

The Keys of the Kingdom

Agape Love, the Virtues, the Bridal Chamber and the experience of the Kingdom of God

At the heart of early Christianity lies an issue that was foundational to an experience of the Kingdom of God, an issue that was never properly resolved as it polarised and split the early church in a schism that has never even been admitted.

The schism between the Gnostic Christianity and Orthodox Christianity has been spun as orthodox Christianity simply purging itself of pagan heresy.

The spin is now beginning to look more like the disinformation it was, thanks to Nag Hammadi and other finds of early Christian texts that show that the Orthodox Church was less than honest in its treatment of Gnosticism, and in particular Valentinian Gnosticism.

Though to this day there is still considerable confusion around the term 'Gnosticism' and this serves to keep Christianity from addressing the real issue.

GOD IS ONLY GOOD

The early orthodox Church referred to both the Marcionite heresy and the Valentinian heresy as 'gnosticism'. Modern commentators are hard pressed to see just how the early church could have used the term for both.

The answer is simple. For the early Christians, Gnosticism was not about salvation being reserved for those who possessed some secret knowledge.

Gnosticism was about experiencing heaven now through true knowledge of the Father.

Intimate knowledge of a Father who was supreme and exclusive goodness and love.

Many early Christians knew this truth and accepted it on face value and they experienced heaven now. They experienced the Kingdom of God.

However there were difficulties. There was a cognitive dissonance between the experienced God of infinite and only goodness, and the Character traits of the the God described in many of the Old Testament texts.

While Christians remained innocent to these differences, and not addressing them, all was well.

However at some point the issue was going to need addressing.

Marcion was the first to address the problem. He rejected the Old Testament completely. And formed the first Christian Canon, with one gospel account, apparently similar to Luke, and a collection of an early version of the letters of Paul. He also wrote a text in which he highlighted the differences between God as revealed by Christ, and the God of the Old Testament.

Marcion was very successful in the early part of the second century, excommunicated by the orthodox churches around 150 Ad, however his followers continued to fellowship until they were finally eradicated in the fifth Century.

The contention between Marcion and the orthodox Church, served to polarise Christianity.

On one side there were those who practised Christianity as a form of Christian Judaism, and affirmed the nature of the Christian God as Yahweh, and sought to proselytise people into a modified Judaism. They were organised into a power structure with the local Bishop at the top. They saw themselves as those who had received a deposit of faith from Christ, and protected this deposit and handed it down through the authority structures. This form of Christianity was based on the Jerusalem model of James the Lords brother.

Other Christians saw the message of Christ was about Jesus as the infinitely good God, the God who is Love, being incarnated within both persons and cultures and transforming them. These Christians were attending the meetings and services and sharing in the life of the within the established structures of the mainstream of Christianity as organised in its hierarchical form but also meeting together separately to experience direct relationship with God through Christ more fully. This form of Christianity was based on Paul's model, and highly valued Paul's genuine writings and the Gospel and letters of John. (See appendix Paul vs James)

These people became colloquially known as Gnostic Christians.

Valentinus was perhaps the best known of these Gnostic Christians within the Second Century Church. Tertullian indicated that Valentinus was so popular within the mainstream Church in Rome that he was nearly made Bishop in the middle of the fifth Century. Tertullian clearly indicating that Gnosticism was not some fringe aberration at this point in time.

Until recently the only indications of how Valentinus perceived Christianity were from the writings of his enemies, the orthodox 'heresiologists'. These writings made him out to be a pagan with a few Christian trappings, a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Thanks to the Nag Hammadi find we now have the 'Gospel of Truth' which allows Valentinus to speak for himself about just what he understood Christianity to be and what Gnosticism meant.

For Valentinus Gnosticism clearly meant direct and experiential **KNOWLEDGE OF THE FATHER** through Christ the Saviour,

The gospel of truth is joy to those who have received from the Father of truth the gift of knowing him by the power of the Word, who has come from the Fullness and who is in the thought and the mind of the Father; he it is who is called the Saviour, since that is the name of the work which he must do for the redemption of those who have not known the Father.
Valentinus Gospel of Truth

He was nailed to a cross. He became a fruit of the knowledge of the Father. He did not, however, destroy them because they ate of it. He rather caused those who ate of it to be joyful because of this discovery.
Valentinus Gospel of Truth

and the Father is Good.

When it pleased him, then, that his Son should be his pronounced name and when he gave this name to him, he who has come from the depth spoke of his secrets, because he knew that the Father was absolute goodness.

