

A Christian Critique of Adyashanti’s “Resurrecting Jesus” by Philip St. Romain, M.S., D. Min.

Adyashanti is a name unknown to most Christians, even to those interested in contemplative spirituality. He was born in 1962 and named Stephen Gray, re-naming himself Adyashanti (Sanskrit for “primordial peace) around 1996, after having experienced a Zen awakening and subsequently beginning to teach a small group of students. His influence has grown through the years, including numerous CDs, DVDs, retreats, and now a YouTube channel that streams a number of his teachings. The website gururating.org rates him 4/5 in terms of influence, so that says something about his status in certain circles. He is sometimes affectionately called Adya by those who comment on his YouTubes, so I will do the same as well.

I was relatively unfamiliar with Adya’s writings and teachings until recently, when I became involved with a couple of social media groups that were dialoguing about mystical experiences from a variety of perspectives. Several participants fondly referenced teachings by Adya, and I listened to some of his YouTube teachings, enjoying his gentle, friendly approach; his emphasis on love, discernment, present-moment awareness, and related topics also resonated. He occasionally mentioned Jesus, and of course there were the usual references to humans being divine that one often hears in Easternish teachers, but that was not unexpected. I’ve learned through the years to either never-mind those, or to hear them as ways of speaking about divine union. I am convinced that there are many types of religious experiences and ways of expressing connection with the divine, so it was interesting to hear Adya describing his own awakening and unitive experiences.

Then I became aware of his book, *Resurrecting Jesus*. It came up in a social media discussion about Christian mysticism, and the participant who mentioned it stated that he agreed with Adya’s approach to “the Jesus story,” as he called it, and that it was best to consider what the New Testament taught about Jesus in a mythical or metaphorical sense. Furthermore, it made sense to him that one of the most important takeaways is that Jesus revealed that we are all, like him, both human and divine. A teacher (Craig Holliday) who’s been deeply influenced by Adyashanti puts it even more strongly: that we are 100% human and 100% divine. I looked up *Resurrecting Jesus* (Sounds True Publisher, 2014) on Amazon.com and saw that it had over 700 reviews, with a 4.7 out of 5 overall rating. Many of the 5’s

noted that what he taught was what they believed Christianity should be teaching instead of its tired old doctrines on theology and morality. Well, OK, but I wasn't sure that Adya's prescription was the best way forward. So I bought the book to learn exactly what he had in mind.

And what a muddle it is, with sparkling and beautiful insights in places, interesting reflections in others, but also an abundance of misinformation and false teaching concerning the message and meaning of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. This book will do nothing to motivate anyone to become a Christian or join a church, and that's tragic!

"Well," some might say, "he's only sharing his opinion, so what's wrong with that?"

Absolutely nothing, of course. Only, when you're widely regarded as an enlightened spiritual master, people are more likely to consider your teaching on even topics related to other religions as enlightened spiritual analyses.

In this work, I will share an extensive review of *Resurrecting Jesus*, hoping to point out some of the areas that are in direct conflict with Christian teaching, and how an alternative Christian perspective can be understood.

Adyashanti's Christian Awakening

What's an enlightened Zen teacher doing writing a book about Jesus anyway?

As in all his books and audio messages, Adya is generous in sharing of his journey to Jesus. He describes how his Zen practice left him feeling dry, so he began reading the mystical literature of Christianity. He came upon St. Therese Lisieux's autobiography, *The Story of a Soul* (late 19th C.), and "found myself quite literally falling in love with this saint . . . and when I say I fell in love with her, I mean I *really* fell in love, like when you get a crush in high school (p. 7)." Her love of God awakened a heart-opening in him that he'd been missing in Zen.

It seems that Adya didn't know much about Christianity prior to his reading of St. Therese, so he began to read more Christian literature, especially the mystics. The spiritual sensitivity he'd developed through Zen practice also enabled him to discern a difference in the transmission of divine presence coming through Christianity.

In Europe, all you have to do is walk through the doors of those old churches and you immediately feel a direct transmission, very different from the transmission of Buddhism or Hinduism or Islam or any religion (p. 12).

Experientially, he knows something good and beautiful is made available to the human race through the Christian religion. “When we open to this Christ presence, it can evoke an inner sense of vitality and of boundless love (p. 12).”

The next step, you might think, would be to actually begin in earnest a search for a church community to connect with, then religious instruction, bible study, and all the sorts of disciplines countless Christian converts have done through the centuries.

