

DIVINE SHALOM

Deuteronomy 30:11,14

For this teaching which I give you today is not hidden from you, and is not far away. But the teaching is very near you: it is in your mouth and in your heart.”

II Corinthians 3:3-6

You are a letter from Christ, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of the human heart. Such is the confidence that we have through Christ with God. Not that we can claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, who has made us ministers of a new covenant, not written in law but in the Spirit; for the written law kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

Gospel of Thomas 50, 3

Jesus said: “If they say to you: where have you come from? Say to them: We have come from the light, from the place where the light came into being by itself, established itself, and appeared in their image. If they say to you: Is it you? Say: We are its children, and are the chosen of the living God. If they ask you: What is the evidence of God in you? Say to them: It is movement and rest. The Realm of God is within you and outside you.”

Numbers 6:24-26

*May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May the face of the Lord shine on you and be gracious to you.
May the Lord look kindly on you and give you Shalom.*

Nicene Creed (Read aloud only those sections of the Creed with which you agree.)

SERMON

A few years back, I hosted a radio show with a focus on religion and life. It was a call-in talk show. One November night the topic of the show was spirituality and sexuality. Just as the show ended, the Board Op received a phone call from a man who said his name was Rev. Chuck. The caller wanted to speak with me. So I talked with him. He said he'd been driving home while listening to the radio but that he must have heard wrong. For it sounded like---as host of the show---I had said that I was a minister and yet I considered homosexuality a gift from God. Rev. Chuck was slightly disoriented by this. I responded to him by saying that “yes, I am a United Methodist Minister; and that, indeed, I had said on the air that homosexuality is a gift from God.” Rev. Chuck just couldn't believe his ears. I went on to say that I believed that all sexuality---when expressed in healthy, loving relationships---is one of God's greatest gifts. Rev. Chuck agreed with that but went on to say that “his” Bible condemned homosexual perverts to hell. I told him I did not interpret the Bible in that way.

I presume most of you would find it difficult, if not downright suicidal to attend Rev. Chuck's church. And why is that? Why should it matter about his theology, as long as he's a Christian and preaching “The Bible“?

So you come here to St. Paul's Church---at least in part---because no one uses religion as a weapon.

But theology does matter. It reverberates through our bodies, minds and souls in healthy and unhealthy ways. And we need to express our experiences of God in words. That's a human urge. And we call that theology.

At the very dawn of the Christian movement, in the first few centuries after Jesus' resurrection, there were countless ways the followers of Jesus talked about their experience of God. They tried to put it into words, and these words became the early Gospels and Epistles in our Bible. But Matthew, Mark, Luke and John weren't the only Gospels used by the ancient church. It is estimated that there were hundreds of other gospels and accounts of Jesus' life and teachings.

One of those is the Gospel of Thomas, which was written around 90 c.e. It is one of the oldest gospels in existence. It is a collection of Jesus' sayings probably used by Jewish Christians living in Eastern Syria. Fragments of Thomas were found in 1897 at an archaeological site in Egypt known as Oxyrhynchus. And later, in 1945, a complete version of the Gospel of Thomas was recovered as part of the Nag Hammadi library in Egypt. It was discovered by a farmer who stumbled upon a cave where he found old urns containing ancient manuscripts. The farmer knew such things had value so he sold them to an infamous trader in the antiquities black market. The trader read the first few lines---"Jesus, Son of God"---and knew he had a gold mine. At this point, things got crazy. Between the Coptic Museum in Cairo, the Roman Catholic Church, Biblical Scholars, Egyptian military intelligence, and private collectors, there was a mad scramble for ownership and control of these manuscripts. People began to lie and steal to obtain the Gospel of Thomas and the other tractates found at Nag Hammadi. And those who managed to get hold of the Gospel, hoarded it for a long time so that no one else could see it.¹

But since the Gospel of Thomas has become available to other scholars and to the public, it is becoming a revolutionary force in Christianity. Thomas provides us with new ways of hearing some of the familiar sayings of Jesus, and gives us other sayings and parables with radically different slants than those in the Bible. Thomas says we have come from the Light, that divinity shines within us all.

