

1. Ouspensky & Gurdjieff

1. Recently I was asked by an Anonymous correspondent about Gurdjieff groups that are on the decline. I am writing in English because although there is a good translation of Ouspensky's chief works (Pyrinos Kosmos - Πύρινος Κόσμος), there are several very bad ones and Gurdjieff's are just as bad. Furthermore, a student of this system should know English anyway.

Here in Athens there are at least 3 G-groups and 2 O-groups that I know of. The fact is that G-groups are at loggerheads and speak very badly of one another. I used to know the leader of the first ever G-group here back in the 1970s: the man obviously had no real grasp of the system even in its theoretical aspect; moreover, he used to take drugs and thought it right. Of the O-groups I have no information except that their own few translations are not up to standard. (Two of them by Pyrinos Kosmos, *In Search of the Miraculous* and *A New Model of the Universe* are very good.)

2. Many rumours about the two men were floating around even in the 1930s and 40s but many have spread in the last 60 years. Many of the publications seem to have been written by somewhat irresponsible people who like calumnies and scandals. In any event, it is one (and permissible) thing to write dispassionately about the system as given by the two men and quite another (and impermissible) to write gossiping about them. Since O died in 1947 and G in 1949, different persons are now promoting their teachings, some capable and others not at all.

The basic fact is that both men tried, each in his own way, to help people who wanted it to raise their level of consciousness and, at the same time, realise aims of their own. Judging by their writings, one cannot but conclude that they were very different characters and consequently their methods and their version of the teaching would be quite different.

3. O writes quite plainly that after a period of about 3 years he felt that he was no longer understanding G and, after their emigration from Russia, he distanced himself from G in 1921 and in January 1924 he broke from him completely.

O established himself in London in 1921. G had gone to Germany but his plans failed and after visiting O in London in 1921, went to France where he settled in the Château du Prieuré near Fontainebleau and had many disciples staying there with him. O wrote that he could not see the direction G's work was taking but thought the method had the monastic quality about it.

This monastic quality was one of the obstacles O saw separating him from G. Another one was the fact, as it seemed to him, that G started accepting people who were not prepared for the work. Moreover, G did not insist that disciples/students should not write anything about the work and about the people involved without permission from G.

4. All these are well documented facts and well-known by anyone who has evinced serious interest in this esoteric affair.

Both G and O held onto the System, which G taught (and imparted to O) or, rather, the “Fragments of an Unknown Teaching” as G and O would call it. Neither of them sought to enrich or fuse the System with other teachings like Sufism (developed in Turkey and Persia and Central Asia) or Vedānta (brought from India to the West by Vivekānanda first in the 19th cent. and many others subsequently).

It is obvious from the reliable published documents (there are many fantasy-ridden ones) that G knew more of the System than he gave to O or, as far as I know, to anyone else. Some writers say G lost contact with the Inner Circle; others that he went mad. Such opinions seem to me far-fetched: they presuppose that the writer(s) knew what the Inner Circle is (which I don’t believe for a moment) or that they could judge objectively G, who as a character was very difficult to assess, since by all accounts he was very enigmatic being a consummate actor who managed to conceal himself behind many personas.

5. Hereafter I stay with O and part company with G, whose actual work I don’t really know from personal experience. But I shall return to him and his tradition later. It is said that G’s successor in the USA, Lord Pentland, produced good results. This is very likely but two of his students that I met in Athens did not inspire me.

O had done much work on his own before meeting G in Moscow in 1915. Some have written that G had, in fact, plagiarized O’s own work on the four (and higher) dimensions, but this is not easy to prove. Personally, I have found no convincing evidence for this.

O certainly loved truth and pursued it to the end of his life with great intensity. But here it should be obvious to all that just because someone announces repeatedly that he loved and pursued truth, he had not necessarily arrived at it or was on the right way to it.

This is not to deny that O did pursue truth passionately and his work produced results that affect with their goodness thousands of people even to this day.

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2. Ouspensky (2)

1. I first met Ouspensky as a young student back in a summer of the late 1950s in London in his book, *In Search of the Miraculous*. My English was about good enough then to manage to read it in a few days. It shocked me, it enthused me, it filled me with wonder and longing. That was it! I recognized the main ideas as what I had been searching for throughout my previous years of puberty. But I also felt that perhaps I was not ready for such work.

The book was recommended by a much older friend who, as I learnt subsequently, had started dabbling in “esoteric work”. I poured questions on him and he did his best to reply by saying he did not know much. But he recommended some more books in the same line and I got onto O’s *A New Model of the Universe*. This too filled me with wonder and longing. But this I found more difficult. Several chapters remained not comprehended, almost totally impenetrable, despite a second and a third reading. And then I read other books by O.

2. One chapter of *A New Model*.... I still don’t understand and wonder why it was written at all the way it was written. But before I come to this, I should deal with another important matter.

One reason adduced by O for leaving G’s tutelage was that G did not after a time select as students/followers people who were “prepared” but accepted just about anybody who was interested.

How does one get prepared and how does a member of, say, O’s groups/school recognize such a person in order to invite him/her to join?

Obviously, strong interest is one such criterion. But if the man interested does not know much about the subject how can another man, unless the latter can read thought, know whether the former man’s interest is genuinely for the specific esoteric teaching? Also, the man may be interested for deep-hidden selfish reasons (e.g. make money, find sexual partners) or because he is simply curious after reading much literature round the subject of esotericism, or wanting to write a book or articles for a newspaper. There are many cunning actors who can fool many people.

3. However, it cannot be a matter of interest alone. It is possible that the multifarious experiences of everyday life, and especially “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune”, may force one into searching for true or deeper causes of events, for hidden forces and motives in one’s character or more generally for “the meaning of life”.

I recall myself as a teenager wondering why my feelings sometimes changed without apparent external cause. Also wondering whether things one did, like going down one street instead of another was unalterable “fate” and what would happen if one somehow managed to break this “unalterable fate”.

And how did experiences *deja-vu* occur or out-of-body experiences and sometimes knowing the immediate future?

Why was the thinking so incessant and automatic, beyond my control?

Why did girls attract me so intensely?

How did men of genius like Da Vinci, Galileo, Vivaldi, arise and men of wisdom like Pythagoras, Lao Tse, Aristotle and so on?

And so on...

4. The chapter in O's *A New Model...* that produced misgivings was the fourth one, "Christianity and the New Testament". I knew very well the Gospels and wondered at O's treatment of them which in no way illuminated them. Nothing significant is explained in 60 pages of small print.

In the Preface to the 2nd Edition (of 1934) too there is something so unbelievably wrong that it makes you wonder about O's understanding of social and economic forces. And this is doubly significant because he connects the specific issue ("the existence of the Soviet government") with the distinction he rightly makes between "logical" and "psychological" thinking.

But I must leave both issues for the next paper.

3. Ouspensky (3): Crisis of the early 1930's

1. In the Preface to the 2nd edition of *A New Model...* (1934) Ouspensky draws a distinction (valid in my view) between "higher mind", which is generally unrecognised, and ordinary mind which has several gradations but is generally recognisable in people from street-cleaners to select specialists in all academic and scientific disciplines; he draws a distinction between the "psychological method", which accompanies higher mind, and the "logical method" which, accompanies ordinary mind. The former is connected with "esoteric knowledge" as distinct again from well-recognised "ordinary knowledge" in all spheres of human investigation and study.

O also mentions the existence of "defective thinking/method" which is responsible for superstitions, conspiracy-theories and various false notions that become current thinking and mainstream views for a period.

The psychological method sees the absurdities of "defective thinking" and the limitations of logical mind, accepts the existence of "higher mind" and strive to reach it.

2. On p xv he writes that logical mind at present (before 1934) looks for "the causes of the economic and political crisis everywhere except where it actually is". And what is the place/cause "where it actually is"?

"The causes of the crisis", he wrote, "live in the existence of the Soviet government in Russia and in the recognition and support of this government by other governments"!

Such a claim is not merely wrong, it is preposterous!