That didn’t happen.

What he describes next in the book is his admiration for the ritual of the Catholic Mass, and what he thinks it’s supposed to be. He attended one, but didn’t like the homily on abortion, and *that was that!*

That was the moment I realized, “OK, I guess the Christian path isn’t going to be my chosen path.” I wanted something really deep, and I could find it in the ancient mystics, but I couldn’t find it in a living, modern church. (p. 14).

Well, he didn’t try very hard, did he?

There were other Catholic parishes, the Orthodox liturgy, and numerous Protestant traditions that might have resonated. Additionally, religious communities of men and women (including monastics) often welcome others to join them at Mass, as do Catholic retreat centers. Adya’s search for a Christian community has to go down as one of the most *pathetic* I’ve ever read about, and I cannot help but wonder how his sharing about this has influenced other readers drawn to Christianity. If such an advanced spiritual teacher finds church affiliation so unacceptable, then why bother?

By way of contrast, I will mention here an encounter I had with a Vedanta monk sometime in the 1990s in Philadelphia, where I was a speaker at a conference on Kundalini issues. I do not recall his name or his monastery, but he shared that he’d come to sense the presence of Christ in his practice, and he was going to take five years away from the monastery to experience the Christian pathway as a member of a church. He’d read a few books, but decided that actually *becoming a Christian* was the only way he could be sure that this was his calling. Perhaps it could be integrated somehow with his Vedanta practices, but he’d already set those aside

and was beginning to pray Christian prayers and practice Christian disciplines instead. He wanted to know if I had any suggestions for him, and I had a few, but was so impressed by this man's humility that I couldn't even remember what I'd told him the next day.

Now back to Adya: after rejecting any formal affiliation with Christianity, he seems to have turned his attention more completely to Zen, but now with an abiding appreciation for the distinctive communication of love Christ had brought to the world, and to him.

The Mythical Gospels

Jesus of Nazareth was a real person who lived during a specific time in history; no serious historian contests this. Within a few years after his crucifixion by Pontius Pilate — the Roman governor of Judea from 26 - 36 A.D. — a religious movement begun by Jesus' followers was spreading throughout the Roman empire. The earliest writings of their beliefs date back to Paul's letters to the Thessalonians around 50 A.D., and the four gospels found in the New Testament were in circulation before the end of the century, along with other letters by Paul and many other writings. Prior to these writings, there was a robust oral tradition conveying the teachings and deeds of Jesus, with reflection on the meaning of his crucifixion and profession of the belief that he had risen from the dead. All of this is well-known and taught widely by scholars who have studied this period of early Christianity.

Early Christianity borrowed from Judaism a process for reflecting on scripture that is still useful today. Sometimes called "the senses of scripture," it engages the oral and written message from several angles:

- a. *Literal/historical* — What really happened? This approach makes uses of historical, linguistic, cultural and other studies to try to answer this question.
- b. *Allegorical* — The deeper meaning hidden in the text.
- c. *Moral* — What the scriptures tell us about how to act.
- d. *Anagogical* — Where are we headed? What's the ultimate goal?

Some approaches also makes use of a *theological* lens — what the message tells us about God. Still others reflect on the *spiritual or mystical* meaning of the message. We find these considerations at work in the writings of Paul and other

non-biblical writers in early Christianity. For them, one could not really claim to have a full understanding of scripture without considering these different approaches.

I bring this up as a point of contrast with Adyashanti's approach to scripture, which he calls *mythic*. In one short paragraph in his Prologue (p. xv), he basically says it's pointless to try to understand the historical Jesus because scholars are all over the map on this, so he is judging the literal/historical aspect of the story of Jesus to be a pointless exercise in futility. He is clearly wrong about that, however. People who had witnessed the deeds and teachings of Jesus were still around when the New Testament was written and no doubt would have rejected any text that strayed significantly from their memory. Nevertheless, Adya states that he prefers a mythic approach, stating that the story of Jesus will come more alive

. . . when we can let go of the obsession with history, of what did or didn't happen (p. xv). In the end, it doesn't really matter whether we read the Bible as historically factual or whether we read the story as mythic and metaphorical . . . Each of us, hopefully, looks at the story in our own way, in a way that speaks to us. (p. xvi)

I'm thinking that for the early Christians who were martyred for their faith, historical considerations mattered a great deal more than this. What do you think?

