



by

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The Greatest Goal of All

The Author

John Lerwill (after a successful career in the IT industry) is an historian in several aspects of history, including genealogy and Aston Villa Football Club, about whom he has published several books.

This booklet's title is, therefore, a play on his interest in soccer in the use of the word 'Goal'. It is his belief that there is a 'goal' in life to which we should attain. In fact, he asserts that this goal will be attained by all souls after many, many re-births in the cycle known as reincarnation.

Our 'goal' is, he says, to achieve unification with our creator – God himself.

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Preface

Every activity of man has an urge which impels it. ... Each little act of ours has to be in pursuit of a goal. We forget that the great activity of living on earth for years and years and years must also have a goal, a purpose, an urge that impels us.

A thought....

At every birth what appears to be a new life comes among us. We see the little form as it lives and grows, becoming a factor in our lives for days, months or years. At last there comes a day when the form dies and goes to decay. The life that came, whence we know not, has passed to the invisible beyond, and in sorrow we ask ourselves, Whence came it? What was it here? and Whither has it gone?

It has unfortunately come to be the popularly accepted opinion that nothing can be definitely known about these matters of deepest interest to humanity.

How to be 'wise'

A young man came to a sage one day and asked, "Sire, what must I do to become wise?" The sage vouchsafed no answer. The youth after repeating his question a number of times with a like result, at last left him, to return the next day with the same question. Again no answer was given and the youth returned on the third day, still repeating his question, "Sire what must I do to become wise?"

Finally the sage turned and went down to a near-by river. He entered the water, bidding the youth follow him. Upon arriving at a sufficient depth the sage took the young man by the shoulders and held him under the water, despite his struggles to free himself. At last, however, he released him and when the youth had regained his breath the sage questioned him:

"Son, when you were under the water what did you most desire?"

The youth answered without hesitation, "Air, air! I wanted air!"

"Would you not rather have had riches, pleasure, power or love, my son? Did you not think of any of these?" queried the sage.

"No, sire! I wanted air and thought only of air," came the instant response.

"Then," said the sage, "to become wise you must desire wisdom with as great intensity as you just now desired air. You must struggle for it, to the exclusion of every other aim in life. It must be your one and only aspiration, by day and by night. If you seek wisdom with that fervour, my son, you will surely become wise."

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Chapter 1 : Where We Are At

The rational age we are in stems *largely* from the 17th century and the laws of physics identified by Newton. But he was not a pure rationalist – he would abhor the idea that there was no ‘Almighty Creator’. Newton simply was trying to account for how the universe works at a practical level.

Scientists and great thinkers frequently met to discuss the great philosophical and moral issues of the day. One example is that of a group which used to meet in Birmingham until the late 18th century (the ‘Lunar Society’), and which was composed of men of the ilk of the engineering giant James Watt, the scientist/philosopher Joseph Priestley, and the grandfather of Charles Darwin – a very spiritual man. Their goal was to develop the highest possible thought about how to obtain the best and fairest civilisation. Priestley was eventually driven out of Birmingham (because of his liberal and Unitarian views) and lived out his remaining life in the newly-founded United States of America. He was a close friend of that country’s founding fathers.

It was only after Western man had begun to be self-satisfied about his accomplishments in science, technology and the industrial revolution that conditions became right for Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution to be able to gain such respectability that it started to be proclaimed as ‘the Truth’ at the expense of the Bible. The Christian Church had by then not done much to help itself by showing little understanding of the pure teachings of Jesus, so that the rationalists began to have a field day. This was despite the fact that Darwin’s theory was what it was and still is – a theory. It has been adopted as a working hypothesis that must have a grounding in absolute truth, according to the rationalists.

This was all despite the work of the philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau in America and poets such as Robert Browning in Britain. And even Sir William Jones for his 18th c. work in bringing Hindu works to the public’s gaze. There have been many sympathisers of oriental thinking, but they have since all tended to be trampled down by the loudest voices in the search for material prosperity. William Blake (18th c.) wrote:

To see a World in a grain of sand
And a Heaven in a wild flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.