Valentinus Gospel of Truth

The concept of Gnosis pervades many other early Christian texts, not only the so called heretical gnostic texts but also texts and fragment of texts later incorporated into the Orthodox New testament.

We will look at some of these later, not the least of which is the first chapter of Second Peter.

Gnosticism and even the writings of Paul provided a headache for the authoritarian church for several reasons.

Not the least of these was that that direct experience of God through Christ was open to all whether or not they submitted to the authority of the temporal Church.

So to deal with this problem, the orthodox church did what Jesus accused the Pharisees of doing. They obfuscated the message of the Kingdom Now.

Luke 11:52 Woe to you, lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and you have hindered those who were entering in.

Entering in to what? Entering into the Kingdom of Heaven.

It may seem strange that they should have known the keys of the Kingdom, but Jesus expected Nicodemus to understand what he meant by being born again.

John 3:10 Jesus answered and said to him, Are you the teacher of Israel and do not know these things?

After the success of Ireneus pogrom in the last decade of the second Century, talk of the Kingdom being present tense began to fade, and anyone who could be grouped in with condemned heretics such as Marcion and Valentinus would meet the same fate.

Nevertheless some Christian authors accepted by the Orthodox Church, such as Clement of Alexandria, still continued to speak of Gnosticism and spoke of teachings of Christ that were not intended to be passed on in writing, and others that could be passed on in writing if sufficiently obfuscated.

Others on the fringe of the Empire, such as Ephrem Syrus, continued to refer to concepts that were the key phrases of the earlier condemned Gnostics, terms such as Bridal Chamber, Singleness etc.

And down through the Centuries of the Church people like St John of the Cross have managed to avoid the inquisition and restore many of the Keys of the Kingdom for those who have ears to hear.

But chief of the Keys is the Knowledge of the Father as Jesus revealed Him (gnosis), and as Paul described the Holy Spirit.

John 14:9b He who has seen Me has seen the Father. And how do you say, Show us the Father?

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, 23 meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

God is only infinite love and Goodness, and the source of pure virtue.

The Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God is the experience of the communion of saints within the pure contemplation and union with God, and this Kingdom is within you.

The Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of Love, because God is Love.

The union and communion is coinherence. God within our eternal self, our eternal self within God, our eternal self within the eternal self of others and their eternal self within ours in a cascade of love, clear knowledge and virtue.

The importance of true Gnosis

Given the intimate nature of the Kingdom, there are two points to be made.

The first is that this is not an experience of the flesh or the soul. The true God cannot be known carnally nor is he known by the soul, he is only known by the Spirit. The flesh and the soul cannot be coinherent, they are 'outside' only.

2Co 5:16 So as we now know no one according to flesh, but even if we have known Christ according to flesh, yet now we no longer know Him so.

Until Christ came humanity only had knowledge of the father from the outside. Christ came to reveal God to us.

Mat 11:27 All things are delivered to Me by My Father. And no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son will reveal Him.

And to whom does he reveal the Father? To 'children'.

Jesus saw infants being suckled. He said to his disciples:
"These little ones being suckled are like those who enter the kingdom."
Gospel of Thomas 22

1Jo 2:13 I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father.

Mat 11:25I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the sophisticated and cunning, and revealed them to babes.

Mat 18:3 and said, Truly I say to you, Unless you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

Only fragments of Papias writings from the early Second Century remain. In one of those fragments we find

The early Christians called those who practised a guilelessness according to God, children
Papias fragment in Eusebius

There were in the first centuries people who were notable because they embraced Jesus teaching and as a consequence received the Kingdom. There were known well enough to justify naming them.

These are the guileless ones who know God simply through the experience of God in Christ. They do not know him through creation and the experience the flesh, nor through the reading and exegesis of Ezekiel or Moses. They know the Word as a person and not as a Book .

These the ones who have entered the rest.

The Rest

Jesus said, "Let the one seeking not stop seeking until he finds. And when he finds he will marvel, and marvelling he will reign, and reigning he will rest."
Gospel of Thomas

St John of the Cross describes this rest as a darkness of the sensory and natural realm as well as the rational realm, the realm of the soul. And he sets out the first part of pattern for the entry into the kingdom.

In darkness and secure
by the secret ladder disguised
ah the sheer grace!
In darkness and concealment
my house being now stilled

The secret ladder represents faith, because all the rungs or articles of faith are secret to and hidden from both the senses and the intellect. Accordingly the soul lived in darkness, without the light of the senses and intellect, and went out beyond every natural and rational boundary to climb the divine ladder of faith that leads up to and penetrates the deep things of God....The night of faith will be my guide in the delights of my pure contemplation and union with God.