Basically, then, Adya has excused himself from any disciplined engagement with the various senses of scripture except, perhaps, the allegorical and spiritual, to some extent. He will, however, use Christianity's teachings about Jesus found in the Gospels, especially Mark, as a point of departure for telling what he calls *the Jesus story*, ignoring the historical, moral, anagogic, and theological meanings and constraints found in the Gospels.

Adya seems quite confident that his readers (or those who've heard him lecture on this) will, through the lens of his enlightened and enthusiastic insights, come to a deeper and more authentic understanding of Jesus and his message than anything the Christian church has been teaching.

I think the churches in this country need to be revitalized; they need that challenging presence of Jesus that says, "It's important that you realize the truth of your *being*. There are profound consequences to living in darkness.

You ask where, exactly, Jesus taught about the truth of our *being*? I can't think of any passage where that was the main point, much less how not teaching this has

been a point of neglect for the “churches in this country.” There was no biblical reference to support the statement, either. Actually, there are very few in the entire book. This is a story, not a study.

Jesus and the Good News

There’s no doubt in my mind that Adyashanti has a deep admiration and respect for Jesus. This comes through in page after page as he reflects on many of the incidents described in the Gospels. He also rightly notes how Jesus’ life and teachings differ significantly from most Eastern teachers, especially in his exercise of prophetic encounter and his full embrace of this life in the body. Without the interpretive constraints of history and theology, however, Adya’s allegorical interpretation of Jesus quickly goes off into the weeds.

First, let’s keep in mind that Jews and Christians (including Jesus) are *substance dualists*; we make a real distinction between God and creatures. God is the source of a creature’s ongoing existence, and so there is a vital connection between God and creatures, but everything created by God is a new being, not-God, an expression of divine creativity. In the case of humans, we are also blessed with a conscious intelligence and freedom that enables us to be friends (or enemies) of God. A real *interpersonal relationship* becomes possible, and all references to union with God in the Bible and the Christian mystical literature are about *that* and nothing else. As St. John of the Cross noted in *Of The Ascent of Mount Carmel*:

In order, then, to understand what is meant by this union whereof we are treating, it must be known that God dwells and is present substantially in every soul, even in that of the greatest sinner in the world. And this kind of union is ever wrought between God and all the creatures, for in it He is preserving their being: if union of this kind were to fail them, they would at once become annihilated and would cease to be. And so, when we speak of union of the soul with God, we speak not of this substantial union which is continually being wrought, but of the union and transformation of the soul with God, which is not being wrought continually, but only when there is produced that likeness that comes from love. . . (2nd Stanza, Verse 5, #3)

This likeness, as St. John calls it, is not an identification at the level of being, but a transformation through grace in which humans become more and more God-like in character, behavior, and even knowledge, to some degree. As St. Paul notes

in 1 Corinthians 2, the gift of the Holy Spirit enables in us a sharing in the mind of Christ himself. The union effected is relational and participative.

This is all so basic in Christian theology and spirituality that there's simply no excuse for Adya to not know it. He has assured us that he has read the Christian mystics many times, but somehow, through his reading, he also picked up a notion that there was a diversity of opinion on such basic matters. "Different mystics had very different takes on the relationship between Jesus and God, or on their relationship with Jesus (p. 2)." No references are cited, so one wonders what he's talking about, here. But it's typical for Adya that mystics, not the Christian community, know best about these matters.

For Christians, *Jesus himself is the Good News*, the Messiah awaited by Jews for centuries, and the one who connects us with God in his own Spirit. He is unique in all the world of people by possessing the divine nature in a manner that no one has done before, or since. This is why Jesus can connect humanity and divinity unlike anyone else; both are so profoundly and intimately joined in his person that his humanity exists for divinity and vice versa. He is truly human, but in him we find a new humanity — a new Adam, or start for the human race. Christian focus on Jesus and transforming our humanity through the living contact we have with him through faith, prayer, service, community, and Sacrament opens us to the blessing of the Spirit he shares with us. That's what Christianity is about.

Adyashanti has no difficulty affirming the full humanity and divinity of Jesus, but he has little use for the rest of what I've just written. For him, the good news brought by Jesus is that *we can, like him, awaken to the fullness of our own divine nature as human beings*.