By the 20th century – and particularly after World War One – the rationalists thought they had to be right. Man – they thought – was in control of his own destiny by the use of his reason. It was the age of extreme politics which resulted in yet another (and horrifying) world war.

Following World War Two, it began to dawn how the impact of pure rational thought over 150 years had harmed the safe development of the world, yet the major political powers still threatened one another with nuclear warfare. As the world entered the 1970s, the Christian world was re-focusing itself on how to deal with its shortcomings, and ecological issues began to obtain respectability, but 40 years on and little has been done to slow down the rape of the world resources, and there is little control over the birth-rate.

Man continues to think he is in control, but the rationalist mindset seems not to be able to see beyond their own thoughts.

Meanwhile, the thoughts and teachings of the great spiritual masters – about how to live a balanced and constructive life – are still deemed by the great majority to relate to a different world. There are even those that say they are not relevant. The general thought

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is that the thoughts of the spiritual masters do not count in our so-called civilised societies. And many of those that do give some thought to the matter only take pieces of 'the cake'. The whole of it can be difficult to consume.

And yet when pain is experienced in our lives, we don't know how to cope and tend to seek outside ourselves for help.

Despite man's advanced knowledge in science and technology, his (lack of) understanding of the great spiritual teachings, and his unwillingness to develop tools with which to fully understand them, are reflected in this ancient, oriental, allegory:

Not far from Ghur once stood a city tall
Whose denizens were sightless one and all.
A certain Sultan once, when passing nigh,
Had pitched his camp upon the plain hard by,
Wherein, to prove his splendour, rank, and state,
Was kept an elephant most huge and great.
Then in the townsmen's minds arose desire
To know the nature of this creature dire.
Blind delegates by blind electorate
Were therefore chosen to investigate
The beast, and each, by feeling trunk or limb,
Strove to acquire an image clear of him.
Thus each conceived a visionary whole,
And to the phantom clung with heart and soul

When to the city they were come again,
The eager townsmen flocked to them amain.
Each one of them—wrong and misguided all—
Was eager his impressions to recall.
Asked to describe the creature's size and shape,
They spoke, while round about them, all agape,
Stamping impatiently, their comrades swarm
To hear about the monster's shape and form.
Now, for his knowledge each inquiring wight
Must trust to touch, being devoid of sight,
So he who'd only felt the creature's ear,
On being asked: 'How doth its heart appear?'
'Mighty and terrible,' at once replied,
'Like to a carpet, hard and flat and wide!'
Then he who on its trunk had laid his hand
Broke in 'Nay, nay! I better understand!

'Tis like a water-pipe, I tell you true,
Hollow, yet deadly and destructive too';
While he who'd had but leisure to explore
The sturdy limbs which the great beast upbore,
Exclaimed: 'No, no! To all men be it known
'Tis like a column tapered to a cone!'
Each had but known one part, and no man all;
Hence into deadly error each did fall.
No way to know the All man's heart can find:
Can knowledge e'er accompany the blind?

The Blind Men And The Elephant by SANA'I, trans. by E. G. Browne.

All religions of the world (though apparently different) have a common root, and the essence of their teachings is the same.

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Chapter 2 : Know Thyself

Over the doorway at the temple of The Oracle in Greece were inscribed the words "Know Thyself..." It is the maxim of all spiritual philosophies.

The ancient civilisations of India, Egypt, Greece and the Islamic world developed in harmony between materiality and spirituality, until the weaknesses of man brought about their demise. In the West, there developed the thought that man could be all-knowing without recourse to his source, his origins. This thought became developed to a much higher degree than in ancient times as man's material equipment became ever-sophisticated. Man has come close to self-extinction as a result.

The *Blind Men And The Elephant* allegory, written as it was in ancient times, reveals that man has for millennia been making mistakes about his condition. In former times, however, there was much more open access to people of great wisdom, though men of wisdom are still to be found, everywhere. Nevertheless, in those older times, the truth had to be carefully protected by those who really knew, as the truth (it is said) could and can so easily be misused. The truth had to be transmitted carefully, and *sheikh* or *guru* or *pir* (a disciple's spiritual mentor) would be in no hurry to raise the spirituality of their disciples. The disciple could only develop according to the level of his intrinsic awareness of the truth.