If O had applied his psychological method, and, more so, his "esoteric method" (p xvi), which examines a room not only from every aspect within it (=psychological) but also its position in the entire building and the building in the wider community and environment, he would have realized that there had been economic and political crises long before any Soviet/Bolshevik government in Russia.

It is astonishing that he did not bother to examine this simplest of historical facts.

3. In the wider historical context, which would have corresponded to his wider social and geographical environment, there were economic depressions in the late 19th cent. (though admittedly not of the magnitude of the 1929 crash), there were revolutions in 1848 and the Napoleonic wars earlier. There was moreover abysmal poverty afflicting millions in the richest countries (Britain and USA), due to the rapid development of Industry and Commerce after the cruel and disastrous land enclosures in the latter 18th cent. which drove the masses of common people to unemployment and starvation.

And the Soviet government was not in existence then. Even the notions of socialism and Marxism came **after** these horrific developments in the fast-advancing industrialisation of the societies of Europe and the USA.

4. The cause of the 1930 crisis was ignorance of economic laws, greed for profit and for pleasure and arrogance. This triad (ignorance, arrogance and greed) is at the root of every crisis throughout the known human history. This triad makes some people, cunning and unscrupulous, appropriate to themselves, by deceiving and exploiting others, goods that are given freely by the Universe and are meant to be for the common enjoyment of all.

The immediate cause of the 1929 crash was inordinate speculation in the Stock Exchanges (and wider Markets). But at the same time land prices were rising by leaps and bounds in Florida and other areas as the rent-seekers sought to capture the value of locations which was augmented by the increase of population (after the war losses), the progress of technology and the advances in other aspects of social life.

Instead of examining the phenomenon in its historical and global context, O calls the Bolshevik regime “a plague” and points out that if you contact plague-ridden people, you will simply catch it yourself – which is empirically evident.

5. Yes, the Bolshevik coup had something of the nature of the plague but it did not explode suddenly inside a paradisiac Russia. If there had been no injustices in Russia, there would not have been so many warnings of unrest in the latter 19th cent. which eventually culminated in the 1917 bolshevik coup.

Yes, the Soviet government from the days of Lenin caused, or tried to cause, trouble in many countries as far as Persia, India, and Korea (D. Volkogonov 1994 *Lenin*, N.Y., pp 394-5, 400-1). But it never really succeeded in impacting the strong Democracies. The crisis in the early 1930's had native social and psychological causes and with his esoteric methods O ought to know this....

We shall continue in the next essay.

4. Ouspensky 4: The New Testament

1. Ouspensky is certainly a major figure, if not the most important one, among modern occultists or esoteric philosophers/psychologists, as many would have them. Despite my own disagreements, I still regard him a great benefactor and authority in esoteric matters.

O wrote: "In the New Testament the esoteric idea occupies the chief place in the four Gospels." These, he continued, "are written for the very few, ... pupils of esoteric schools. However intelligent and educated in the ordinary sense a man maybe, he will not understand the Gospels without special indications and without special esoteric knowledge" (148-9).

He then pointed out that there are discrepancies between the FCG (=Four Canonical Gospels, I term them) and other writings in the NT (=New Testament) and subsequent Christian literature by Fathers of the Church and later Church magnates.

With this latter idea I concur fully but I would add **that there are just as big and disturbing discrepancies among the FCG themselves, which O fails to notice!**

2. There is much that O notices in the FCG that seems to me right and therefore agreeable. At the same time, very little of this has not been noticed and commented upon by previous writers, mystics, occultists, theologians et al.

For example, on p 181, O takes some passages from John (5,21; 5,28; 8,51) which say that the "dead" (or those "in graves") shall hear Christ's voice and will live (or be quickened) while those who do keep his sayings will not "see death". O explains that the first lot are only metaphorically "dead"; they are alive but "dead" to esoteric truth and become alive when they hear the teaching; those that practice it will not be bothered by (=see) death. All such ideas had been noted by others earlier. O obviously and rightly does not believe in the popular Apocalypticism of the imminent Second Coming.

Again, on p 197, O examines the parable of the Good Samaritan, as the passage in Luke 10. 25-37 has come to be known. A lawyer asked Christ who is his "neighbour" (*plēsiōn* in Greek) and he narrated the story of the man who travelled from Jerusalem to Jericho but was attacked by thieves, stripped, beaten up and left "half dead". Then a priest passed by and then a Levite, both high adherents of the orthodox Jewish faith, but both ignored him. Later a Samaritan came and after tending his wounds, took him to an inn and took further care of him.

Now everybody believes that one's neighbour is any one person, but Jesus points out most clearly that it is the Samaritan, "he that showed mercy" on the wounded traveller. So one's neighbour (*plēsiōn*) is the person who helps one along the spiritual way: him one should love as one loves oneself, O rightly points out – not just anybody!

3. Many passages in the FCG refer to esoteric work as distinct from common religious or spiritual involvement.

O has a very curious view of the FCG, however. He thinks they are “objective works of art”, i.e. works of the highest possible kind of art, meant for very special people of higher being and higher mind or, to quote him, “for those who already have a certain degree of understanding... who possess a key”. (But then people of “higher being and higher mind” would hardly need to read such writings since they already know about this esoteric development. And what would they who possess a key do with them? The commandments “Love one another” and “Do unto others as ye would others do to you” are plain enough! If one were to practise them diligently, one would hardly need all the cryptic rest.)

“They are written”, says O, “consciously for a definite purpose by men who know more than they wrote” (151). The adverb “consciously” indicates action by men of higher being and mind, far above us, aiming at and achieving specific results.

This cannot be right as there are far too many contradictions in the FCG to take very seriously anyone of them in its entirety.

4. The FCG contain much that is of value both for the life of Jesus (after all, they are the only biographies) and for his teaching. But they contain also much traditional Judaic lore and, of course, what may be termed “apocalypticism”, i.e. the vision of Christ’s Second Coming “in the clouds” while angels gather and lift up the elect from the corners of the earth (Mark 13. 3-33; Mathew 24. 3-36; Luke 21. 7-36).

O rightly rejects all apocalypticism but evades these passages which indicate that the writers are not at all of higher mind since they postulate a very near date for this event yet nothing of the sort came to pass!

O says that the FCG are the only sources with evidence that Jesus existed (156). This is not true. We may circumvent Tacitus (*Annales* 15.44) and Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* 18.3.3), who refer to him, as too late, near 100 CE (= Common Era = AD). Earlier, Clement, Bishop of Rome (c 95) mentions Christ by name. Also the Syrian stoic Mara bar Serapion (c75) writes of a Jewish wise king, whom the Jews put to death, and draws parallels with Pythagoras and Socrates. Josephus too called him *sophos* “a wise man”. Both of them regarded him as a philosopher, not religious leader. Then, there were the Jewish traditional texts that presented him as a magician.

On the other hand, Philon of Alexandria, who encompasses Christ’s lifetime, does mention some prophets and miracle-workers in Palestine and sects like the Essenes but not Jesus, who resurrected Lazarus before all the villagers of Bethany (John, 11). Surely the news of such a miracle (and there were other resurrections) would have spread widely and would not have passed unnoticed by other writers!

We must conclude that Jesus did teach but not quite as he is presented in the FCG; and was known but, again, not quite as in the Christian popular tradition. He probably taught select people quietly, far from crowds, perhaps even in secret.

I shall continue in the next paper.

5. Ouspensky (5): The New Testament (B')

1. Ouspensky does not, like so many other occultists or theologians, notice the grave discrepancies and contradictions in the FCG (=Four Canonical Gospels). He thinks they are great works of conscious art. Let us now examine this issue.

Mark and John give no genealogical table for Jesus' ancestry but Matthew and Luke do. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke have more similarities with each other than with the other two. But their genealogies are stunningly different:

Mtth: Joseph, Jacob, **Matthan**, Eleazar, Eluid, Acheim, Sadoc...

Lk: Joseph, Heli, **Matthan**, Levi, Melchi, Janna, Joseph...

They agree only on Joseph and his grandfather Matthan. They do not agree on any other subsequent ancestor. They don't agree even on Joseph's father's name! Both accounts can't be true but both can be false!