Spiritual autonomy is knowing who and what you are — knowing that you are divine *being* itself, knowing that the essence of you is divinity. You are moving in the world of time and space, appearing as a human being but nonetheless you are eternal, divine *being*, the timeless breaking through and operating within the world of time (p. 18).

But surely, you say, he cannot mean this. What about the fact of contingency, that we don't create ourselves, that our existence is received moment-by-moment from our Creator?

Reflecting on John 3:16 and God's gift to the world of his Son, Adya writes that:

Every verse and episode of the Jesus story is a metaphor for the human experience of awakening. . . And when you reorient your life toward this realization, then you understand: *you* so loved the world, *you* had so much compassion, *you* had so much love that you poured yourself into life, and that pouring forth was your birth (p. 50).

Every *you* in the quote above is substituted for God. *We created ourselves!* How about that?

We are very far from the teachings of Jesus and Christianity, here. Not even the most generous allowance for allegorical interpretation of the Gospels allows for this degree of misrepresentation of the message and meaning of the Jesus story. Adya's Zen does not explain this interpretation. Zen can co-exist with any religion; I've known a couple of Catholic priests who were Zen masters in recognized lineages. Neither do the Gospels, writings of Paul, or the Christian mystics stand with Adya. Philosophically and theologically, he is closest to Hinduism and its teachings on the divine Brahma and indwelling Atman being one and the same. While Christianity does indeed teach that we are not separate from the divine, and that the divine dwells within, it differs from Hinduism in its view of what creatures are and in many other significant areas, which is why the two have maintained themselves as distinctive religious pathways. No, Adya is on his own, here, and so one needs to decide what to think about his teaching.

What Does It Mean To Be Divine?

Why did the early Christians consider Jesus divine?

It was because he demonstrated behavior that went far beyond what humans were capable of doing. He calmed storms, for example, multiplied loaves and fish, raised the dead, healed people born blind, and, after his crucifixion, he rose from the dead. These and other behaviors give expression to *divine attributes*. Most historians acknowledge that Jesus was known as a wonder-worker, and that this was one of the reasons he was followed by huge crowds.

Regarding these miraculous signs worked by Jesus, Adyashanti steers clear of any historical or theological considerations. As in the rest of the book, he views them mythically, primarily as metaphors for our own psycho-spiritual development. Besides, he tells us he's got little use for miracles. "To me, whether the miracles described in the Gospels really happened or not isn't ultimately an important

question (p. 108).” He then goes on to speak of a variety of “ordinary miracles” we just have to open our eyes to see. “The more we open to the reality of our own divinity, the more we start to perceive life as a miraculous event (p. 109).” I’m in full agreement concerning the importance of learning to see and appreciate the wonder of the ordinary, beginning with existence itself, but they do not signify the presence of divine nature in humans.

So what, then, does Adyashanti mean when he speaks of “our own divinity.” Why does he believe we have a divine nature?

It seems that what he refers to as divinity is the sense of a background, continuous, unchanging presence to our own lives that we can experience.

When we look back on the arc of our lives, from the time we were born to the present moment, each of us can touch upon the intuition that there’s something about us that is unchanged. Throughout all the ups and downs and changes of life, something is now as it ever was. To touch upon this is to begin to experience eternity within (p. 33).

Again and again in his books and teachings, he refers to this *inner witness* of our lives as divinity, and it seems that our possession of this awareness implies to him that we must be in possession of a divine nature. I can’t find any other reason why Adya believes we are divine.

But what if this background witness consciousness is not God, but something else, like a non-reflecting aspect of the consciousness of the human spiritual soul? That’s the view of Catholic writers on epistemology and spirituality like Bernard Lonergan and Daniel Helminiak. I have made extensive use of their work in my own book, *God and I: Exploring the Connections Between God, Self, and Ego* (Contemplative Ministries, Inc., 2016). Here’s a key quote from Helminiak:

Let’s say that I am intensely engaged in the contents of my consciousness -- ideas, feelings, sensations, deliberations etc. After awhile, I can become disengaged from this involvement and consult my memory concerning what was going on. When I do so, I discover that I am capable of not only retracing my steps (not always perfectly, of course), but that there is also an sense of presence in connection with the memory -- that these considerations not only happened, but that “I” was the one involved in them. Indeed, the common thread running through all manner of experiences and deliberations is that “I” am the one who is present to these operations. To be able to report your experiences is to have a sense of self. Nonreflecting awareness “of” oneself as the experiencing subject

links the flow of ongoing experiences as the experiences of a somebody. So nonreflecting consciousness is the key to the human sense of personal continuity and identity. Said in other terms, it is a spiritual nature that makes human animals persons.