In more ancient times, a spiritual aspirant would be advised by his spiritual mentor not to openly disclose his spiritual growth, but this advice did not appear to have an affect on the Sufi Mansur al-Hallaj. Mansur came to believe that he and God had become one and the same, and in a state of ecstasy he had exclaimed, "*Ana al Haq*" ("I am the Truth"). This statement was anathema to the conventional religious Muslim clerics of the day. He was tried and executed in public in Baghdad where they cut him into pieces and then they burnt his remains. But he still kept repeating "I am the Truth" as they kept cutting his arms, legs, tongue and finally his head. He was smiling, even as they chopped off his head.

Mansur wanted to testify of this relationship to God to others thus even asking his fellow Muslims to kill him (Massignon, 79) and accepting his execution, saying that "what is important for the ecstatic is for the One to reduce him to oneness." (Massignon, 87)

In this day and age, it is permissible in Western society to be so outspoken, though many an ordinary person who has announced himself as Jesus has been cast away in a psychiatric hospital in past decades. For a scientist to speak on the subject, his status will raise fewer eyebrows, and Fritjof Capra (a professor of theoretical or modern physics) wrote, in his *The Tao of Physics*:

I was sitting by the ocean one late summer afternoon, watching the waves rolling in and feeling the rhythm of my breathing, when I suddenly became aware of my whole environment as being engaged in a gigantic cosmic dance. Being a physicist, I knew that the sand, rocks, water and air around me were made of vibrating molecules and atoms, and that these consisted of particles which interacted with one another by creating and destroying other particles. I knew also that the Earth's atmosphere was continually bombarded by showers of 'cosmic rays', particles of high energy undergoing multiple collisions as they penetrated the air. All this was familiar to me from my research in high energy physics, but until that moment I had only experienced it through graphs, diagrams and mathematical theories. As I sat on that beach my former experiences came to life; I 'saw' cascades of energy in rhythmic pulses; I 'saw' the atoms of the elements and those of my body participating in this cosmic dance of energy; I felt its rhythm and I 'heard' its

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sound, and at that moment I knew that this was the *Dance of Shiva*, the Lord of Dancers worshipped by the Hindus.¹

Here, then, is a scientist's evidence that everything is not pure materiality, and he is not alone in that thought – I could quote many others. Peter Russell, for example, has published the eminent *From Science to God*.

Fritjof Capra used the word *Tao* in the title of his book. What is *Tao*?

Literally, the word *Tao* (of Chinese origin) means the way, path or road of every nature and its duration within the universe. The development and completion of man's life lies in his ability to modify naturally his spiritual nature in accordance with the *Great Tao*, which is more commonly known as the *Universal Law of Truth*. It is not, however, concerned about the differences between religions and any notion of which might be superior to another. The concept is similar to the idea of *Sanathana Dharma* (the Eternal Way) of India, which forms the basis of Hindu philosophies. *Islam*, though possibly not appearing to be quite of the same all-encompassing philosophy, is a similar concept and means 'submission to God'.

Whether we use the term *Tao* or *Sanathana Dharma* or *Islam* the idea is the same. There is only one God though the paths towards God may vary according to place and time. These paths all provide comparable codes of behaviour and the notions of responsibility and love. The end of the journey (or the goal) is to attain unity with God. This is the end that was obtained by the spiritual masters Jesus and the Buddha.

No religion is an end in itself. All are preparatory or elementary systems and necessary means of instruction, which men need before they are able to understand the higher teaching enabling them to find the Kingdom of Heaven within. Not all religions teach in the same way, but all are designed to prepare man for the knowledge of Truth and as there is only One Truth it is not important how, nor in what way, the lessons are learnt so long as they are learnt. It is, of course, possible for Truth to be found without going through the preparatory courses, but this is very rare; some form of religion is still necessary for the majority and should be established in every country, for where people are gathered together for worship help and comfort can be found.

Jesus said:

I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.

But Jesus did not say to men: "ask someone to show you how to find God". He said:

Seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you;" and "say not Lo here, and Lo there, for the Kingdom of Heaven is within you.