Ascent of Mt Carmel

Heb 4:9 So then there remains a rest to the people of God. 10 For he who has entered into his rest, he also has ceased from his own works, as God did from His. 11 Therefore let us

labour to enter into that rest, lest anyone fall after the same example of unbelief.

This resting from our works is a resting from our flesh and soul life.

Or as Paul puts it more starkly.

Gal 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ, and I live; yet no longer I, but Christ lives in me. And that life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith toward the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself on my behalf.

In the passage from 'the ascent of Mt Carmel' St John of the Cross details the first keys of the Kingdom:

- the darkness of the flesh and soul, and
- the ascent of the ladder of Faith.

This dark night is of course a major step for anyone who has predominantly experienced everything they know through their flesh and soul!

It is a step that cannot be taken unless you have complete confidence in the one who is leading you, and you experientially know God to be only goodness and love.

If at this step the mind wants to check you with a fear of the God who your sacred texts state is less than pure love and goodness, you will not have the freedom to proceed.

What then do we do with the Scriptures that paint God as having character traits such as anger, fierce wrath, fury, cursing, scorn, derision, jealousy, revenge, authoring a justice system weighted towards males, returning evil for evil, able to be provoked, utilising non-specific and disproportionate retribution, including on children, genocide, hatred, revulsion, humiliation and shaming, violence, cruelty, and dealing in terror and death?

You leave them at the gate.

If you cant simply do that as an innocent, you may have to pay the price that Valentinus and Marcion and their followers paid. A price by the way, that is nothing compared to the value of the experience of the Kingdom of God. Check the appendix for more.

But once you release the images of horror, you are ready to proceed with the Keys of the Kingdom, and entry into the Bridal Chamber.

The Bridal Chamber

In this world, the slaves serve the free. In the Kingdom of Heaven, the free will minister to the slaves: the children of the bridal chamber will minister to the children of the marriage. The children of the bridal chamber have just one name: rest.
Gospel of Philip

The Place of rest is the Bridal Chamber.

Our coinherent union with God and each other in Christ. It occurs in Rest. It occurs in Christ. It

occurs in the Bridal Chamber – the Kingdom of Heaven.

It occurs in the experiential Knowledge of who we are in Christ Jesus, in the experiential Knowledge of the Father, in the experiential Knowledge of our incorporation into the eternal coinherence through Christ Jesus.

This is true baptism, the sharing in Jesus Baptism and his death and resurrection, where we become sons and daughters of God, in Christ. We die to the flesh and come alive to God, who is Spirit.

For when Christ the Bridegroom was baptised, it was appropriate that the bridal-chamber of heaven should open its brilliant gates. So too, when the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove, and the Father's voice spread everywhere, it was appropriate that "the gates of heaven should be lifted up." "And, lo, the heavens were opened to Him; and a voice was heard, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Hippolytus

Baptism is "the Holy" building. Redemption is the "Holy of the Holy". "The Holy of the Holies" is the bridal chamber. Baptism includes the resurrection and the redemption; the redemption (takes place) in the bridal chamber.

Gospel of Philip

We enter the Bridal Chamber in the Spirit Body, our soul and flesh at rest.

1Co 15:50 And I say this, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

We have a Fleshly body with a genetic inheritance. When we are born again we have a spiritual body with a heavenly inheritance. The inheritance of the sons and daughters of God.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

1Pe 1:23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the living Word of God, and abiding forever.

This is a body birthed in us through the action of the Holy Spirit. It is comprised of the Virtues the Fruit (karpos - birthings) of the Holy Spirit.

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, 23 meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Eph 5:9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth),

The keys of the kingdom are seen in specific patterns of the Virtues that birth us from the rest of the Bridal chamber into the Kingdom of Heaven, through the gate of light who is Christ. These patterns are repeated in the early documentation.

The patterns begin with Faith continue in a dance of virtue and gnosis (knowledge of the Father) and end with agape love and an entering in.

God is Agape Love. Agape love is the pure spiritual song of Solomon love. (see appendix) Agape Love is shared in the Gathering, is shared in the Communion of the Saints within Christ. This is heaven. This is the message of the Bridal Chamber.

The soul of the Christian is in its home in the Bridal Chamber at rest, and the Christians spirit is free to experience heaven.