This suggests that the writers are not god-inspired, did not know Joseph's family and were very far removed from him. No comment from O.

2. There are inconsistencies in Jesus' birth too.

Matthew has (2.11) Mary give birth in a house in Bethlehem with no mention of Nazareth or of a manger or cave (as in other accounts). Neither angels nor shepherds come to celebrate. The 3 Magi come, indeed, following the star, then Joseph, warned by an angel, takes Mary and the baby and sojourn to Egypt to escape Herod's slaughter of the innocent. They return later and live in Nazareth.

Luke has Joseph and pregnant Mary travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem for enrolment and there Mary gives birth to Jesus in a manger. Angels and shepherds glorify the child but no star nor Magi with gifts appear! No slaughter of the innocents takes place and no sojourn to Egypt!

Again, both accounts can't be true but both can be false! No comment from O.

3. We find a similar discrepancy at the other end of Jesus' life, the crucifixion.

In Matthew 27:46 Jesus on the cross cries out in near despair *Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani* "my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And Mark describes the event in almost identical tone and detail (15:34).

But in Luke (ch 23) Jesus at no time loses control. First he prays that the Father should forgive the executioners "for they know not what they do" (23:34), then absolves the one criminal who has faith and finally breathes his last saying "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit". Similarly, in John he seems to be detached (ch 19), calm and in control. He

commends his mother to his beloved student and him to his mother, then says simply “it is finished” and gives up the spirit.

Why such discrepancy? Obviously, the evangelists were not there. But also their informants perhaps did not witness the crucifixion. Again, no comment from O.

4. If the evangelists can’t agree on such important issues as the birth and crucifixion of their protagonist why should we believe that anything else they write is true?

And, taking up the theologians’ point that the writers were “god-inspired” how could they differ so much in their account of the selfsame event? Or, to take up Ouspensky’s view that they were men of superior mind and that “every phrase, every word, contains hidden ideas” (The New Model...,150), it is difficult to see any hidden ideas in contradictory narratives of the events of the birth and the crucifixion of Christ: all we have is only contradictory ideas!

Needless to say, O does not deal with such inconsistent accounts but carries on blithely with his theories and inadequate interpretations.

5. How is it, then, that the resurrection of Lazarus, which is such a startling miracle, is mentioned only by John (ch 11) while the others ignore it and repeat other resurrections and so many comparatively trifling matters?

I’ll turn to another aspect which O mentions towards the end of his survey of the Gospels. On p 205 O refers to the incident where Jesus casts out of the temple the merchants and money-changers (Mth 21:12-13; Mk 11:15-16; John 2:14-17). This may be “a most remarkable allegory”, as O describes it, but could such an event have taken place?

The Romans were wary of trouble especially at Easter and had the temple well guarded precisely to prevent any agitation. Many Jews would come from the Diaspora and offer prayers and sacrifice. Surely Jesus would know that all these devout visitors from distant lands would need the money-changers and the vendors of fowl and goats: they most probably had no local coins and had not brought sacrificial animals. The guards would most certainly have arrested Jesus or anyone disturbing the normal run of the day.

6. Another historical discrepancy is the frequent mention of the Pharisees as the men who were the upper religious class and who conspired against Jesus.

But the Pharisees came into power after 70 CE (=AD). Before the destruction of the temple by the Romans at that date (during the Siege of Jerusalem), the upper class were the Sadducees. So it is they who should have featured as the enemies – if FCG had been written even around 70 CE! Again, no comment from O.

So there is much that is amiss in the FCG and O should have been much more circumspect in his approach. These are elementary facts of history and occultists and theologians should take them into consideration before making pontifical statements about the significance of the FCG, which cannot be taken as serious historical sources.

Far more interesting are the Gnostic Gospels which, however, were not on the whole easily obtainable at the time of Ouspensky. Of this I shall write in a future paper.

6. Ouspensky: H.M.Nicoll: The New Man

1. Ouspensky's partial and unsatisfactory examination of the FCG (=4 Canonical Gospels) was followed by some other attempts at interpreting Christ's teaching by some of O's followers. The most notable one is M. Nicoll's *The New Man* (1972 The Penguin Metaphysical Library but first published in 1950). MN was a student of Gurdjieff and then Ouspensky for several years and was given permission by O to set up his own groups and disseminate the "system". MN died in 1953 leaving unfinished another book of gospel-interpretation *The Mark*.

MN's investigation has both the merits of O's "psychological" method (giving some fine insights of interpretation) and the vices of its practical application.

2. MN explains the commandment "Thou shalt not steal" and writes: "To steal, psychologically, means to think that you do everything from yourself, by your own powers, not realizing that you do not know who you are or how you think or feel, or how you even move. It is, as it were, taking everything for granted and ascribing everything to yourself" (p3). Yes, undoubtedly, there is in us a greater Power that vivifies and moves us but our ego usurps its energy and work.

But then MN writes that "this meaning is veiled" because if it were expressed literally and analytically (as he gives it), people would not believe it and think it nonsense.

This comment is strange because the formulation of the commandment "veils" nothing. It is simply a laconic statement, as was the mode of formulating such injunctions in ancient times. In the ancient Vedic tradition the formulation is even shorter: *asteya* "non-stealing"! Usually people steal gross objects like gold and clothes etc or subtle like poses, gestures and ideas and then enery from the higher Power. How the injunction is interpreted depends on the intelligence and understanding of the hearer/reader. If it was veiled, then the people for whom it is chiefly meant would not understand it at all.

3. MN stresses the "psychological" meaning and the "ancient language" of parables (7-9). He comments by way of example on Jesus' words to Nicodemus "Except a man be born of water and the spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5), saying that spirit perhaps means "will" or the inmost, real part of man (p8) and adding that it is nonsense to think a man must be born again of physical water (9). True! But, of course "water" here could be simply baptism by immersion or sprinkling which is the ancient rite symbolising the cleansing of heart and mind. After all, Jesus himself was baptised by John in the river.

He gives other examples of the language of parables but they too are more of the nature of simple metaphors than symbols. When Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that he will give her water that will remove her thirst for ever (John 4:13-14), he obviously refers metaphorically to his own instruction. But would the brief exchange they had there and then be really sufficient to ensure the permanent satisfaction of the woman? I doubt it. Realistic probability is an aspect occultists should examine much more thoroughly.

Another example MN gives is from Isaiah 41:17 - "The poor and needy seek water and there is none". Yes, water may well stand for "truth" here but what of the subsequent verses (18-19) which say that God will open up rivers and plant cedars, myrtles, firs and pines in the wilderness. MN extracts no esoteric meaning from them for obvious reasons!

This selectiveness vitiates the method entirely.

4. Other difficulties are seen when MN deals with the Sermon on the Mount (110ff). Here, again, he gives some fine psychological insights according to esoteric ideas but, again, disregards important aspects. First, the Sermon in Matthew (ch 5ff) is given atop a mountain to **the disciples alone**, whereas in Luke (ch 6) it is given to a multitude on a plain! MN rightly translates *ptōchōs* as "beggar(-ly)" in both but he is wrong in rendering the adverb *nounechōs* (Mk12:34) as "with his own mind": the "own" is imported: the adverb means simply 'minfully, by-one-who-has-mind'.

MN also says that the Sermon "lies in between the teaching of John the Baptist and Christ's teaching in parables". This is rather disingenuous and incomprehensible because it can apply only if we take the two Gospels of Luke and Mathew as one unitary whole; otherwise, in Luke the teaching of John Baptist appears in ch 3 together with Jesus' baptism, then Jesus teaches in ch 5 and the Sermon is in ch 6: here the Sermon comes **after** the teaching. The same sequence is followed in Matthew (chs 3,4,5).

I shall continue in the next paper.

7. Ouspensky & M.Nicoll: The New Man (B')

1. Jesus did, of course, speak many parables, many pithy tales or analogies with symbolic expressions and an inner signification that is not readily understood by the masses of Christians (even some clergy). But this lack of understanding is not due to any special symbols or arcane expressions but to limited intelligence or limited application of intelligence on the part of the hearers/readers. There is nothing very special about the language of the parables used by the evangelists and put into the mouth of Jesus. M. Nicoll exaggerates the significance of the symbolism – which is found in many other traditions and has been elucidated by other researchers.