There is only One God: and although many roads lead to Him, there is only One Gate which man must himself unlatch if he would find the God within.

The Gate or Door through which all must go through is called the Christ. By whatever name He may be called in different lands by different peoples, He is the same giver of Life. The name is not important because the name is that given to the form in which the Universal Cosmic Christ chooses to manifest God's all-pervading Love to all men.

¹ With acknowledgments to V. K. Pillay in his book, *Quest for Divinity*.

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Chapter 3 : The Way

By examining the teachings of the *Sufis* (the inner teachings of Islam) whilst in my early 30s, I now feel I was (then) unwittingly looking into the nature of the true teachings of Jesus, but in a form conveyed through Islam. The Sufi teachings appear to me to be essentially the exact equivalent to those taught to the early Gnostic Christians, and which were suppressed by formalist Roman Catholicism 300 years later, and again in the cruel Albigensian Crusades against the Cathars in the Middle Ages. In the Kabbalah of the Jews (and commonly adopted by Christians) we find a parallel teaching.

Gnosticism, despite all the repression of its adherents over many years, is alive and well - and is the practical philosophy for those of mankind that wish to hear! Particularly in the Nag Hammadi Library² can be discovered some of the Gnostic truths that were hidden away by the Essenes³ and others for mankind to find again at some future opportune time. But the transmission has in fact survived through other channels to the present day.

So, what is Gnosticism? What did the earliest Christians believe? There are indications that re-incarnation and vegetarianism were important elements of their belief - perhaps there are many Christians to-day who always suspected that was the case! But Gnosticism does go *much* further - it propounds the idea that it is possible to achieve Unity with God in *this* life, and thereby cease the round of re-incarnation that the soul otherwise (and, usually, unwittingly) experiences.

While some Christians may try to discredit Gnosticism by suggesting that it is teaching that Salvation is found by acquiring certain esoteric knowledge of the intellectual kind, this is far from the truth. The Greeks distinguished clearly between different kinds of knowledge, between the rational and the intuitive, between learning about something and learning by experience of something. Gnosis involves immersing the self experientially in the subject so that the knowledge gained becomes part of one's being. By gaining knowledge in the Gnostic sense, the individual knower is transformed. To know God in the Gnostic sense is to have a direct and living experience of God. It is not all an intellectual process, bypassing as it does, mere opinions, beliefs and the acquisition of information.

Gnosis is closely related in meaning to the Sanskrit word *Jnana* and is probably derived from it. The term was used by Greek Hermetic mystics to describe interior, illuminative insight.⁴

"The Greeks" are mentioned here, and it is reasonable to believe that Pythagoras had substantial contact with the Hindus as well as the Egyptians - other parties of the Gnostic way. Gnosticism is not bound by any one religion.

"Awaken!", is the *Sufi* dictum! The wakefulness called for is from the attachment that one normally has for this (material) world. Jesus said, "I am The Way". But by this he meant that he was the example by which to live and thence to "die" in attitude towards the outer, material, world - the *maya* (illusion) spoken of by the Hindus!

What we observe is not reality itself, but reality as conditioned by the human mind and senses and the various instruments which it uses to extend the senses. [That is,] what we observe is not nature itself but nature exposed to our method of questioning ... Consciousness and physical reality (or empirical reality) should be considered as complementary aspects of reality.⁵

"The Way" *in its ultimate form* is, however, for those who are completely responsible for themselves. It does not mean (it is not necessary) that one should become a monk or a

² Gnostic documents hidden since the time of Jesus

³ A mystical Jewish sect of the time of Jesus, who were inheritors of ancient Gnostic teachings.

⁴ Peter Phipps, "*Greater Than You Know*", 1997

⁵ Bede Griffiths, "*The Marriage of East and West*", 1982.

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nun, but "the Way" involves sincerity, duty, responsibility and loss of ego. "Ego" is the element I have the most difficulty with – particularly as an Aries personality. However, if I wish to lose the anger and irritability and notion of being 'the doer' I sometimes (perhaps often) feel, then it is essential for "ego" to be worked on. Yes, "work" is called for, but the reward and resulting happiness is said to be great. The application of enthusiasm⁶ helps in this objective. As observed by Freke and Gandy in *Jesus and The Goddess*:

Gnosticism is not about avoiding the fact of suffering and retreating into wishful thinking. It is expressing our natural compassion by doing all we can to ameliorate the terrible suffering we encounter ...It is understanding that everything is arising from and returning to the Good. It is trusting that ultimately ... good will come from bad, and choosing to play an active part in that process.