Seven and Twelve

In the Bridal Chamber:

her bridesmaids are seven, who dance before her; and twelve are they in number who minister before her and are at her bidding, having their gaze and their sight upon the bridegroom, that through the sight of him they may be enlightened.

Acts of Thomas

As the Acts of Thomas refer to seven maids who dance and twelve maids who minister. The author of this text is speaking of the keys of the Kingdom for those with ears to hear. This pattern is further expounded in the Shepherd of Hermas. Hermas describes the virgins who assist the soul into the Tower, (the virtues who bring the soul through the Gate of Christ into the Kingdom of Heaven) as both seven and twelve.

These are the seven virgins of Hermas

Their powers are mastered each by the other, and they follow each other, in the order in which they were born. From Faith is born Continenence, from Continenence Simplicity, from Simplicity Guilelessness, from Guilelessness Reverence, from Reverence Knowledge, from Knowledge Love. Their works then are pure and reverent and divine.

Whosoever therefore shall serve these women, and shall have strength to master their works, shall have his dwelling in the tower with the saints of God."

These are the twelve Virgins of Hermas

The first is Faith, and the second, Continenence, and the third, Power, and the fourth, Long-suffering. But the others stationed between them have these names--Simplicity, Guilelessness, Purity, Cheerfulness, Truth, Understanding, Concord, Love. He that bears these names and the name of the Son of God shall be able to enter into the kingdom of God.

The pattern of these Virtues is not random.

Faith and Thanksgiving and the beginning of the cascade

As in St John of the Cross, the journey from the Rest of the Bridal Chamber begins with Faith.

Now faith in Christ, is faith within Christ, and is a receiving of Christ within. It is an eating and a drinking of Christ and is not without a thankfulness that seeks to acknowledge the awesome gift. The word Eucharist means thankfulness. Faith manifests in a cascading flow through thankfulness that causes the soul to learn to drink of the Holy Spirit.

We feed on Christ in our hearts with thanksgiving. It is not feeding and thanksgiving, it is with thanksgiving that we feed. Thanksgiving is our spiritual mouth and digestive system.

There is no stopping the drinking in the thankfulness of faith.

Thomas said to him: "Teacher, my mouth will not bear at all to say whom you are like."
Jesus said: "I am not your teacher. For you have drunk, you have become intoxicated at the bubbling spring that I have measured out."
Gospel of Thomas

This flow cascades out in Virtue and true Knowledge of the Father.

It is completed in Agape love and an entrance into the inheritance, the Kingdom of Heaven.

This pattern is also seen in 2 Peter 1

2Pe 1:5 But also in this very thing, bringing in all diligence, filling out your faith with virtue, and with virtue, knowledge; 6 and with knowledge self-control, and with self-control, patience, and with patience, godliness, 7 and with godliness, brotherly kindness, and with brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if these things are in you and abound, they make you to be neither idle nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2Pe 1:11 For so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And also in Clement of Alexandria

To him who has shall be given: "83 to faith, knowledge; and to knowledge, love; and to love, the inheritance.

More on being born of the Spirit

Without our Holy Spirit Born Body we do not enter the Kingdom of god, the Kingdom of heaven, the Bridal Chamber.

Mat 22:12 And he said to him, Friend, how did you come in here without having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

Mat 25:8 And the foolish said to the wise, Give us some of your oil, for our lamps have gone out. 9 But the wise answered, saying, No, lest there be not enough for us and you. But rather go to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.

For there is no small fear, lest, having sometime defiled that beautiful robe by our after sloth

and transgressions, we be cast out from the inner room²⁰ and bridal chamber, like the five foolish virgins, or him who had not on a wedding garment. (Matt. xxv.; Matt. xxii.)

To be clothed is to have a body. The clothing of the Spiritual Body - the Virtues - is not an optional extra

"And these virgins, who are they?" "They," he said, "are holy spirits; and no man can be found in the kingdom of God, unless these shall clothe him with their garment; for if thou receive only the name, but receive not the garment from them, it profits you nothing. For these virgins are powers of the Son of God. If therefore you bear the Name, and do not bear His power, you will bear His Name to no effect.

His power is the virtues, the fruits of the Spirit. The Virtues must carry the soul into the Bridal Chamber through the Gate who is Christ.

And they say to the men who were bringing the stones in; "Abstain for your parts altogether from handing in stones for the building; but place them by the tower, that the virgins may carry them through the gate, and hand them in for the building. For if," say they, they be not carried in through the gate by the hands of these virgins, they cannot change their colours Labour not therefore," say they, "in vain."