I repeat some of the material from the previous essay to help any new reader connect with the preceding unfoldment of this subject.

2. We examined in Es4, Ouspensky 4, the parable of the Good Samaritan in the New Testament, and saw that there was no real difficulty in the symbolism. The traveler that was robbed and denuded was ignored by the priest and the Levite (orthodox but hard-hearted) but was succored by a Samaritan (unorthodox, despised but good-hearted) who then took him to an inn and paid for all expenses. If the vast multitude of Christians like to think that the “neighbour” (=GK *plēsion*) is anyone (a very noble idea, even if rarely practiced), when it is clearly stated that he is the one “who showed mercy”, then that is the fault of the theologians and Church-officials who maintain this view and that of the people who do not read the parable carefully.

The esoteric significance may be primary but in the narration here it is secondary: it refers to people following a discipline, a way to self realization, get robbed of energy by inner demons (wrong notions, vicious thoughts, negative feelings) and need the help of a teacher to lead them on. But the parable (as any parable) has application just as much in the ordinary level of common life.

3. The parable of the Good Sower is another example. This is found in Matthew 13.3-12, Mark 4. 1-11, Luke 8. 5-15 but not in John. The symbol of the field representing mind is found also elsewhere (e.g. Bhagavad-Gītā 13.3ff).

However, the import seems to be so well “veiled”, to use MN’s term, that even the disciples fail to get it. So Jesus has to explain it to them i.e. that there are four degrees of understanding a spiritual teaching: the wayside where the seed falls and is eaten by birds is no understanding; the stony ground gives little understanding; the area with thorns is a little better but still insufficient; finally, the good, fertile ground is true understanding.

What is special and significant in the parables is not the language per se but the metaphorical and symbolic use of words, images and incidents.

4. I take as a final example MN’s treatment of the Marriage at Cana (John 2.1-11). MN presents this as “a parable” (p38) but it is not. It is an incident in Christ’s life and illustrates, among other things, his miraculous powers. However, MN quite rightly, perhaps, sees Mary,

Jesus' mother, as his "old self" now becoming obedient to the "new self", capable of performing miracles and transforming water (=old truths of the Judaic tradition) into wine (=higher truth, which surprisingly is not linked here with the Mystery of the Eucharist, as in Mth 2: 28-29 "this is my blood").

However, here too we find a difficulty. The evangelist writes that this is the beginning of "signs" (=sēmeion 'miracle, wonder') and this MN takes to be "the first sign of the inner development of Christ". This may be so. But John has Jesus heal from a distance, again in Cana, the son of a nobleman (4:46) and calls this "his [Christ's]" second sēmeion 'sign, miracle' (4:54). This is extraordinary, indeed, because the evangelist seems to have forgotten that he wrote in 2.23, between the 1st and 2nd miracle, that Jesus performed several others (*autou ta sēmeia ha epoiei* 'the miracles that he did'). It is another one of many inconsistencies.

5. It is worth at this point to point out yet another inconsistency in this same Gospel of John. In ch 12: 20-21, we read that some Greeks (probably Greek Jews) approached Philip (=GK *philippos* 'lover of horses') and asked to meet and talk with Jesus. He goes with Andrew and tells Jesus. Hereupon Jesus embarks on a long speech that his time has come to be glorified! The "Greeks" are not mentioned hereafter and the speech continues for another 20 verses!

Here obviously we have stitching together, compiling two (or more manuscripts) into one. The scribe (or scribes) did not do a very good job since the sequence is not at all smooth and the hiatus only too obvious. Why readers miss this is one of the many mysteries and absurdities that accompany NT studies.

Considering that the FCG are infested with such discrepancies and inconsistencies, one must be baffled by the occultists' inability, despite their superior "psychological" method, to spot them and realize that these writings are a sad mixture of genuine sayings of Jesus and much irresponsible narrative, perhaps even invention and myth-making.

8. Ouspensky & Amis: A different Christianity

1. R. Amis also follows Ouspensky's "psychological" method in his work *A Different Christianity* (1995/2003 Chicago/South Brent (U.K.) Praxis). As he exhibits knowledge of the Gnostic texts and actually refers to The Gospel of Thomas (on pages xix, 32,73), one might at first think that he would be treating the Gnostic aspect of Christianity.

He does not. Instead of actually examining (some of) the Nag Hammadi Gnostic texts, now readily available in J. Robinson's *The Nag Hammadi Library* (1988, 3rd ed. with many reprints), RA confines himself to the comments of Clement of Alexandria and those of a modern academic, M. Smith, on Mark's putative "secret Gospel", which may have existed but which cannot now be traced anywhere! This is hardly the "psychological method", so promoted by Ouspensky but hardly ever followed by him or followers!

He seems to think (p 105) highly of Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon (2nd cent CE), not realising that much of what this Church prelate criticised may have been a lot closer to what Jesus taught than his own beliefs and dogmas.

2. However, RA attempts and partly succeeds to present the esoteric aspect of Christianity as it may be found in its doctrinal/theological and practical/mystical developments over the last 1900 years, especially in the Eastern Church of Greece and Russia.

RA makes some excursions into the (later) Vedic tradition of India but these are tentative and limited (pp 156, 192) perhaps because he does not know it.

As he takes for granted the veracity of the totality of the Four Canonical Gospels as God-inspired documents and shows no great interest in what Jesus might actually have taught, I shall not deal further with his book.

3. However, I do concur fully with his appreciation of the spiritual treasures in the mystical tradition of Eastern Christianity.

The official Eastern Orthodox Church (Greece, Balkans, Russia) in its general character is no better and no worse than other Christian denominations but much of its monastic life (especially on Athos and the Meteora and some places in Russia) has been exemplary in fostering spirituality and producing many saintly figures over the centuries.

Western monasticism, of course, did much the same.

But inspired monasticism with its severe disciplines and practices is quite different from the official Church with its rigid doctrines, mechanical rituals, its squables over property and power and its often ignorant, greedy prelates.

4. Finally, the fact remains that most of what Jesus enjoins in the FCG is quite explicit. There is nothing enigmatic when he urges the disciples to surpass the Pharisees (Mth 5:20) in piety, goodness and self-control, or when he says (Mth 5:27-8) that whoever looks at a

woman with desire already commits adultery. True, common people cannot follow such commandments in their life; such instructions were given for prepared disciples.

The difficulty is not in understanding such plain sayings (however superficially) but in following them, in implementing them in daily life. We neither remember them nor have the desire and energy to do so!

That is precisely what Ouspensky or Amis, applying their much-vaunted “esoteric” approaches, should have done in their examination of Christianity: instead of presenting with self-satisfaction their nebulous expatiations, that did not really explain anything much, they should have separated what Jesus directly taught his disciples from what he gave as ethics for the common masses.

The two aspects are indeed quite different.

I shall continue in the next paper with the esoteric aspect itself.

9. Esotericism

1. In the previous papers of this series, I examined some errors in Ouspensky's (and some followers') thinking, particularly with regard to the Four Canonical Gospels that purport to be one of the primary bases of Christianity, its Church and its morals. This, of course, does not mean I do not appreciate and admire the many good aspects of his work.

After many years of studying the evidence for Christianity, (scriptural, literary, historical, archaeological), I concluded that the true teaching of Jesus is to be found in the Gnostic texts relating to him (excluding those relating to Judaism), though some important aspects are sparsely given in the FCG also.

The FCG by themselves are unreliable as sources both for the life of Jesus and for his teaching. This I demonstrated very briefly in papers Es 3-5, and to a lesser extent 6-8. I shall revert to this subject later.

2. Before examining the chief ideas of Christ's teaching as found in some of the early Gnostic texts, I wish to touch on a wholly disagreeable, paradoxical aspect.

This is the "esoteric" aspect which really and truly means 'inner, confined within, special, secret, oral, not-common, not-public'. Yet in our times the secrecy and oral tradition has been broken by the very men who taught esotericism!