Other ancient gospels---in whole or in fragments---were also discovered at Nag Hammadi and at other archaeological sites and in old monasteries; and we have learned about some additional gospels because they were quoted at length by early Christian theologians like Clement of Alexandria.²

We know that the Bible did not fall from heaven already written down in the King James Version---which by the way---is one of the worst English translations from the original texts. The Bible was compiled---not in a single mystical moment---but rather, it evolved over time.

What we are learning from the discovery of the various ancient Christian texts is that the early Christian communities cherished many different gospels. The early Christians were very diverse in the ways they interpreted and embellished the stories and sayings of Jesus that were floating around at the time. We also know that early Christians made no distinction between canonical and non-canonical gospels.³ In fact, their only official scripture was the Jewish Scripture (which wasn't even canonized until 90 c.e.).⁴ But by the end of the 2nd century, the Western Church in Rome started talking about a Christian canon, a canon that included only those scriptures that combined to promote a specific theological agenda and thus were authorized for official use under the rule of the Christian Church(the Muratorian Canon).⁵ And this canon included Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

while rejecting Thomas. But “a literal transcription of the words of Jesus it was not.”⁶

During the early years of the church, Christians were persecuted. So when the Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity and the Christian religion was legalized in 312, many people---especially church leaders---breathed a sigh of relief. However, Constantine was shrewd as well as faithful. He wanted a strong empire and he believed a single religion would stabilize it. So he made Christianity the state religion. And he put pressure on the Christian Bishops and scholars to unify on the essentials of the Christian faith.⁷ Of course, by this time, the Western Church had already evolved into a pretty well-run organization that had successfully fended off some early extremists (ie. Montanus, Marcion, and the Gnostics).⁸

But in the year 320, a fierce theological debate almost split the church. Even people on the street were arguing about whether God alone was the one, true, uncreated God while Jesus was human because he received life and being from God. People were running about singing little songs about Jesus not being God in the same way that God the Creator is God. They didn't have football teams then to root for. So they rooted for one theologian against another, Arius against Athanasius. At that time, there was no unanimous opinion on the nature of Jesus. (Sounds rather familiar, don't you think?) Some people said Jesus was Divine. Others said he was human.

Now this would not have been such a problem in the earliest years of Christianity, when most people believed humanity was part of a “great chain of being, emanating eternally from God,” and that human beings were innately able to know and participate in the life of God.⁹ “The earliest Christians lived in a world...where, in fact, divine and human, temporal and eternal...were marvellously porous and open to one another. Prof. John Dominic Crossan says they could never have argued that...divine conception had happened to (Jesus) alone in all the world!”¹⁰

But even early on, some Christians began to affirm a rather dualistic view of the world by seeing the material world and human beings as innately imperfect and sinful. Thus if human nature was so imperfect, how could Jesus save us if he was human? People who'd had an experience of Christ believed he opened heaven's door for them. But who was Jesus really? Was he God and therefore belonged to the Divine Realm? Or was he human and therefore belonged to the imperfect created order? The fact that Jesus called God “father” (in most gospels) and that he called God “mother” (in The Gospel of the Hebrews) meant that even Jesus made a distinction between himself and God.

Arius believed that Jesus had blazed a trail for us to God. But Jesus was human---although a human who perfectly realized his divinity---and if he wasn't human then there was no hope for the rest of us humans to follow him into communion with God. Arius believed that we could somehow emulate Christ and thus realize our own divinity or perfection.¹¹ We are all children of God.

But Athanasius did not agree. He saw how fragile and imperfect we are as human beings. And no matter how good our intentions, we can't seem to bring ourselves into perfection. Thus Athanasius thought if we were left to our own devices, we would fall into dissolution. And as we look at the long history of human violence against other humans and against the environment, it's easy to understand Athanasius. He believed that only as we participate in God can we avoid destruction. Therefore, Jesus could not save us if he himself were a mere mortal. So, Athanasius concluded, Jesus must be Divine. For only the One who created the world would have the power to save it.¹²

And this debate between Arius and Athanasius was fierce. Finally, Emperor Constantine intervened and called together the Council of Nicaea in 325.¹³