The church has generally taught that you must be baptised into Christ and practice the virtues with a view to entering heaven when you die. This is the kingdom in the Future paradigm.

This teaching however is based on the truth of the kingdom of heaven being within you now.

And being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered and said, The kingdom of God does not come with observation. ²¹ Nor shall they say, Lo here! or, behold, there! For behold, the kingdom of God is inside (entos) you.
Luke 17:20

His disciples said to him: "The kingdom – on what day will it come?"

"It will not come by watching and waiting for it. They will not say: 'Look, here!' or 'Look, there!' Rather, the kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth, and people do not see it."

Thomas 113

Jesus said, "If those pulling you say to you, 'Look, the kingdom is in the sky,' the birds of the sky will go before you. Or if they say that it is beneath the ground, the fish of the sea will go in, preceding you. And the kingdom of God is within you and outside you. Whoever knows himself will find this and when you know yourselves you will know that you are children of the living father. But if you will not know yourselves, you are in poverty and you are the poverty."

Thomas 3

This paper is letting those of you who love Christ and are willing to die to the flesh, and live in the Spirit, that you can go into the inner chamber and experience the Kingdom of heaven now.

Experience the Kingdom as a cascade of virtues commencing with faith completed in agape love and coinherence. **NOW**.

Many new Christians do experience something of the Kingdom now, but unfortunately it is often not valued as anything more than an initial conversion “High”.

In the next section we will explore some of the road maps of faith cascading into love and the experience of the Bridal Chamber.

May I recommend that you don't wait until you die to experience the Bridal Chamber.

Hermas' roadmap

Hermas begins with faith coming to replace double mindedness through repentance, or paradigm shift.

The order of the virtues that bring the soul into the Kingdom of Heaven is as follows.

From Faith is born Continenence, from Continenence Simplicity, from Simplicity Guilelessness, from Guilelessness Reverence, from Reverence Knowledge, from Knowledge Love.

Continenence

We must be dead to the flesh and its desires. This is achieved not through the flesh battling the flesh as Jerome recounts his torments in the desert, “subduing (his) rebellious body with weeks of abstinence”.

but through the gift of Continenence, a virtue as Clement teaches in the Stromatas

Continenence is an ignoring of the body in accordance with the confession of faith in God. For continence is not merely a matter of sexual abstinence, but applies also to the other things for which the soul has an evil desire because it is not satisfied with the necessities of life. There is also a continence of the tongue, of money, of use, and of desire. It does not only teach us to exercise self-control; it is rather that self-control is granted to us, since it is a divine power and grace.

Clement Stromatas

And this continence is not even an issue for those who experience agape love in Christ.

How, then, has he any more need of fortitude, who is not in the midst of dangers, being not present, but already wholly with the object of love?

Clement Stromatas

Simplicity and Guilelessness

He said to me; "Keep simplicity and be guileless, and you shall be as little children, who do not know the wickedness that destroys the life of men.

Hermas – The Shepherd

Mat 18:2 And Jesus called a little child to Him and set him in their midst, 3 and said, Truly I say to you, Unless you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven. 4 Therefore whoever shall humble himself like this little child, this one is the greater in the kingdom of Heaven. 5 And whoever shall receive one such little child in My name receives Me.

Reverence

4352 proskuneo

This is a very strong word meaning to reverence, worship, to kiss and adore.

The root of the word has the connotation of kissing as a dog licks its masters hand.

Knowledge

This is Gnosis. True knowledge of the Father.

Speaking of this knowledge St John of the Cross says

Other knowledge is acquired by the light of the intellect, but not the knowledge of faith. Faith nullifies the light of the intellect, and if this light is not darkened, the knowledge of faith is lost.

This is the true knowledge of faith and love. It is knowledge of the Father.

He is the one who set everything in order and in whom everything existed and whom everything lacked. As one of whom some have no knowledge, he desires that they know him and that they love him. For what is it that everything lacked, if not the knowledge of the Father?

Valentinus Gospel of Truth

Agape

There are many sexual metaphors in the documents of the first Christians. Christian Agape Love is pure sexual love liberated from the the flesh and genitals. It is coinherent Sexual love, Spiritual body to Spiritual Body to Spiritual Body.

It is at this point in the soul experiences the Bridal Chamber.

Many of the early Christian writers hinted at the nature of the experience of the intimacy,

Further, also, when he has received gnostic comprehension, he considers that he sees the Lord, directing his eyes towards things invisible, although he seems to look on what he, does not wish to look on; chastising the faculty of vision, when he perceives himself pleasurably affected by the application of his eyes; since he wishes to see and hear that alone which concerns him.