Essentially, the "active part" relates to choosing kindness rather than enmity towards others; recognising that even one's enemies have a story to tell and a right to live at peace. Also the recognition that the spiritual way is one of adventure. Freke and Gandy continue:

...it is clear that Christianity was not always the safe, pre-packaged, off-the-shelf religion it has become. The Christian Way was once travelled by philosophical adventurers who proclaimed life to be an opportunity for self-discovery, for spiritual creativity, for living our own myths. Christianity.....began as a movement of mystical enthusiasts with a beautiful vision of the meaning and mystery of life.

-----oO-----

Do you choose yourself?

Body and soul contain a thousand possibilities out of which you can build many 'I's. But in only one of them is there a congruence of elector and elected. Only one – which you will never find until you have excluded all those superficial and fleeting possibilities of being and doing with which you toy (out of curiosity, wonder or greed) and which hinder you from casting anchor in the experience in the mystery of life, and the consciousness of the talent entrusted to you, which is your I.

Dag Hammarskjöld
Former secretary-general of the United Nations
In "*Markings*", 1963.

⁶ en-"theo"-siasm, meaning to be filled with Godly desire.

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Chapter 4 : In Summary

The Theosophist C. W. Leadbeater made the decisive statement, "A man decides for himself both the length and character of his heaven-life by the causes which he himself generates during his earth-life". This statement, then, reveals what we're on earth for – to prepare ourselves. Nay, better than that, but to spiritually evolve. God's plan is to expand, and that is what is intended we should do as part of God's plan.

God – the creator and maintainer – has provided us with the physical and spiritual means by which to achieve that evolution, and, surely, the round of re-births will ultimately bring us to our true destiny when we wake up to our spiritual reality.

All religions aim at the unity and well being of society. They show that our way of self-realization is through social involvement. All religions preach purity and adherence to Truth. They proclaim that good qualities are essential for us. They all teach oneness and equality. They have all the same goal - but the paths are different. Rules and regulations differ in different religions because the specific needs of the times and circumstances when the founders of the religions came with their missions were different; but this does not mean that one religion is superior or inferior to the other. However, over the years, the interpretation of teachings has become narrow and this has tended to promote strife and discord between followers of different religions.

It could be said that man has been at a real crisis point for some time now. It was not long ago that very serious predictions were made about world shortages of foodstuffs and oil. But those predictions have hardly come to pass, and do not appear to show real signs of doing so despite the (sometimes serious) difficulties and sufferings that occur from time to time. In the past sixty years we also have had the further implied threat of a nuclear holocaust, and continue to be so alarmed on a different basis. But that horror has not manifested itself since 1945.

Is the invisible 'Helping Hand' at work? Has that 'Helping Hand' been further at work elevating man's consciousness towards its proper destiny? I believe it has. I cannot believe that man would be left to destroy himself, despite what evils he has committed. Man has been created for a purpose. Rather than thinking of the worst outcome, perhaps we should consider that there has probably been more than an equal amount of good been done, particularly through the unselfish love of evolved human beings, by their seeking help from God for their fellow man and mankind in general, by action and prayer.

We pursue all sorts of wealth - of scholarship, recognition, money, power, physical health, but do we seek the wealth of God's love? Jesus taught a new way of life based on faith in God and redemption - not through repentance, but through service and love.

If we want bliss we have to give up our pre-occupation with "mine" and "thine". We are all children of one God. One who has love of God fears sin and leads a moral life. This triune principle promotes purity [and unity] of thought, word and deed. It is imperative we cultivate universal love - no religion has spoken against love.