In Matthew 7:6 Jesus is presented as saying: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend you".

This is surely plain enough. It is equally clear in the *Bhagavad Gīta* 18:67 where Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, his student, friend and devotee - "This [my teaching] is not to be given ever by you to one who is not devoted, is not willing to hear, does not engage in spiritual practice and speaks ill of Me (=God, Spirit Absolute)". And in the next stanza the Lord says that this, his "supreme secret [teaching]", is given to those who turn to the Supreme Spirit with devotion.

3. Then again, the Mysteries in ancient and now defunct traditions were never made public to common people but only to select few, the initiates, in Greece, Egypt etc. The public were allowed only in the outer courtyards of the temples – which in Egypt and India are truly enormous. And for this reason we do not know much about them.

An echo of this is found still in monasteries where the instruction to novices and any monks who want it, is given in the inner rooms, never free of access to the visiting public. There also the monks do their prayers and other spiritual practices.

In the Christian temples much of the liturgy is performed in the open so that the faithful may participate in the worship and thanksgiving. But a significant part is performed within the sanctuary and in this the public has no participation not even entrance!

Today both the inner doctrines and the related practices have, by ever increasing publications, been made common knowledge thus violating the ancient traditions. Apart from the inherent difficulty of understanding even intellectually many of these esoteric ideas, there is always the necessity for practical, methodical psychological work which demands the close attendance of a tutor versed in these ideas and the practice of them. Many people reading them can very easily deceive themselves into thinking they actually know and follow the teaching!

How could all these authors today, and serious ones like Ouspensky, Gurdjieff and their followers, embark on such writings yet, at the same time, claim that they teach esoteric doctrines meant for the few?

However, the esoteric doctrines themselves are well protected, despite the many impurities that are added and the ensuing corruption. There are always traditions that keep them unspoiled.

I shall return.

10. Esotericism (B')

1. What is esotericism?

The word comes from Greek, the adverb *esō* 'inside, within'. From this is generated the adjective *esōteriko* 'inner, internal' and from this the English esoteric which then gives *esoteric-ism* 'study, subject, system, thinking connected with what-is-internal, not obvious'.

This applies not just to anything but religion, psychology and philosophy. The esoteric aspect of a religion focuses on a teaching that is not immediately or directly apparent in the official and general setup of the particular religion. E.g. in Christianity the official main doctrine is that one believes in Jesus Christ as the one and only Son of God and worships him and thereby obtains salvation; it helps if one applies the ethic taught by Jesus to love and forgive others, not to kill, or steal and the like.

The esoteric aspect of Christianity is that by applying rigorously Jesus' commandments and by following certain practices of austerity, like intensive prayer, surrendering one's self-pride, fasting and the like, one rises mentally or psychologically to a higher level of consciousness, knowledge and being and acquires new out-of-the-ordinary powers like healing, telepathy etc.

2. Philosophical schools/systems like Platonism or materialism and psychological ones like those of Freud or Jung do not strictly have an esoteric aspect but there is a large, non-academic thinking which is both philosophical and psychological, which is 'esoteric'. But all these academic studies are highly theoretical and of no real practical use.

As with esoteric Christianity, this fairly broad study termed "esotericism" examines the possibility of man's rise in consciousness, knowledge and being and the manifestation of qualities and powers that are latent but not accessible in our usual state.

In higher states of consciousness (higher mind, knowledge and being) manifestations are much more frequent and lasting and can even be produced at will, if one has reached a very high state.

3. These higher states and their powers are not things a man may acquire, like implantations of teeth or kidneys or prosthetics of arms and legs.

These states are natural to man and latent within everyone. But to have them established permanently like the states of sleeping and being awake, the man must undergo a discipline and re-education in moral and spiritual values in a Group or a School under the guidance of a teacher who has some knowledge about this having himself gone through such a discipline and received permission to teach from his own teacher.

The process can be long and at some points may seem difficult and painful as the aspirant begins to see several sides of his character that he does not like at all. He has no inner unity and consistency, no will and control over most functions; he lies to others and to himself

about everything; his feelings change frequently, suddenly and intensely; his thoughts run on and on incessantly; he decides one thing only to change a few minutes later; and so on... There is nothing unrecognizable in these comments.

4. Here one should beware of pseudo-esoteric organizations. In our days they are legion and thousands of people flock to them allured by the promise of higher states and new powers. And because of this propensity to lying, people invent spiritual experiences, visions, communication with spirits and all sorts of self-delusions.

Often, a man drops out of a school for various reasons and decides he will form his own "school" and use whatever published material he can find. He deceives people, perhaps for very long, pretending he has esoteric knowledge and can do things. The more acute students soon see through the presence, the others continue to be deceived and may even imagine that they "develop" and "evolve" into higher beings.

Some start their enterprise for money, others out of vanity or for power, for self-aggrandizement or self-glorification. They change the little knowledge they acquired and their imagination invents astonishing fantasies about superhuman beings and extraordinary paradisiac worlds.

The genuine aspirant will not be deceived for long. A genuine teaching would make him/her face useless habits of thinking and feeling and dissolve them; also (and mainly) face egoism and false notions about oneself thus leading at once to humility and to a truer and larger feeling of oneself or the "real I", as the system terms it, and to a new understanding of life.

11. Esotericism (C')

1. The series of these brief papers started after I read the book *Ouspensky's Fourth Way* (2015, Starnine Media and Publishing Ltd, Oxford) by G. de Symons Beckwith. In this, the author outlines Ouspensky's reformulation of Gurdjieff's system of "fragments of an unknown teaching" and then Dr Francis Roles's reformulation of that with the aid of Shri Shantananda Sarasvati (Śaṅkarācārya of the North, Jyotir Math, a custodian of the Vedic tradition of the philosophy of Advaita Vedānta and a kind of Patriarch or Archbishop of Hinduism; he succeeded in 1953 Brahmānanda Sarasvatī, who with other sages or holy men, unknown, decided to release to the world a simple system of meditation which was eventually brought to the West by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.)

This is one of the very many books on one or other aspect of esotericism and in particular of the teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky's better known version. They all ignore the fundamental rule that the esoteric teaching is not to be divulged to the multitude. One should not even think of asking one's master for permission to do this.

2. An essential feature of a system of esoteric teaching that has for its subject the inner or spiritual development of human beings is that it should not be made public (or given to the common multitude).

As was said in a previous paper, Jesus directs against publicity. So does Shri Kṛṣṇa. The ancient Mysteries in Greece, Egypt and elsewhere, were performed out of the gaze of the public in the inner courtyard or the sanctuary of the temples and vestiges of this tradition still remain in the Christian liturgy.

But even the two most famous teachers, Gurdjieff and Ouspensky, say plainly and repeatedly that the esoteric teaching is given orally from master to disciple(s) and should not, except in very special circumstances, be transmitted by the disciples to others.

Moreover, a teacher of esoteric knowledge makes it difficult for people to approach him and learn from him. They must first show that they want it intensely.

3. But all such practices are no longer held with assiduity. No sooner Ouspensky and Gurdjieff departed from this world than numerous groups/schools mushroomed up (K. Walker, J. Bennett, M. Nicholl who had started earlier in Britain, Pentland in the USA and so on) all implying more or less that they were the appointed successors. And they were followed by others and others in a wild proliferation.

This was bad enough. But it was somewhat contained.

At the same time, many more books appeared presenting and explicating "the System" and "the Work". Publications appeared thick and fast over the years. Some are quite dry and informative. Some purport to be by Ouspensky or Gurdjieff but were in fact written or compiled by close relatives or associates. One gave us Gurdjieff's unknown teachers.

Another was by a lady who claimed to have had a night's sexual relationship with Ouspensky back in St Petersburg. And so on ...

4. As I said, all this goes against the principles of esotericism. Furthermore, such widespread information and rumour is manifoldly dangerous.

It causes damage to the writer who simply adds to the impediments he will have to face when he takes up this quest more soberly - especially if he/she inserts elements of fantasy or malevolence. And some make money out of it all.