In the act of contemplating the souls of the brethren, he beholds the beauty of the flesh also, with the soul itself, which has become habituated to look solely upon that which is good,

without carnal pleasure. And they are really brethren; in as much as, by reason of their elect creation, and their oneness of character, and the nature of their deeds, they do, and think, and speak the same holy and good works, in accordance with the sentiments with which the Lord wished them as elect to be inspired.

Clement Stromatas

but the interior of the Chamber is not to be described, it is to be experienced.

2 Peter's Roadmap

2 Peter is an interesting book. It is comprised of content from different sources. Chapter 2 to the end is an edited version of the book of Jude. Chapter 1 however, is unique content, and stands alone as a distinct work.

A road map into the experience of the Kingdom of heaven.

2 Peter 1 follows the same pattern as the Hermas texts. We see again the cascade of virtues and Gnosis, beginning with faith and ending in agape love, and an entrance into the Kingdom.

filling out in (epichoregeo en) your faith virtue, and in virtue, knowledge; 6 and in knowledge self-control, and in self-control, patience, and in patience, godliness, 7 and in godliness, brotherly kindness, and in brotherly kindness, love.

2Pe 1:11 For so an entrance shall be ministered (epichoregio) to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Where the Hermas text uses the birthing metaphor to describe the cascade (Faith birthing continence, continence in turn birthing simplicity, etc.), 2 Peter uses the term epichoregeo en (to fully supply within) to denote the cascade.

Epichoregeo has as its root the word choregio to lead in chorus or dance. Note that the Acts of Thomas referred to the seven bridesmaids “who dance before her”.

Choresis is the root word of perichoresis, the divine dance of the coinherent life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Clement's Roadmap

Clement of Alexandria was in charge of the pre-eminent catachetical school in orthodox Christianity at the close of the Second Century.

A work of his titled Stromatas has managed to survive to this day, and is to say the least an eclectic and unusual work.

In it, Clement clearly pledges his allegiance to orthodox Christianity, but also clearly indicates he is concealing mysteries for those with ears to hear.

But since this tradition is not published alone for him who perceives the magnificence of the word; it is requisite, therefore, to hide in a mystery the wisdom spoken, which the Son of God taught....not enjoining us to communicate to all without distinction, what is said to them in parables. But there is only a delineation in the memoranda, which have the truth sowed

sparse and broadcast, that it may escape the notice of those who pick up seeds like jackdaws; but when they find a good husbandman, each one of them will germinate and produce corn.

In one part of the the Stromatas, Clement provides a commentary on Ephesians 1. The Great Kingdom coinherence passage.

In this he talks of predestination in the context of the flow of the Bridal chamber as per his roadmap.

To him who has, shall be given: "to faith, knowledge; and to knowledge, love; and to love, the inheritance.

Continenence which is part of Hermas' and Peter's road maps is included as foundational.

I have highlighted the keywords:

For it were no longer seemly that the friend of God, whom "God has fore-ordained before the foundation of the world" to be enrolled in the highest "adoption," should fall into pleasures or fears, and be occupied in the repression of the passions. (CONTINENCE)

For I venture to assert, that as he is predestined through what he shall do, and what he shall obtain, so also has he predestined himself by reason of what he KNEW and whom he LOVED; not having the future indistinct, as the multitude live, conjecturing it, but having grasped by GNOSTIC FAITH what is hidden from others.

And through LOVE, the future is for him already present. (KINGDOM NOW)

For he has BELIEVED, through prophecy and the advent, on God who lies not.

And what he believes he possesses, and keeps hold of the promise.

And He who has promised is truth.

And through the trustworthiness of Him who has promised, he has firmly laid hold of the end of the promise by KNOWLEDGE.

And he, who knows the sure comprehension of the future which there is in the circumstances, in which he is placed, by LOVE goes to meet the future.

So he, that is persuaded that he will obtain the things that are really good, will not pray to obtain what is here, but that he may always cling to the FAITH which hits the mark and succeeds.

Clement also says

For as God can do all that He wishes, so the Gnostic receives all that he asks.

Clement Stromatas

He also quotes a scripture from a lost Gospel:

And this is to worship God by deeds and knowledge of the true righteousness. The Lord will not wait for the voice of this man in prayer. "Ask," He says, "and I will do it; think, and I will give."

