though “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth,”* the Absolute is also a personal God who can be appealed to in prayer and who responds as a loving Heavenly Father.

To understand the magnitude of a divine incarnation, it is necessary to understand the source and nature of the consciousness that is incarnate in the avatar. Jesus spoke of this consciousness when he proclaimed: “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30) and “I am in the Father, and the Father in me” (John 14:11). Those who unite their consciousness to God know both the transcendent and the immanent nature of Spirit—the singularity of the ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss of the Uncreate Absolute, and the myriad manifestations of His Being as the infinitude of forms into which He variegates Himself in the panorama of creation.

The nature of an avatar's consciousness

The scientific evolution of cosmic creation from the Creator-Lord is outlined, in arcane terminology, in the Old Testament book of Genesis. In the New Testament, the opening verses of Saint John's Gospel may rightly be called Genesis According to Saint John. Both these profound Biblical accounts, when clearly grasped by intuitive perception, correspond exactly to the spiritual cosmology set forth in the scriptures of India handed down by her Golden Age God-knowing *risbis*.

Saint John was perhaps the greatest of the disciples of Jesus. Just as a schoolteacher finds among his pupils one whose superior comprehension ranks him first in the class, and others who must be ranked lower, so among the disciples of Jesus there were differing degrees of ability to appreciate and absorb the depth and breadth of the teachings of the Christ-man. The records left by Saint John, among the various books of the New Testament, evince the highest degree of divine realization, making known the deep esoteric truths experienced by Jesus and transferred to John. Not only in his gospel, but in his epistles and especially in the profound metaphysical experiences symbolically described in the Book of Revelation, John presents the truths taught by Jesus from the point of view of inward intuitive realization. In John's words we find precision; that is why his gospel, though last among the four in the New Testament, should be considered first when the true meaning of the life and teachings of Jesus is being sought.

* John 4:24 (see Discourse 18).

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not....

That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, "This was he of whom I spake, 'He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.'"

And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him.

—John 1:1–5, 9–18*

* Omitted here are verses 6–8; these are discussed in Discourse 6. In the beginning segment of Saint John's Gospel, he relates encapsulated profound truths of universal creation; appropriately for this revelation, these verses in the original Greek are written as poetry. In verses 6–8 and 15, however, Saint John digresses briefly to anticipate his historical narrative of the life and activities of Jesus by making reference to Christ's forerunner, John the Baptist; these verses, written as prose, depart from the poetic style of the rest of this opening passage. About these first eighteen verses of John 1, scholars observe: "With the exception of verses 6–8 and 15, which seem to be interruptions, this prologue is in the form of Semitic poetry."—Robert J. Miller, ed., *The Complete Gospels: Annotated Scholars Version* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1994). (*Publisher's Note*)