Then, it causes damage to readers who, by reading about esotericism so explicitly, begin to think they "know". In addition, they lose an innocent interest in the subject and the freshness of the surprise, should they meet a genuine school with a living teaching.

However, in the end, common people don't understand what they read, anyway. And all this rise in publications and the spread of inflated information create yet another impediment to test the genuine searchers.

12. Gnostic Christianity

1. It is now certain that apart from the 27 documents in the NT (=New Testament) there were c 100 CE (=AD) many other writings expressing Jesus' teaching. These did not make it into the NT. Some of them, now categorized as "Gnostic", were known and their titles were mentioned by ancient writers of the 2nd and 3rd centuries. In many cases fragments of them survived in the writings of the early Church Fathers, like Irenaeus of Lyon or Clement of Alexandria. Some very few like the *Gospel of Mary* and the *Apocalypse of Peter* survived independently but in incomplete form. Thus Gnosticism has been known as a heresy but with insufficient reliable information for a very long time, since the second century.

2. In 1945, at Nag Hammadi, South Egypt, was discovered a collection of 52 tractates, written in Coptic. One of them is a fragment of Plato's *Republic* (588A-589B) and three are Hermetic texts, all known from other sources. Some others are in the Judaic Gnostic tradition. The rest are Christian Gnostic – some being Apocalypses, others Apocrypha or Gospels attributed to John, James, Peter, Thomas and other disciples, including Mary.

It took several years before anything was published, mainly due to difficulties with the Cairo Museum. Interested scholars and laymen were astounded when *The Gospel of Thomas* was first published in 1957, I think, in several countries and languages. Consisting of 114 sayings of Jesus (some of which had appeared independently in the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus), it had many similarities with statements of Jesus in the Four Canonical Gospels but also ideas that diverged very significantly.

3. Here follows a selection of sayings 3, 50, 77, 111.

«The Kingdom is within you and without ... When you know yourselves then you shall be known, and you shall know, that you are the sons of the Living Father. But if you don't know yourself, you live in poverty...// We came from the light, the place where the light came into being of its own accord ...// It is I who am the light which is above all. It is I who am the all. From me did the all come forth, and unto me did the all extend. Split a piece of wood and I am there. Lift up a stone, and you shall find me there.// The heavens and the earth will be rolled up in your presence. And the one who lives from the living one will not see death ...Whoever finds [=comes to know, realizes] himself is superior to the world».

Here we have some major ideas of esotericism. The kingdom is within man; it is not some future second coming. Self-knowledge is essential and it will reveal that man in his True Self is the same as the Father in heaven and ensures transcendence of death. Pantheism is stressed and the world(s), the Whole [universe], issue from the substance («from me») of God and not from Nothing (ex nihil) as was declared subsequently by Church Prelates. This is Unity.

4. In subsequent years all the treatises were published and a wholly new picture of Christian Gnosticism emerged. In 1988 J. Robinson published the third and definitive edition of the

Nag Hammadi Library (Harper–Collins, San Francisco) which contains translations of all tractates, including the Judaic Gnostic texts (*Apocalypse of Adam*, *The Steles of Seth* etc.).

The idea of Unity and self-development is succinctly expressed in the *Gospel of Truth*: «It is within Unity that each one will attain himself from multiplicity unto Unity» (Robinson, 25: lines 10-15).

The Gospel of Philip also refers to the self-development and merging into the Godhead: «You saw the spirit, you became spirit. You saw Christ, you became Christ. You saw [the Father], you shall become the Father ... you see yourself» (Robinson 61: 30-35). In this same Gospel we find the idea of reincarnation: «If you become the light ... If you become one of those who belong above ... If you become horse or ass or bull or dog or sheep ...»

5. In these texts Jesus is not the one and only Son of God as he is in the New Testament, nor has he come to suffer and save the world. He is a specific Teacher, come to save those who wish to be saved, not through belief and faith, but through Selfknowledge and the subjugation of all negative aspects in ones being such as anger, envy, fear, greed, pride and, of course, ignorance.

Salvation consists not in some future elevation in heaven but in immediate and full realisation of one's true Self.

The Self that is to be realised or known is not that of the common notion with the mechanical habits and negative feelings like envy and hate. It is the Self that is one and the same in all beings and no different from the Godhead. And ignorance is ignorance of this fundamental unity.

The process starts with an inner «call» and, naturally, requires guidance from a teacher and effort and discipline on the part of the disciple.

Final salvation is the ascent above the common level and the eventual merging into the Godhead which is the Source of all. Naturally there are degrees and levels in all this.

This is the main Gnostic teaching.

13. Gnostic and Upanishadic parallels

1. In this essay I explore the Christian Gnostic teaching and present similarities with the Vedic Tradition of Ancient India.

Let me start with phonetic exercises. Every cult or religion has its hymns and psalms. But here, in the Gnostic texts, we have the sounding of vowels aaaa, iiiii, eeee etc as found in the Gospel of the Egyptians (Robinson *The Nag Hammadi Library* 1988: 44:2ff) and Marsanes (Robinson, 28:20ff).

We find similar phonetic exercises in the Chāndogya and other Upanishads in the ancient Indic Vedic Tradition.

2. There are powers that impede man's striving for Selfrealisation or liberation. So in the *Apocryphon of John* (20:8; 21: 4-13) the Archons in the higher realms want to keep man captive in the material world. But these are also forces within man, demonic powers experienced as desires, ambitions, envy, greed, pride etc (*Apocryphon of John* 18: 20ff).

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* Up says (4.1.10) that the gods do not like man to escape from their control through liberation: so they put obstacles in his path. Here also the gods are said to be forces within man: within man are contained earth and sky, fire and wind, sun and moon.... and all desires against which man must struggle (*Chāndogya* 8.1.1-6)

3. *The Gospel of Truth* says (18:11) that ignorance and oblivion will be dispelled for good once there is knowledge of the Father. Similarly, stress is laid in the Upanishads for the knowledge of the Self *ātmañjāna* or knowledge of the Absolute brahmavidyā. The *Muṇḍaka* Up says (1:1-5) that there is lower and higher knowledge. The higher one is that of truth or the Self or Brahman and this is in fact the basis for all other types of knowledge, like the sciences, languages and so on, which are lower.

Ignorance is dissolved with knowledge of Truth.

4. In *Eugnostos* (Robinson 227, 7;7) and *Apocryphon of John* (6:10) the first creative power of light to arise is called *Autogenes* "Selfborn". This curious term is not met in Greek, Judaic, Egyptian or other Middle-eastern traditions. But it is found in Vedic Texts as *svayambhū* (e.g. *Īśā* Up 8) 'selfborn'/selfexistent'.

5. In the Gospel of Thomas (saying 50) Jesus tells the disciples to declare: "We came from the light, the place where the light came into being of its own accord... We are its children". (Cf the light in John 1:4,9ff.)

The *Chāndogya* Up says (3.13.7): "Now far above... shines the light of heaven falling on all things... the very same light that is within man".

6. A curious issue is that the Perfect Glory of the Godhead, the matrix of all creation is also termed "First Man" (*Apocryphon of John* 4:23). No other Near-eastern culture has this idea, that all the worlds and their multifarious phenomena evolve from primordial Man. But sure

enough we meet it in the Vedic texts: “In the beginning this world was the Self in the form of Man *puruṣavidha* (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka* Up 1.4.1).

7. Another parallel but not in the Upanishadic texts is that of the dance. One Gnostic text, not in the Nag Hammadi collection, *The Round Dance of the Cross* or *The Hymn of Jesus* has Jesus singing and dancing: “He [=Jesus] began singing a hymn and declaring ‘Glory to you father’. We circled him and responded ‘Amen’ ”. Later Jesus sings ‘If you follow my dance/ you see yourself in me when I speak/... Learn how to suffer / and you’ll be able not to suffer...” and so on.

In India god Śiva is known as *naṭarāja* ‘Lord of the dance’: he performs his cosmic dance before the (periodic) annihilation of the universe. Much earlier, in the Vedic period other gods are dancers and the worlds emerge out of their dance (*Ṛgveda* 10.72.6-7).