Clement Stromatas

and

To those, then, who have repented and not firmly believed, God grants their requests through their supplications. But to those who live sinlessly and gnostically, He gives, when they have but merely entertained the thought. For example, to Anna, on her merely conceiving the thought, conception was vouchsafed of the child Samuel.¹⁷⁸ "Ask," says the Scripture, "and I will do. Think, and I will give."
Clement Stromatas

What is the ultimate gift? It is of course the Kingdom of Heaven.

Luke 12:32 Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

The intimacy of the Bridal Chamber

The metaphor of the Bridal Chamber is clearly one of intimacy, a metaphor that speaks of intimate male female love.

This intimacy is clearly seen in the existence of the Agapetae, in the early references to the Kiss, in naked baptisms, and the existence of love feasts, about the nature of which little is now known. (see appendix)

Intimacy within mainstream Christianity was suppressed by the third Century, 'in order to avoid scandal'. Suppressed at roughly the same time we see the concept of Church replace the concept of the present tense Kingdom.

Is the Bridal chamber experience simply sublimated sexuality? The short answer is no.

Human sexuality is driven by the yearning for resolution of the dualism between male and female. This can simply be at a purely material level dominated by lust, at the level of the soul erotic love, or it can be spiritual.

Whilst the bridal Chamber incorporates the latter, its main dynamic is not human love but the yearning for the resolution of the most fundamental dualism – the experiential divide between God and Other.

It is not only the yearning for resolution, it is a participation in the resolution in Christ Jesus - the redemption in Christ, of the all into the experience of the coinherent life of God that all creation has but does not experience. Valentinus refers to this state of possession without awareness as forgetfulness.

What exists in him (the Father) is knowledge, which was revealed so that forgetfulness might be destroyed and that they might know the Father, Since forgetfulness existed because they did not know the Father, if they then come to know the Father, from that moment on forgetfulness will cease to exist.

Valentinus Gospel of truth

This resolution is prophesied in 1 Cor 15 28 "that God may be all things in all"

The Bridal Chamber is where the cascading conduit between God and Other is experienced, and it is from this locus that healings and miracles are experienced because the flow of the life of God

pours into every lack.

But that which is the deficient is filled again by the perfect Father. He is good. He knows his plantings because he is the one who has planted them in his Paradise. And his Paradise is his place of rest.

Valentinus Gospel of Truth

More on Faith

Faith is the beginning of the cascade of the Bridal Chamber. But do we understand what faith is?

Firstly faith is not a work, it is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

As love gives, faith is a receiving. It is therefore the first of the gifts, it is the gift that gives us the capacity to receive.

But how do we receive this gift of receiving?

From the human perspective it is where our thankfulness meets the flow of God's goodness to us.

For the essence of this thankfulness is that when it is offered it is felt, and by being felt is offered. So he offered thanks and brought away faith.

St Ambrose

The flavour of faith is the flavour of thankfulness.

"we who know the weight of those terms, and are not ignorant of the grace of faith, render thanks to the Father, who bestowed on us His own creatures, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world and our Lord, to whom be glory and majesty with the Holy Ghost, for ever."

Africanus the historian. In the Fifth Book of his Epitome of the Times

Faith like Wisdom is the hearing of the Word. If our ears are closed we hear nothing. Faith must be opened. We can truly open to God when we know that he is only Good.

He opens our heart by the revelation within our thankfulness of the lavish and outrageous goodness, grace, generosity and beauty of His heart that constantly floods toward our lack.

This is the heart of true Gnosis – true knowledge of the Father.

Knowledge of the Father

Forget the orthodox propaganda. It was the knowledge of the Father that split the church between orthodox and gnostic at the end of the second Century.

Jesus came to bring us the revelation of the Father, through his own life and through the action of the Holy Spirit. It was clear that the revelation of God in Jesus Christ did not match the revelation of God in the Old Testament.

To the 'Children' of course, this was irrelevant. They simply knew God as purely good through the experience of the Bridal Chamber.

However the Second Century saw a struggle to make sense of this dichotomy.

The orthodox stating that there was no difference between Jesus and the Old Testament God, the Gnostics stating that the Old Testament God was not the true God who was infinitely good.

The orthodox won the day, keeping the God of the Old Testament, but losing the revelation of the

infinite goodness of God in the process. In the process the experience of the Bridal Chamber, so valued by the Gnostics was relegated to irrelevance under the new paradigm of intellectual orthodoxy.

'By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you are orthodox in your theology?'