A Theosophist⁷ has written:

One is reminded of a passage in the Bhagavad-Gita (iii.28) where the true sage is represented as holding that "the *gunas* move among the *gunas*". That is to say, the one who truly sees recognizes that in all that happens, whether in a distant place or in the heart of another person or in his own thoughts and feeling, the forces of one vast creative process are at work. Thus beholding a unity and purpose in all that happens, he is increasingly open to an intuitive realization of the one Actor within and behind the whole great work, or of

⁷ Hugh Shearman, *The Theosophist*, 1964

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the one living Purpose which is ever fulfilling Itself through the minutest as well as through the greatest events. This transforming experience enables him to see the picture in successively new and different ways which would previously have been unthinkable to him and thereby to uncover layers of subjective reality hitherto unconscious within him.

It has been said that if a man were to move one step towards God, God would move ten (even one hundred) steps towards the man.

The 'how' is already defined:

Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the final commandment. And a second is like unto it; thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self. On these two commandments hang all the law.

– Matt. 22:37-40

Concerning this statement, Walter Starcke, in *The Gospel of Relativity*, states:

I was surprised to be given this clue in terms of Christian scriptures because up until this time the Bible made no sense to me. But when I saw that whenever Jesus talked about "righteous judgment" he was talking about right identification, that whenever he talked about love he was talking about seeing true identity, the Bible opened up. I saw that the entire Bible was nothing more than an explanation of the identity dilemma which creates the entire human scene, and that every principle Jesus gave was about how to solve the dilemma so that we could be free.

Whenever you read the Bible see if everything, in one way or another, doesn't relate to either the cause or the solution of the identity crisis.

I know it sounds too simple to believe, but total freedom, eternal life, complete fulfilment, and actual transcendence over material limitations are attained by one thing and one thing alone—by resolving the identity crisis. When you really know who or what your human identity is, and who or what your God identity is, you are free. This is done when you consciously realize how to comprehend the *relative* nature of the two commandments. ...

Certainly absolutes exist; no one is denying that nor denying that it is necessary to comprehend them in order eventually to experience them. But it is a stumbling block when one expects to find absolutes at the finite, or less than absolute, level. By knowing the absolutes, and then by knowing the finite, it is possible to see how they relate. It is possible to see how the finite expresses the absolute in less than absolute terms, and in that double-thread way lies the answer.

Keep in mind, however, that when I talk about the double thread I am *not* talking about two threads. I am talking about one truth, one thread, made up of two strands. One strand is the absolute spiritual identity, and one is the less-than-absolute human identity. The answer lies in not rejecting either of these strands, but in combining them through right identification until freedom is attained.

You might wonder why man hasn't done this in the past if it is so simple. But there's a reason. It takes the ability to "double think," and man has only now evolved to the point where he can consciously do that.

Up until now man hasn't been able to think of two things at once, not really. If he sees the front of a house, he can't see the back. When he goes around to the back, he loses sight of the front. But now we are *developing* a new sense —the ability to sense or hold the picture of the front in our consciousness while we actually look at the back in such a way that we retain a whole picture. It's sort of like having the ability to superimpose one on the other without confusing either. And it's the key to thinking relatively.

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Appendix: A Selected Bibliography

The following selected publications reflect recent key research and ideas in the realm of spirituality:

From Science to God, Peter Russell, ISBN 1577314093

Gnostics (The), Tobias Churton, George Weidenfeld & Nicolson Limited 1987, ISBN 0297791060

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Gospel of Relativity (The), Walter Starcke, Turnstone Books 1974, ISBN 0855000376

Greater Than You Know, Peter Phipps, Sathya Sai Publications of New Zealand 1997, ISBN 095833384X

Jesus and The Goddess, Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy, Harper Collins 2001, ISBN 000710071X

Jesus the Man, Barbara Thiering, Corgi Books 1993 and 1996, ISBN 0552139505

Jesus the Master Builder, Gordon Strachan, Floris Books 1998 and 1999, ISBN 0863152759.

Jesus Prophet of Islam, Ahmad Thomson and another, Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd 1996, ISBN 189794053X

Magi, The Quest for a Secret Tradition, Adrian G. Gilbert, 1996.

Marriage of East and West (The), Bede Griffiths, Fount Paperbacks 1983 and 1985, ISBN 0872431053

Sufis (The), Idries Shah, Anchor 1971, ISBN 0385079664