8. There are many other parallels: the sesame seed that becomes a large tree; the return to the childlike innocence in order to obtain wisdom or enter the kingdom; the attainment of solitariness or solitude indicating full liberation; the three bodies – carnal, subtle (psychic) and spiritual (causal); and so on.

Enough has been given here to show the great affinity between the two teachings – Advaita and Gnostic Christianity. But in this exposition we see also the affinity of these systems of knowledge with the modern esoteric teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky.

14. Esotericism & Gnosticism

1. J.C. Pearce is not an esotericist or occultist, as far as I know, but he is a practical philosopher and an expert on child psychology. In his *Biology of Transcendence* (2002, Rochester, Vermont), he wrote: "We invariably build religions around our spiritual giants, or use them to support a religion to avoid a shift of mind and disruption of culture these rare people bring about" (p 6). He added later – "The early evangelists didn't hesitate to [change] the radical nature of Jesus' message itself in order that it might be heard and accepted" (p 155).

2. Anyone who studies with an open mind the Christian Gnostic texts and the writings comprising the New Testament realises that the latter with its biographical, soteriological and apocalyptic aspects is directed towards the multitudes.

Not that St Paul's theology in his Epistles appeals easily to common people. In fact, it is obvious that he never met the real Christ or was much interested in him or his mother. There is no evidence that he visited the places where Jesus lived, taught and was crucified and buried. And there are hardly any references to Jesus' teaching: the writing is more Hebrew Pauline theology. And when he presents the exemplary woman giving birth, it is not Mary, Jesus' mother, but Abraham's Sara - *Hebrews* 11:11! Peter too in his *1st General Epistle*, 3:3, refers to Sara, not Mary, as an example of obedient wife! I find all this quite extraordinary, i.e. that Jesus' mother should be so discarded! (Unless these writers never knew Jesus' family or unless Jesus' mother in purely human terms was not such an exemplary wife and mother!)

3. It is the Gospels, of course, that win the day with Jesus' life story, the choosing of disciples, his verbal attacks on the powerful enemies (i.e. the priestly class who plot against him), the multiform miracles (especially the resurrections) and finally his own crucifixion, resurrection, reappearance and eventual mysterious ascent to heaven.

The teaching is for the most part expressed in simple statements (except in John) and simple language. It can be easily understood and memorized. But its practical application must have been as difficult then as it is today. Love one another. Love your enemies. You commit adultery even by looking with desire at a woman (or man, presumably).

However, salvation will come with belief that Jesus Christ is the son of God and sole Saviour! Moreover, he will come again soon, even as this world is destroyed, and his angels will gather up and save the elect, the true believers. Only this prophesy or promise never came to pass.

4. There is no cosmogony nor anthropogony in the Four Canonical Gospels (except the very brief esoteric opening of John). I suppose the believers would turn to the early chapters of *Genesis* in the Hebrew *Old Testament* for these subjects.

On the other hand, there is a very different cosmogony and anthropogony in the Gnostic texts. Here the worlds come out of the Godhead and evolve in increasing density and diminishing intelligence, as it is given in Vedāntic texts and Esotericism.

As I pointed out in the previous paper Es13 Gnostic and Upanishadic Parallels §6, Man is the first born of the Godhead (*Apocryphon of John* 4:23 and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* Up 1.4.1). Man as a cosmic spiritual being issues directly out of substance of the Godhead but gets enmeshed in the phenomena of the material world and in his life he must strive, having felt the “call”, to return to that original state with the guidance of a teacher.

In my view, not the NT but the Gnostic texts contain a truer presentation of Jesus’ teaching and are closer to perennial Esotericism. After all, Vedānta, Gnosticism and Esotericism do not postulate one and only divine incarnation (as institutionalised Christianity and the NT do for Jesus Christ) but accept many such incarnations.

And salvation does not come about as a result of mere belief in a Saviour and the mechanical following of dogmas and stereotyped rituals but protracted personal effort and application of ethical principles and practical measures in daily life.

15. Modern esotericism ignorant of Gnosticism

1. No system of knowledge, no teaching can be trustworthy that relies on mainstream Christianity (Catholic, Protestant etc) and its basis, the NT (=New Testament). The 4 Canonical Gospels, as I demonstrated in Es5 and Es6, are full of contradictions and discrepancies. They cannot serve as sources for Jesus' life or teaching.

The Gnostic texts seem much more reliable for Christ's teaching as they are free of contradictions and of biographical material. And some of them like the *Gospel of Thomas*, *Gospel of Mary*, *Dialogue of the Saviour* and *Gospel of Truth* may well have been written c 80-100 while others like *Apocryphon of John*, *Book of Thomas the Contender* and *Gospel of Philip* may be of c 150 or earlier, according to Robinson and other authorities. Moreover, some of them contain cosmogonic and anthropogonic accounts – a feature, absent in the 4CG.

2. The Canonical Gospels may be of the same period. Justin Martyr is the first to mention two gospels – Matthew and Luke – c. 150-160; but their contents are not known. St Paul's epistles are known before 100 but not any of the 4CG. They come to be known as such with the names of the evangelists only after 180 in the writings of Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon. The full NT as we have it was first established in the 4th century!

In many churches it was not accepted but was considerably modified. One version accepted both *John's Apocalypse* and *Peter's Apocalypse* (a very different piece of writing). St John Chrysostom rejected all Apocalypses, including John's. But Clement (Alexandria c 200 CE) accepted both, also the *Didachē* (=Instructions for a pious Christian life of the 2nd cent.) and the Epistle of *Hermas* another pious piece which nobody now reads except scholars.

However, Clement (Alex.) mentions in his *Stromateis* a Gnostic tradition known well to him and a secret version of Mark's Gospel (this is mentioned by Ouspensky also in his *New Model...*); he also mentions a *Gospel of Egyptians* (*Strom* 3.64,1; 3.66,1-2; 3.92.2). Many other Gospels and similar writings are mentioned by others.

3. Ouspensky died in 1947. Gurdjieff died in 1949. Maurice Nicoll died in 1953.

The *Gospel of Thomas* with its 114 sayings of Jesus was published in 1957. Other Gnostic texts in subsequent years and the complete Nag Hammadi collection in its definitive version came out in 1988.

Consequently, these three men can be excused to a considerable degree for not taking up the Gnostic version of Christianity.

4. However, I don't think they were entirely justified in their ignorance of the Apocrypha (of which there were plenty of publications before 1940) and of the Gnostic aspect of Christianity. The *Hymn of Jesus*, the *Gospel of Mary* (the same as in the *Nag Hammadi Collection* but found independently also), the *Acts of John*, the *Acts of Thomas* etc had been

published while the Gnostic teachings of Basilides, Marcion and Valentinus, were mentioned in the early Fathers Irenaeus and Hippolytus.

If occultists promulgate the “psychological” (and more so the “esoteric”) method, as Ouspensky put it, they ought to examine the traditions outside the official or mainstream Christianity and its NT. Oddly enough some older occultists did accept other sources – but not Ouspensky and his followers.

What is even more surprising is their failure or unwillingness to evaluate more correctly the unreliability of the NT and examine thoroughly the history of the early manuscripts and the gradual build-up of the NT as **the only** authority of Christianity.

5. Let me close this paper with two examples, additional to those I gave in some earlier papers.

The earliest and best manuscripts of Mark’s Gospel end in chapter 16, verse 8, where the angel tells the 3 women that Christ has risen and the tomb is empty (so the *Codex Sinaiticus* and the *Codex Vaticanus* too, from the 4th cent). Verses 9-20 with Jesus’ appearance to the disciples are found only in later versions!

Are we not entitled to think that, since Mark’s is thought by all authorities to be the earliest of the FCG, they are spurious additions and that the same most probably happened in the other Gospels? I think we are.

Then, in Luke chapter 22, in the Last Supper, Jesus gives bread and wine to the 12 disciples saying it is his flesh and blood. This is the basis of the church ritual of the Eucharist (=thanks-giving) and Holy Communion. But verses 19-20 which have these words of the Eucharist do not appear in the earlier and best manuscripts and do not appear in *John’s Gospel*, chs 13-18; they do not appear in the *Didachē* either and in its 9th section the wine is referred to King David not Jesus!