We are at the beginning of a time that will return to the Second Century and resolve the differences between true Gnostic and true Orthodox, and sweep away 1800 years of missing the point.

With the Resolution of the Orthodox Gnostic problem in the light of the Kingdom experience, the divisions of current Christendom will also be swept away as inconsequential.

The Resolution

The Mystery of the Kingdom is the experiential Knowledge of the Father as pure love and goodness.

God cannot be known from the outside. Yet until Jesus came we only knew God from the outside. And outside Jesus God looks like the Old Testament God – a god with temporal characteristics.

In Jesus we know God in the only way he was ever meant to be known – coinherently - and that is the eternal not temporal nature of God. This is the way he is known eternally.

When everything comes into Jesus experientially, into Jesus knowledge of the Father (Gnosis) there will be no Old Testament God, because a great bulk of the character traits of Yahweh (e.g. wrath etc.) exist only in relationship to sin, which is temporal.

When everything comes into Jesus experientially, there will be only pure agape love. The One who is Agape Love will be all and in all.

This is the ultimate coinherence. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

Such is the place of the blessed; this is their place.

As for the others in their place, may they know that it does not suit me, after having been in the place of rest to say anything more.

But he is the one in whom I shall be in order to devote myself, at all times, to the Father of the All and the true brothers, those upon whom the love of the Father is lavished, and in whose midst nothing of him is lacking. It is they who manifest themselves truly since they are in that true and eternal life and speak of the perfect light filled with the seed of the Father, and which is in his heart and in the Fullness, while his Spirit rejoices in it and glorifies him in whom it was, because the Father is good. And his children are perfect and worthy of his name, because he is the Father. Children of this kind are those whom he loves.

Valentinus Gospel of Truth

The heart of the Coming reward

We must see in a new light. This is not the message of a reward coming in the future. This is the hearts reward when we come to Christ now in the Bridal Chamber.

Mat 11:28 Come unto me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Psa 84:5 Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; In whose heart are the highways to Zion. 6 Passing through the valley of Weeping they make it a place of springs; Yea, the early rain covers it with blessings.

Enter the secret place, as Jesus did regularly

Mat 6:6 But you, when you pray, enter into your room. And shutting your door, pray to your Father in secret; and your Father who sees in secret shall reward you openly.

Luke 5:16 But He was drawing back in the wilderness, and praying.

Present your body to him.

Rom 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.

Open yourself to him

Heb 4:13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight, but all things are naked and opened to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

You cannot even come to the Father unless you believe he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

Heb 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God **must** believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

The reward is the Kingdom of God, the Bridal Chamber.

Luke 12:32 Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

come drink - faith drinks

John 7:37 And in the last day of the great feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

And flow - love flows

John 7:37 And in the last day of the great feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. 38 He who believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

Son 5:1 I have come into My garden, My sister, My spouse; I have gathered My myrrh with My spice; I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey; I have drunk My wine with My milk. Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O Beloved.

Son 7:9 and the roof of your mouth like the best wine for my Beloved, that goes down smoothly for my Beloved, flowing softly over the lips of sleeping ones.

Let your breathing become a sacrament of your faith and love, flowing in and flowing out.

John 10:9 I am the portal. If anyone enters through me, he shall be saved and shall go in and go out and find pasture.

This is perichoresis, the heart of coinherence, the heart drinking in faith and flowing out love simultaneously.

We must become a 'single one' in the Bridal chamber.

Without this united heart of coinherence we cannot experience the coinherent kingdom life.

Coinherence is foreign to our flesh/soul consciousness. Heaven is the Coinherent life of the Trinity in which we all share eternally

Jesus saw infants being suckled.

He said to his disciples:

"These little ones being suckled are like those who enter the kingdom."

They said to him: "Then will we enter the kingdom as little ones?"

Jesus said to them: "When you make the two into one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside and the above like the below –

that is, to make the male and the female into a single one, so that the male will not be male and the female will not be female –

and when you make eyes instead of an eye and a hand instead of a hand and a foot instead of a foot, an image instead of an image, then you will enter [the kingdom]."

Gospel of Thomas 22

And if we will not receive the Kingdom life now, how do we expect to receive it when we die?

If anyone becomes a son of the bridal chamber, he will receive the light. If anyone does not receive it while he is here, he will not be able to receive it in the other place.

He who will receive that light will not be seen, nor can he be detained. And none shall be able to torment a person like this, even while he dwells in the world.

Gospel of Philip

Andrew Moore

Gin Gin Queensland

February 2008 (moorea@ozemail.com.au)