(Daniel Helminiak, *The Human Core of Spirituality: Mind as Psyche and Spirit* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 70.)

By “spiritual nature,” Helminiak is not referring to God, but to the human spiritual soul, which is the animating and organizational intelligence of a human individual. The soul is not-God, but receives its existence from God moment-by-moment, and this first arising of its awareness is the background witness, a constant and peaceful experience that we can learn to connect with.

All of which is to say that Adya’s basis for affirming a divine nature for human beings is highly debatable! A strong case can be made that the non-reflecting background awareness he considers divinity is really the human spirit, not eternal Presence. One is free to disagree with me (Lonergan, Helminiak and others) about this, of course, but to do so one would need to articulate an anthropology that limits human awareness and experience to a degree that discounts or excludes what Helminiak has articulated above. Nowhere does Adya do so in this book; his view of human nature is nowhere articulated. Therefore, it is reasonable to disagree with his contention that humans possess a divine nature, and that this is not what Jesus taught when he referred to God, nor is it what the early Christians had in mind when they affirmed a divine nature at work in Jesus.

Adyashanti’s Critique of Church Teaching

From the foregoing, it’s obvious that Adya is significantly at odds with basic Christian teachings regarding how scripture is interpreted, the mission and message of Jesus, and whether human beings have a divine nature or not. *Resurrecting Jesus* also projects a negative perspective concerning the Christian religion and church life.

Regarding the decline in church attendance in Europe through the years, he notes:

That tells us that the church as a whole has failed to reinterpret the story and message to remain current and *vital*, as something that speaks to our hearts,

that speaks to those mysterious impulses within us, that allows us to lean into the mystery of our *being* (p. xvii).

Let's see: as far as we know, he's been to only two Masses in his life, but will now presume to tell us what church services are doing right, and wrong? Seriously?

Church leaders have also obviously noted a decline in church attendance and have studied this for decades, with many factors explaining the decline. Making no reference to any such research, Adya's "solution" is to *reinterpret* the Christian message, making it more about "the mystery of our *being*," not God. That would indeed be a reinterpretation, maybe even a new religion.

Reflecting on the meaning of Jesus' experience of transfiguration, Adya states:

If we believe that it only has to do with Jesus and not with us, if we believe that he's the one and only God-man, then we misread the entire story. For two thousand years, this story has in large part been misread. When the early church decided, in 325, to establish the articles of Christian faith in the Nicene Creed, Jesus became the only begotten son. Less than three hundred years after the death of Jesus, the church fathers separated Jesus' reality from you and me. They said, "Only Jesus is the God-man. Only Jesus is a combination of divinity and humanity; the most that we can do is to have the right relationship with him." At that moment, the church itself cut humanity off from entry into its own transcendent being (p. 119-120).

First of all, Christians believed Jesus was the only begotten Son of God long before the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. For example, there's the famous quote in John 3:16, written sometime before the end of the 1st century AD.

For God so loved the world that He gave *His only begotten Son*, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (New King James Version)

As we noted earlier in this critique, Adya gave this passage a mythical, nondual spin. For him, it means we were sent by God to this life as Jesus was — that we even incarnated ourselves via our own divine nature (p. 50).

Another affirmation of Jesus' exclusive Sonship is expressed in The Old Roman Symbol (later became the Apostles' Creed), from the early 2nd C. This was a common profession of faith prayed during liturgy and before Baptisms:

I believe in God the Father almighty;
 and in Christ Jesus *His only Son*, our Lord,
 Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,
 Who under Pontius Pilate was crucified and buried,
 on the third day rose again from the dead,
 ascended to heaven,
 sits at the right hand of the Father,
 whence He will come to judge the living and the dead;
 and in the Holy Spirit,
 the holy Church,
 the remission of sins,
 the resurrection of the flesh
 (the life everlasting)
 - Wikipedia

Numerous early church writings refer to the Sonship of Jesus as special to him alone rather than as paradigmatic to us all. Adyashanti has a problem with this core Christian belief, but this is clearly *his problem*, not the fault of any misinterpretation or misunderstanding of what Jesus or the early church taught.