At the Council, most of the Bishops stood somewhere in between Arius and Athanasius. Nevertheless, with Emperor Constantine breathing down their necks to agree on a common creed -- Athanasius was able to impose his theology on the council, especially since the Emperor agreed with his point of view. So when the Nicene Creed was signed on May 20, 325, it became not only official Church doctrine, but the official religious doctrine of the empire. And for the first time in Christian history, Jesus Christ was no longer considered a creature. Now the Creator and the Christ were one. And Emperor Constantine was happy and declared the Council's decision "the judgment of God."¹⁴

But most Bishops and scholars continued to teach and believe many variations of theology just as they had before. So the debate didn't really end at Nicaea. And even Athanasius, the theological bully who perpetrated some really violent acts against other Bishops, was exiled 5 times but always managed to force his way back into church power.¹⁵ It was hard to make the Nicene Creed stick. The creed was very problematic and controversial because it was unscriptural. It stated that Jesus was divine but did not explain how Jesus the Logos could be made of the same stuff (homoousios) as the Creator God without being a second God. And the whole concept of the Trinity -- also not mentioned in the Bible -- made it sound like there were 3 Gods: the Creator, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

Other theologians at the time proposed that Jesus was a quality or potential inherent within God, but Jesus was not God because there is only one God (Marcellus, Bishop of Ancyra).¹⁶ And Professor Elaine Pagels, in her wonderful new book Beyond Belief, asserts that the Gospel of Thomas was a direct threat to the exclusive divinity of Jesus proclaimed by the Gospel of John. "John says that we can experience God only through the divine light embodied in Jesus. But...Thomas' gospel (says)...that the divine light Jesus embodied is shared by humanity...that the image of God is hidden within everyone."¹⁷ All this god-talk may sound a bit crazy -- that such controversy could take up so much energy. But every one of these people believed that something new had come into the world with Jesus and that somehow, through Jesus, they had experienced God. They were just struggling to find words to express their experience. So theology was important to them.

The whole time all of this was taking place in the Western Church -- in the Roman Empire and North Africa -- the Eastern Orthodox Church rejected this theological debate as irrelevant. Instead, the Eastern Church made a distinction between the teachings of the Church and the experience of God. They believed that religious experience was the primary path to God. They also felt that words are too limiting and that all words and theological concepts are only false idols -- for words cannot contain or reveal God. It is only the Spirit of God within that each individual can apprehend and experience in his or her own time.

But the Western Church ignored the Eastern Church. And the Western Church, with its headquarters in Rome, did not stop with the Nicene Creed. They also felt compelled to set the canon of Scripture, and decided which of the many Christian Gospels to include as official Christian Scripture and which to throw out. And the Gospel of Thomas, a gospel used more in the Eastern Church--a gospel which challenged the exclusive divinity of Jesus while urging us to realize our own divinity--was discarded along with many other ancient gospels. And the official canon of the New Testament was set in the year 367 (confirmed by our old friend Athanasius).¹⁸ And from that time on, the Christian Church began to persecute the heretics who disagreed with the orthodox canon (and remember the word *heretic* means one who makes his/her own choices). The Church also began to destroy other gospels; and Christians even burned the greatest library in antiquity in Alexandria,

Egypt (in the 4th century).¹⁹ Thus other versions of Jesus' life and teachings had to be hidden if they were to survive (like the Gospel of Thomas).

How can we honestly say that the writings that inspired many early Christians for several hundred years have no spiritual value just because the church says they don't? How can we say that the words written in this one book, the Bible, are the only inspired words of God? And that they are the literal words of God, even though the Christian Scriptures were circulated orally for many decades before they were written down, and then ended up in our Bible tainted by politics and power struggles? And how can we claim inerrancy in our translations when we have discovered over 3,500 different manuscripts just for the canonical gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John?²⁰ Also, the Hebrew Scriptures or the Old Testament Scriptures weren't even canonized until long after the death of Jesus, and Christians don't even agree with the Jews on what the Jewish Scriptures should be.²¹ Yet some Christians hang on to every word of the Bible as the inerrant, literal Word of God, even though we know that many of these "words" contradict each other and some of the stories of rape and murder and prejudice in the Bible are horrendous. Think about it: do you really believe that an inflammation of the skin or any disease makes us ritually unclean in the sight of God? That's what the Bible says, if you read it literally.²² Or do you really believe that it is an abomination of God for a man to love a man? That's what the Bible says.²³ Or do you believe that the earth is the center of our solar system---that's what the Bible says.²⁴---and therefore Galileo is a heretic as the church once declared?