No, far from it! The FCG are not unquestionable authorities for Christ’s teachings!

16. Ouspensky and Yoga

1. Ouspensky used to expect of his prospective students to have read at least his *New Model of the Universe* (1931/34 Routledge & Kegan Paul, London). I wonder if anybody had noticed and told him straight of the inadequacies of the chapter on the New Testament, if nothing else. I don't, of course, mean the Gnostic side of Christianity which would have been a matter for few experts, but the contradictions, discrepancies and inconsistencies in and among the Four Canonical Gospels.

However, his treatment of Yoga is also highly inadequate. His knowledge of the Indic culture generally is that of a sadly misinformed westerner. He has no real knowledge of the religions and philosophical traditions of India, its arts and sciences. India has a very significant tradition in architecture, dance, music, painting, poetry and theatre; also in Astronomy, Mathematics, Medicine (*Āyur-veda*) and of course Linguistic study. But we stay with Yoga.

2. His chapter on Yoga is number 6 and covers pp 242-270, that is 29 pages. Yet nowhere does he mention the classical *aṣṭāṅga* (eightfold) system of Yoga of the ancient master Patañjali – to whom I shall return.

He says on p 243 that one of the meanings of yoga is 'right action'. Yes, it has this and several other meanings in its general use but its basic meanings are uniting/union, coming to rest and controlling, absorption/unification. However, in Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* which is the basis for this discipline it is defined as *cittavṛitti-nirodha* 'the annihilation/cessation/control of alterations/modifications in the mind-stuff'. (1:2). This is the aim of the discipline of Yoga so that the self, termed 'seer/witness' *draṣṭṛ*, can be in his natural state (1.3).

Translations and popularisations of Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*, as well as other scholarly and general studies were available in the first two decades of the 20th century – certainly in English, French and German.

3. On p. 246 O gives five divisions of Yoga:

1. Raja (=rāja) Yoga, of the development of consciousness.
2. Jnana (-jñāna) Yoga, of Knowledge
3. Karma–Yoga, of right actions
4. Hatha (=haṭha) of power over the body
5. Bhakti – Yoga, of right devotional/religious action.

Yes, generally speaking this categorization and definition (expounded in some details in subsequent pages) is correct. But in fact there are several more Schools of Yoga - Mantra or Shabda (=Śabda) which is Yoga of inner sound or meditative with some sound or mantra; Laya-yoga which is a variant of Rāja yoga with the dissolution or cessation of mind –

modifications (and feelings); Tantra-yoga which entails “magical” and other ceremonial acts; and so on.

Tantra was and is an extensive and varied branch with its own Karma and Bhakti (=devotional) aspects.

4. O is quite right when in the end of his chapter he writes that all and not just the 5 types he mentions were originally one system (p 220). He directs us to his *In Search of the Miraculous – Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*, wherein, of course, he describes his own contact with Gurdjieff and the system he propounded.

This one System is implicit in Patañjali’s *Yogasūtra* except that the sūtras are brief, elliptic statements and need a teacher guru plus a reliable commentary to elucidate them. But it is also present in the system of Jñāna-yoga which is, in fact, the oldest and most complete system later known as Vedānta or *Uttara-mīmāṃsā*.

Both Yoga and Vedānta are referred to in several ancient writings like the epic *Mahābhārata* and are implicit in the most ancient (and revered) holy scripture of the Vedas, the *Rgveda* hymns. There, both the need for practices (dharma or ethical behaviour, right action; meditation; generosity; etc) and the unity of the individual and the Universal Self are frequently mentioned.

5. I examined O’s treatment of Yoga to show that once again as with the New Testament, he does not really apply his “psychological” or “esoteric” method in his investigations, that is to examine in much greater detail the subject.

His *A New Model...* came out in 1931 (and 2nd edition with a new Preface in 1934). By, say, 1930 he had worked with Gurdjieff’s system for 15 years, as a student first and as a teacher later. By that time much evidence for the NT and abundant for Yoga was in existence and he could have treated both subjects much more thoroughly and correctly.

17. Gurdjieff and Ouspensky

1. In this paper I focus on one particular event in the early period of the acquaintance of the two occultists which is for me very important in gauging the relation between them. It is narrated by O in ch13 of his *In Search of the Miraculous* and concerns their stay in Finland in August 1916, some 15 months after O began to study with G.

O had wanted then (p23, ch1) to see “facts”, i.e. miraculous events or out of the ordinary, in his own experience and G had told him that “many other things are necessary first”.

After a series of “intensive” facts, breathing techniques, prayers and other mental exercises, O was in “a state of unusual tension” when arriving in Finland. It had been a period of preparation for a heightened emotional state.

2. There were about 8 people plus G. At the evening meeting they were asked to tell the story of their lives but G kept deriding their cowardice in their narration, as each “could not speak the truth”.

Then O and only two others met with G separately and he showed them certain postures and physical movements.

After this G returned to the subject of the narrating of one’s life and pointed out that they all had features which prevented them from seeing and speaking the truth. O was very perturbed.

Then, began the “miracles”. O started “hearing [G’s] thoughts” in his mind. He noticed that, even as G was speaking aloud to all, there were “thoughts” directed to him personally! Subsequently G stopped talking and in the ensuing silence O heard G’s voice “inside [himself] as it were, in the chest, near the heart”. G put a question that roused strong emotion in O and O replied in the affirmative aloud.

3. “Why did he say that?” asked G the others. “Did I ask him anything?”

Whereupon G put another, more difficult question silently and O again replied in audible speech.

The other two were astonished by what was going on.

This “conversation”, silent from one side and audible from the other, continued for not less than half an hour.

G apparently (p 262) put to O certain conditions which O had either to accept or leave the esoteric work he was doing with G and he had a month in which to decide. O waved aside the month accepting at once, but G insisted on the month’s time.

In the subsequent conversation between all four G said something that affected O so strongly that he left and went into the forest nearby.

4. O walked about alone for nearly 2 hours in the dark, held in the power of extraordinary thoughts and feelings. He realized suddenly that G was right in that what O “considered to be firm and reliable” in [himself] in reality did not exist.

At the same time, he found something else. But O thought “I knew that he would not believe me and that he would laugh at me if I showed him this other thing.”

I can’t help wondering here at O’s certitude that G would not believe him and would laugh at him! Had O already reached such a higher state of consciousness (higher mind, higher being) that he could foresee how G would really evaluate O’s discovery?...

5. O returned to the house and went to bed not knowing that G and the others were having supper. Then, a strange excitement arose in him and he heard G’s voice in his chest. But now he himself responded mentally and G received the message and answered.

O thought it could be “imagination” but he felt certain it was real. No more is written here.

The same thing happened the next day. G told O that in that state O was awake. Afterwards O was “awake” again in Petersburg and actually saw one person after another walking towards him and being “asleep”.

But the most important point is made by O much later (p 273-4) when he acknowledges that the experiences in Finland were the most important thing he had learned studying with G, that G had created those states and that he wanted, as he told G, to learn to create them himself. G told him that he would have to make sacrifices.

6. We are not told what those sacrifices were.

In fact, O does not write or hint in any of his subsequent publications of having similar experiences in his life thereafter. This suggests that he did not succeed in finding the method of generating these states. Nothing similar happened again between himself and G or, later, between himself and his own students. Only many years later, Rodney Collin (Smith), one of O’s close students, at the end of his book *Theory of Eternal Life* claims that O communicated with three of his students immediately after his death on 2/10/1947 – but of this I shall write extensively later.

Clearly then, on this count alone (if all that O writes did actually take place), since G induced this telepathic communication, G was several notches above O in being as well as in knowledge. And this is confirmed by several publications of various writers engaged in the Work of the Fourth Way, like W.P. Patterson (1996, of the Gurdjieff line) up to G. de Symons Beckwith (2015, of the Ouspensky line).

Nothing reliable is recorded about G’s manifesting again telepathic or similar powers. It is all very curious.