

Christianity and Cosmic Consciousness: A Commentary on the Words of Jesus

Alexis Georg Hoen

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Hoen's interpretation of Jesus's teachings weaves in discussions from philosophers and academics to clarify and convince.

Alexis Georg Hoen's *Christianity and Cosmic Consciousness: A Commentary on the Words of Jesus* bridges the gap between those who believe in God as a conscious supreme being and those who think of this same divine principle as simply the laws that govern energy and matter. Hoen accomplishes this by putting aside that which divides, looking instead to what unifies us all: the will to live and love.

Hoen is a Ukrainian-born, Munich-educated medical doctor and student of religion who has practiced medicine in the United States for fifty years. He shows that Christianity offers a way to realize cosmic consciousness—"living beyond oneself as an integral part of the cosmic whole"—with Christ leading the way. Anything less than this type of understanding, he posits, threatens the continued existence of the world. Hoen argues that the power of redemption must extend to the whole of nature, and not be wrapped up in concerns of individual salvation. Instead, the bond between humanity and the cosmic environment should be fully expressed, including implications of responsibility and care. For Hoen, the teachings and example of Jesus offer a way to come to grips with both this bond and the responsibilities it entails.

Hoen's approach is thoughtful and coherent; he does not insist on the verity of miraculous or supernatural events, but neither does he try to disprove them. Rather, he sets them aside in an effort to present the teachings of Jesus for a postmodern world. "Original sin," then, becomes not some damning breach of morality inherited from Adam and Eve, but the fact that all that lives, ours included, exist in a tension between unity with and opposition to other living creatures. This is not an aberration but an essential characteristic of life—to be "a part" and "apart" at the same time.

Clear and convincing, Hoen's interpretation of Jesus's teachings in the Seven Last Words, the Beatitudes, and the Lord's Prayer is enriched by his lifetime of exposure to widely differing religious, cultural, and political views. Woven through his meticulously referenced text are the words of the Bible and other holy books, teachings of the founding fathers and saints of Christianity, discussions of Eastern and Western philosophers and spiritual masters, and well-reasoned discussions of how the world's political systems have attempted to organize societies in light of their beliefs.

With its attractive cover art, informative and well-laid-out back matter (including a brief author bio and photo), well-organized table of contents, extensive bibliography and endnotes, and a layout that is easy on the eye, Hoen's book presents itself well. Moreover, its well-crafted arguments are displayed with careful attention to grammar, syntax, and word usage with few errors in spelling and punctuation. The result is an excellent book that is not only thought-provoking and a pleasure to read, but also a welcome resource for independent research.

KRISTINE MORRIS (May 1, 2015)

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