The church in the West---following years of theological warfare---made a wrong turn. The initial focus of Christians was a personal experience of God as love, a love that could transform the world. To them, scripture was only meaningful if it led one into a deeper relationship with God. But the church decided to turn from an experiential focus to an ecclesiastical focus, from a focus on Spirit to a focus on structure; to a focus on church structure based on a strict and enforceable belief system. This meant the church became a spiritual power broker of right belief or official theology (orthodoxy). And the great irony of Christendom is that the man who preached a direct and unbrokered relationship with God was himself made into the ultimate power broker. The message of Jesus was obviously so volatile that it had to be contained at once and refocused onto the medium as the message, onto Jesus as God. Thus Jesus became the exclusive medium, the one and only way to God. And the church controlled access to Jesus. Thus Christianity turned from the Spirit written in the heart to the written letter of the law.²⁵

Jesus revealed to us our true selves: the divinity at the heart of each person. Thus Jesus never constructed an orthodox belief system. He did not create a new religion. He had only two commandments (which actually were very ancient): to love God, and to love your neighbor as yourself.²⁶ He lived as though there were no divisions between Jews and Gentiles, men and women, no divisions between those enslaved and those who were free.²⁷ Everything and everyone is interconnected. This was a revolutionary social vision---fuelled by Divine Compassion---that swept across the Roman Empire. Jesus taught that everyone, no matter who, was a child of God, and could experience the love of God in their lives.

Unfortunately, the church evolved away from the spirit of Jesus. As we look at history, the battles within the church did not stop in the year 325 with the Council of Nicaea. For many centuries, rules and dogmas and reformations wreaked havoc on the church. Even today, the Christian faith is often seen as a violent and destructive force in the world---not only because of the many theological wars that have raged within Christianity---but also

because of the armies of Christians who have marched against other Christians and against people of other faiths (especially Muslims). Christianity is also seen as a mean-spirited force due to the centuries of support for slavery, the centuries of denying women equal rights, and the recent loud-mouthed efforts of fundamentalist Christians to control the political process. Yes, infinite good has also been done in the Spirit of Christ.

But no matter what good or evil Christianity has accomplished, it has never been able to stifle the power or beauty of the Divine.

There is a heartbeat that has never been silenced. (*start drumming*)

There is a heartbeat that pulses through this planet and the vast universe beyond. And that heartbeat is God. You've heard it. You've felt it. That heartbeat reached a great crescendo when all life exploded into being: the stars and the planets and all that is green and growing, the animals and fish and birds of the air, and all the human creatures who populate this blessed earth. "There is a formative drive to the Kosmos."²⁸ There is a heartbeat. You feel it when you walk barefoot upon the earth. And that heartbeat could be heard like a roar in the lives of Jesus and Buddha and Mohamed and Lao-Tze. And when we quiet ourselves and listen to the life that pulses within us---we notice something---don't we? We notice that our hearts resonate even on an unconscious level with the great heartbeat of eternity. And this heartbeat has never been silenced. Not even by the Christian church. (*stop drumming*)

Yes, we still try to wrap words around our experience of the sacred. That's what we do as humans. And we can't help but express ourselves in theology. But I, for one, am tired of stuffing my mind full of dogma and defending opinions about ultimate meaning. I'd rather lighten up a bit and allow myself to be carried forward by the Spirit that blows where it wills.²⁹

And for lack of better words, I call this spiritual process Shalom. Shalom is a Hebrew word that means peace, healing, and wholeness; it means to be fulfilled or complete. Shalom is born of the fire letter (shin) and the water letter (mem), so it is the marriage of opposites, meaning that peace and wholeness can come only from inclusion of both sides of the story, the union of inner and outer, of personal and communal, of passion and peace, of movement and rest, of yin and yang, of heart and mind.³⁰ Shalom is similar to an Aramaic word that Jesus used: "selama."³¹ So what does Shalom look like?

It challenges all of our pre-conceptions, challenges us to think for ourselves, to trust our own deep intuition; and yet at the same time, to move beyond thinking into an experience of the sacred.