In the above quote by him from pp. 119-120 of his book, he states that the 325 AD Nicean formulation about Jesus as the only begotten Son somehow “cut humanity off from entry into its own transcendent being.” Whatever he might mean by this isn’t stated, but it seems he cannot imagine any possibility of union between humans and the divine unless humans also have a divine nature. It’s as though he’s saying, “how can we know and experience God unless we are also divine?” Christianity’s answer is that in Jesus Christ, God connects with us and vice versa through Jesus’ sacred humanity! *It is the human nature of Jesus that we hold in common with God rather than some supposed divine nature that we and God possess.* That’s why Jesus, the God-Man, is central in Christianity.

The Christians mystics whom Adya claims to have read go into great detail concerning how to grow in this Christic connection through faith, prayer, study, Sacraments, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Apparently, this kind of good news is judged as inadequate or “dualistic” in Adya’s teaching. Indeed, it seems he can’t comprehend how the distinction between God and creatures (including humans) taught in Christianity can be understood in any other way except affirming “separation,” which is like the most horrible thing ever in his mind! His ignorance of

Christian teaching on creatures' natural union with God is not the fault of the church, however. That's also entirely on him!

After reading this book, I was left with the impression that Adyashanti is theologically clueless, which is why he recognizes no connection between theology and experience. He also seems to have no appreciation for the liberating value of religious truths such as those expressed in doctrines, and the manner in which such teaching informs our perspectives on many kinds of topics, including faith, moral living, relationships, and meaning. Religious truth is like the proverbial finger pointing to the divine moon, and more! It is a manner in which our intellectual consciousness participates in divine life, giving rise to spiritual gifts like wisdom, understanding, and knowledge (see Is 11:1-3), all obviously great values in themselves. While it's true that some focus on doctrines to the exclusion of spirituality, it's also straw-mannishly fallacious to take the position that people who care about sound teaching are "only in their heads." Many of the great theologians in Christianity were also mystics: e.g., Sts. Thomas Aquinas, Catherine of Sienna, Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, Dons Scotus, and many others.

Insisting that a core teaching of a world religion is wrong because you don't really understand or agree with it might sound arrogant to some (like me!), but I suppose when one is considered enlightened, such a character defect is considered unlikely? Generally, what most of us do when we come upon a significant religious disagreement is we recognize that such a pathway is not for us, and we move on. We don't say that the religion is wrong and ought to reinterpret and reformulate its doctrines to suit us — at least that's how I see it. How about you?

Closing Remarks

Christianity as lived out through the centuries has been imperfect, but it is far from being a failed religion, which seems to be implied in this book. It is the largest of the world religions, with almost 2.4 billion members of one church or another. The Roman Catholic Church is the largest Christian group with over 1.3 billion members. There's no knowing what the experience of all these Christians are like, of course, but it's reasonable to think that *hundreds of millions of people around the world experience meaning from their Christian faith and membership in a community*. That matters!

It's also worth pointing out that Christian institutions are directly responsible for innumerable outreaches in the arena of education, health care, and poverty relief. According to Wikipedia, the Roman Catholic Church is the largest non-governmental provider of health care services in the world, with 5,500 hospitals, 18,000 clinics, 16,000 homes for the elderly and those with special needs, with 65% of these outreaches located in developing countries. "By their fruits shall you know them (his followers)," Jesus said in Mt. 7:16. Christianity has lots of good fruit to show as evidence of its contact with God's loving Spirit.

Mystical experience seems to be the primary concern of Adyashanti, and Christianity values this as well. But the wisdom of the ages has also demonstrated that there are countless men and women in every religion who are good and loving but who do not seem to be mystical types. Most Christians I know, including my spiritual directees, are not mystics. But many are in touch with that same loving Spirit that Adya came to know through St. Therese's writings. The life of God is indeed communicated to us through deep, interior silence, but also through other people, creation, culture, bible study, prayer, service, art, and countless other ways. People with an active life and spirituality are often very much in touch with God, as evidenced by the fruits of the Spirit in their lives (see Gal. 5:22-25). Adya seems either unaware of or uninterested in this more active manifestation of Christian spirituality.

All throughout Christianity, Jesus Christ is revered as the only begotten son of God. Christians look to Jesus not only for guidance in living, but for ongoing spiritual empowerment. We believe he is risen and ascended, still present to us, for "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Heb. 13:8)." We pray to him as our Lord and spiritual Master, and come to know him as our friend. I don't know that there are many people in all of Christianity who believe, as Adya teaches, that they are really divine as Jesus was divine. If they were to hold and promote such a belief, they would not really be Christians, but heretics, for they would be blaspheming one of our most basic core beliefs. *It goes without saying that Adyashanti is not really a Christian, and what he teaches is not Christian, either.* It's a kind of New Age (Vedanta-Lite) spirituality.

