

24-12 Reflection 03

Preparing your way

In times past when the human mind was much more imaginative than it is now, the spiritual path was described mainly in the form of stories such as fairy tales, myths, and legends. When we can let such stories, which carry universal truth, touch us profoundly, then we will change inwardly. It is at this point that the images from the primordial wisdom become etched into the subconscious.

Modern man, even with his more rational and individualized consciousness, can also experience a healing, transforming influence from such stories. Even a more powerful effect can be realized from these stories than from mere explanations because symbols impact the human psyche in a way that differs greatly from rational considerations and intellectual concepts. For almost two thousand years the written stories about the life of Jesus of Nazareth have deeply impressed humanity. These stories present us with puzzles, with closed doors that can be opened only with the key that is to be found in 'man's duality'. Only then can the riddles become 'glad tidings' (Gospel means 'good news').

Of the many gospels that were written, ultimately only four were included in the Bible. Of these, only Matthew and Luke describe the birth of Jesus. The birth narrative in Matthew is not quite comparable with Luke's account. Mark and John did not write about the physical birth of Jesus but began almost immediately with the transcendental birth of Christ at the baptism in the Jordan River.

We can see the life of Jesus described in the Gospels as a meticulous representation of a spiritual path that every human being can follow. From this point of view, the Gospels are symbolic records of inner processes, and the characters represent aspects of both the outer and the inner human being.

The Christmas narrative, the birth story of Jesus, is the beginning of a much larger story. It is the story of Jesus who grows up, who heals and works wonders, who chooses his disciples, and whose physical life finally ends at Golgotha, followed by the resurrection. It is the story of a journey through the outer world toward the world that lies beyond the inner horizon, the world of the Spirit. In The Aquarian Gospel, the story of that journey begins with the birth of Mary.

In addition to 'bitterness' or 'sadness' the name Mary also means 'star of the sea'. In earlier times the course of a ship was derived from the positions of the stars. The birth of Mary-within-us grants to our lives a new star, a new destination. How else should we be able to cross the inner sea and find the entrance to the inner passage?

The great nostalgia

Mary can be seen as the inexplicable but unshakeable certainty that there exists a higher order of life and a great human dignity. The certainty of that other life also includes the great promise that we will be able to reach that goal. It manifests itself as a feeling which The Book of Mirdad (written by Mikhail Naimy) refers to as 'the great nostalgia'. That nostalgia

is full of unborn forms but still has a very special purpose. In chapter 31 of The Book of Mirdad, we read about this:

Like mist is the Great Nostalgia. Emitted by the heart, it shuts away the heart, as mist, effused by sea and land, obliterates both land and sea. And also, as the mist bereaves the eye of visible reality making itself the sole reality, so this Nostalgia subdues the feelings of the heart and makes itself the feeling paramount. And seemingly so formless, and aimless, and blind as the mist, yet like the mist it teems with the forms unborn, is clear of sight and very definite of purpose.

The high reality of life 'beyond the horizon' will inevitably make itself known to those who feel themselves alienated from the world around them. This nostalgia lifts the heart to a higher plane and closes it off from the aridity and flimsy appearances of the outer life. Then there is a willingness and openness to become the 'disciple of the soul' and to listen to the inner voice that indicates a completely different direction. In the Gospel of Luke and in The Aquarian Gospel, Jesus's birth is preceded by the announcement and the birth of John, who later becomes John the Baptist.

John is born from the old priest Zacharias and his aged wife Elizabeth. Every human being who has arrived at his or her border of life, his or her own year zero, is a Zacharias/Elizabeth human being. Head and heart no longer know where to turn. They become silent. Life experiences in the outer world turned out to be fruitless, 'childless'. In reality, this 'old age' and apparent barrenness carry the signs of exceptional maturity and a fertile ground for something new: John ...

Something special happens: during his work in the temple, Zacharias hears the voice of the angel Gabriel telling him that the prophecy will be fulfilled, that Elijah will be the precursor of the Lord, and that his wife Elizabeth will bear him a son whom he should name John.

It came to pass as Zacharias stood before the Lord and burned the incense in the Holy Place, that Gabriel came and stood before his face. And Zacharias was afraid; he thought that some great evil was about to come upon the Jews.

Discovering the aridity of our existence and inwardly recognizing another reality can have the purifying effect of a shock. The forces from the field of the Soul penetrate into the silenced personality. And deep down within lives the awareness that a great change is about to come, that from that moment on nothing will remain the same.

Then Gabriel turns to Elizabeth "as she was in the silence of her home" and announces John's birth to her as well. John, the forerunner, is born out of our increasingly fruitless pursuit of a good and pure life (Elizabeth) and our search for truth and knowledge (Zacharias).

Inevitably, each of us will encounter that limit at some point. Each of us will sooner or later experience that the purity and the knowledge we really seek seem to hide behind a distant horizon that slides forward at the same speed with which we are trying to approach it.

No matter how much we may read and know, no matter how much good we may do for our fellow human beings, it is never enough. This characterizes John: the longing of the Other-one-within-us, who provides us with the power to enter new pathways and who is willing "to be the disciple of Him who comes after him".

Because as soon as we experience the great nostalgia, the deep longing for life beyond the horizon, there will be two processes taking place within us: the ever-more-consciously-experienced futility and aridity of our existence, and an increasingly strong desire for a higher life.

John, it is said, is the incarnation of the prophet Elijah. Elijah symbolizes the immaterial spiritual heritage in the form of the strength and wisdom left behind in our world by all the human entities who returned to the world of the Spirit. As soon as John is born within us, then 'Elijah' is made available to us as well.

The outer man is born unto a 'John-man'. The name John means 'God is gracious' because this condition means that the higher life can express itself as more than nostalgia. John, the outer man, starts from the inner urge to "make his paths straight for the one who comes after him."

Through Mary, we have the inner certainty that by John we possess the new power to proceed. And with Elijah, all the inner knowledge we need is at hand. John is the human being standing in the service of the inner being – symbolized by Jesus – who will be born not simply after him but also within him.

Five months passed by and Gabriel came to Mary in her home in Nazareth and said, "Hail Mary, hail! Once blessed in the name of God; twice blessed in the name of Holy Breath; thrice blessed in the name of Christ; for you are worthy, and will bear a son who shall be called Immanuel. His name is Jesus, for he saves his people from their sins. [...] And Mary went with haste to tell Elizabeth about the promises of Gabriel; together they rejoiced. And in the home of Zacharias and Elizabeth did Mary tarry ninety days; then she returned to Nazareth.

A new phase of the path presents itself.