The expression of Divine Shalom is always evolving, thus cannot be pinned down. It is a journey of opening our minds, bodies, and souls to the infinite heartbeat. We sense the Divine power in every humming cell of life, sometimes as order and sometimes as chaos, but rarely as predictable. And we refer to that power as God. But we know that the term "God" is just a word, and that Ultimate Reality can never be confined by words, or time, or space. "Jewish mystics often refer to It as *Ein Sof*, which means endlessness...(or) an ongoing process."³² God is always on the move, always pulling us toward self-transcendence (evolution). And we can choose to resist or to participate. But there is nowhere we can go that God is not.³³ In suffering and in joy, in darkness and in light, God is there. For it is in God that we live and move and have our being.

Shalom dances in the elusive and yet ever-present spirit of Jesus. He tore a hole in the human psyche that you and I still wrestle with today. And it won't let up. And it eats away at our dogmas and dissolves all barriers between the Divine and the human, between the

spiritual and the material, between you and me. In him, we see the forces of both heaven and earth unleashed. But he won't let us project all divinity onto him, rather he keeps reflecting it back on us. Just as he is Divine Love, we are Divine Love. He awakened us to who we are and who we can become. He helped us see the Spirit written in our hearts. He taught us that we can move mountains, that we also participate in the energy that spins the universe. I don't quite understand who or what Jesus is. And I can't define him by theological concepts. Some call him the "Son of God," but he called himself the "Son of Man." And because he refused to define himself, he left himself open to the manipulations of theologians. But Jesus is not the language of dogma, "Jesus is the language of love."³⁴ And the Spirit revealed in Christ is real. And nothing can explain it away.

God's Shalom can be glimpsed in the Bible. But the literal words of the Bible are not sacred; rather it is the reality of the sacred that inspires the words. The Bible describes the hallowed journey of our spiritual ancestors. And the Bible can be a guide for our spiritual journey. It can open our hearts and souls to an experience of God. But, there are many inspired scriptures. As we bump up against people of other faith traditions, it becomes clear that God didn't speak just on Sinai or just through Jesus. Christianity may be an expression of the Body of Christ, but it is not the full expression of the whole Body of God. God is the God of all people and we revere the great mystery of God too much to try to limit God to our particular religion. For human knowledge is imperfect and we just see in part.³⁵

Creation itself is the greatest sign of God's unfolding Shalom. Creation is sacred and holy. For everything finds life and breath in God. We are connected in every way to every other form of life; we are part of one infinite web that finds its source in God. The fire that burns at the center of the earth is the same fire that burns within our souls. We share one life.

Shalom is always expressed most fully in relationship with others. Thus we embrace the Beloved Community. And we are humbled by the fact that the Christian community, as expressed in the organized church, has not been able to destroy the Spirit of Christ in our world. In fact, we are downright amazed. And we see this as a sign that there is no place bereft of the Spirit of God, and that even with our endless imperfections, we can be sacred vessels of the Spirit. For we were born to love. We are love. And love is always a relationship, a relationship with God and with others. It's all connected. And as we gather together in community, we surrender the ego and fear and anger and hurt in our lives, and our True Self is awakened. The path of transformation always takes us through both the depth of the personal and the communal. Both prayer and community feed the soul. The power of God's transforming love is intensified in community, and it cannot help but overflow into the world. The Spirit moves us beyond the individual self. We are the hands and feet of Jesus; we are the Body of Christ called to care for a wounded world. Through justice and kindness and mercy, the Spirit of God walks upon this earth. Thus, the Realm of God is realized.

I am a Christian---not because I believe that Christianity has the only truth or the only path into God---I am a Christian because on some deep mystical level that I cannot explain fully in words, my heart resonates with the heart of Jesus. There is a loving presence, a divine energy at work in my life that transcends dogma---that transcends me---that I experience as Love.

To experience God as love---to nurture that experience in ourselves and to express it in compassionate and courageous ways in society---is the sole purpose of the Christian faith. And that, for lack of better words, is the work of God's Shalom.