One of the most serious problems with *Resurrecting Jesus* is that there is absolutely nothing in it to encourage a relational connection to Jesus, no mention of how Jesus has dealt with sin and evil, mostly criticism of Christian liturgies and institutional ministry, and no encouragement for anyone to join a church. Heck, I

doubt that anyone would even be moved to believe in God or pray to God after reading this, as such would be “dualistic.” Adya seems to have no prayer life of this sort. Jesus did, however, and he is the model for Christians.

The Christian church is referred to in scripture as the Bride of Christ (Eph 5:22-33; Rev 22:17). It is also a kind of living mode of his presence. The ascended Jesus told Saul that persecution of the church was persecuting him (Acts 9:4) and this no doubt catalyzed Paul’s theology of the mystical body of Christ. The idea of being a Christian without being part of a church makes little sense, but don’t expect this book to nudge you in that direction. Quite the contrary!

A final comment concerns Cynthia Bourgeault’s affirming Foreword. She is an Episcopal minister and a popular author and speaker on themes related to Christian contemplative spirituality. I’m thinking her name brought some degree credibility to Adya’s book, encouraging those who like her own work to consider his. I waited to read the Foreword until I’d first read the book and found, there, some surprising statements:

Adya is not a biblical scholar, nor has he spent long years in Christian schools of religion mastering the complex jargon and precise formulations that would make him au courant in the eyes of academic Christology. . . Those of us who have been trained as “professional” scholars, exegetes, critics, and commentators would be well advised for forgive him the odd scholarly faux-pas . . .

Yes, there are numerous misinterpretations of scripture in this book — so many that I just finally decided to never mind and focus, primarily, on the issues I’ve covered. However, I don’t understand why Bourgeault seemingly excuses Adya from any responsibility to learn more about Christian teachings that he will choose to strongly criticize. Anyone presuming to write a book about the meaning of Jesus’ teaching ought to have a little more humility and do some study. I just typed “divine nature of Jesus” into an Internet search engine and the top results were good resources. His ignorant comments about the Council of Nicaea indicate that he’s done very little study on this and other related topics, assuming, it seems, that his own enlightened opinions ought to take priority.

He is able to see Jesus at something of the level Jesus is operating at.
 Sorry, but I don’t think Adyashanti is anywhere close to operating at the same spiritual level as Jesus. Furthermore, Jesus didn’t teach that humans have a divine

nature in the sense that Adya does. He proposed himself, not some supposed inner divinity we possess, as our transformative connection with God. Why blur this distinction?

. . . Jesus himself is a nondual teacher, arguably the first nondual teacher ever seen in the West.

Well, not really! So, yeah, *arguably*.

The very concept of non duality itself, as far as Christian theology goes, can barely be said to exist.

Right! And that's a good thing!

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Philip St. Romain, M.S., D. Min. is the author of 25 books on Christian prayer, theology, and spirituality, including *Kundalini Energy and Christian Spirituality*, *Here Now in Love: The Roots of Christian Mysticism*, and *God and I: Exploring the Connections Between God, Self and Ego*. Since 1997, he has worked as a spiritual director and retreat leader with the team at Heartland Center for Spirituality in Great Bend, KS. He is married for 46 years and is the father of three grown children. For more information about him and his ministry, see:

<https://shalomplace.com>

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A Few Recommended Resources

Christian Zen: A Way of Meditation, by William Johnston. Harper & Row, 1979.

God and I: Exploring the Connections Between God, Self, and Ego, by Philip St. Romain. Lulu Press, 2016.

God, Creation, and Spirituality, by Philip St. Romain. 20 min. YouTube video.

God, Zen, and the Intuition of Being, by James Arraj. Inner Growth Books, 1988.

The Human Core of Spirituality: Mind as Psyche and Spirit, by Daniel Helminiak.
State University of New York Press, 1996.

The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ, by Philip St. Romain. 25 min. YouTube video.

Zen and the Birds of Appetite, by Thomas Merton. New Directions, 1968.

Zen Catholicism, by Dom Aelred Graham. Crossroad Publishers, 1994.