- 1 James Robinson, ed., The Nag Hammadi Library in English (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1978, 1988), pp.22-26.
- 2 Robert J. Miller, ed. The Complete Gospels, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1994). Alternative Gospels have been found at Nag Hammadi: *The Secret Book of James, Dialogue of the Savior, Oxyrhynchus site: Gospel of Mary, Ancient Manuscripts: The Infancy Gospel of Thomas, The Egerton Gospel*, Akhmim in Upper Egypt in a monk's grave: *The Gospel of Peter*, Ancient Manuscript of a letter of Clement of Alexandria discovered at Mar Saba monastery near Jerusalem: *The Secret Gospel of Mark*, Quoted by Origen, Jerome and Clement: *Gospel of the Hebrews*, Quoted by Epiphanius of Salamis: *Gospel of the Ebionites*, Quoted by Jerome, Origen, and Eusebius: *Gospel of the Nazoreans*.
- 3 Miller, p;4.
- 4 Norman Perrin. The New Testament: An Introduction, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1974), p.326
- 5 J. Stevenson, ed., revised by W.H.C. Frend. A New Eusebius: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church to AD 337, (Cambridge: University Press, 1957 and 1987),pp.123-124. (*The Muratorian Canon of 190 c.e. included: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, along with Acts, The Epistles of Paul, Jude, The Wisdom of Solomon, The Apocalypse of Peter, The Apocalypse of John, and the Shepherd of Hermas. It did not include Hebrews nor all of the letters of Paul.*)
- 6 John Shelby Spong, Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism: A Bishop Rethinks the Meaning of Scripture (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), p.90.
- 7 J. Stevenson, A New Eusebius, pp.334,338.
- 8 Karen Armstrong, A History of God: The 4,000 Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), p.105f.
- 9 Armstrong, pp.108,102.
- 10 John Dominic Crossan, The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately After the Execution of Jesus, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), p.29.
- 11 Stevenson, New Eusebius, p.323. (*Arius held the view that Jesus was not God because he believed that the Creator and the creation were vastly different. Thus Jesus, a human, could not be God.*)
- 12 Jaroslav Pelikan, The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, Book I: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p.203.
- 13 Henry Chadwick. The Early Church, (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1967), p.130.
- 14 Stevenson, New Eusebius, p.350.

- 15 Stevenson, New Eusebius, p.362. (*At the Council of Tyre, there were many accusations against Athanasius, some of which accused him of falsely imprisoning Bishop Callinicus and inflicting torture on him and of personally inflicting blows on him; and that Athanasius had also thrown other bishops into prison who had separated themselves from him because they thought he had deceived them.*)
- 16 Armstrong, p.112. (*Also*)-- Chadwick, p. 135.
- 17 Elaine Pagels, Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas. (New York: Random House, 2003), pp.40-41.
- 18 Perrin, pp.329f. (*The canon of the New Testament was finalized in a letter of Athanasius in 367. He lists the books of the Old Testament--which were broader than those accepted in Jewish Scripture--as well as the 27 books of the New Testament.*)
- 19 Robinson, Nag Hammadi, p.21.
- 20 Miller, p.2. (*Also, in the year 383 c.e., Jerome wrote of the "many forms of texts...of the Scripture now scattered throughout the whole world."* Quoted in J. Stevenson, ed., rev. W.H.C. Frend, Creeds, Councils and Controversies: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church, AD 337-461 [Cambridge: University Press, 1966, 1989], p.183.)
- 21 Perrin, p.328.
- 22 Leviticus 13:1-3
- 23 Leviticus 18:22
- 24 Genesis 1
- 25 II Corinthians 3:6
- 26 Matthew 22:37-39, Mark 12:30-31, Luke 10:27
- 27 Galations 3:28
- 28 Ken Wilber, The Eye of the Spirit: An Integral Vision for a World Gone Slightly Mad. (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1997), pp.26f.
- 29 John 3:8
- 30 *The definition of Shalom comes from a conversation with Rabbi Tirzah Firestone, author of The Receiving*
- 31 Neil Douglas-Klotz, The Hidden Gospel: Decoding the Spiritual Message of the Aramaic Jesus (Wheaton, Illinois: Quest Books, 1999), p.196.

32 Rabbi David A. Cooper, God Is a Verb: Kabbalah and the Practice of Mystical Judaism. New York: Riverhead Books, 1997, pp. 65, 67.

33 Psalm 139

34 Professor Diana Eck of Harvard University, speaking at the Iliff Week of Lectures, Denver, Colorado.

35 I Corinthians 13:9,12