

25-12 Reflection 04

Giving birth to the divine being in yourself

And when upon their way they came to Bethlehem the day was done, and they must tarry for the night. But Bethlehem was thronged with people going to Jerusalem; the inns and homes were filled with guests, and Joseph and his wife could find no place to rest but in a cave where animals were kept; and there they slept. At midnight came a cry, A child is born in yonder cave among the beasts. And lo, the promised son of man was born.

And strangers took the little one and wrapped him in the dainty robes that Mary had prepared and laid him in a trough from which the beasts of burden fed. Three persons clad in snow-white robes came in and stood before the child and said, All strength, all wisdom and all love be yours, Immanuel. Now, on the hills of Bethlehem were many flocks of sheep with shepherds guarding them.

The shepherds were devout, were men of prayer, and they were waiting for a strong deliverer to come. And when the child of promise came, a man in a snow-white robe appeared to them, and they fell back in fear. The man stood forth and said, Fear not! behold I bring you joyful news. At midnight in a cave in Bethlehem was born the prophet and the king that you have long been waiting for. And then the shepherds all were glad; they felt that all the hills were filled with messengers of light.

In a cave, among the animals, a child was born in the middle of the night. The other-one-within-us has broken loose from his bonds and breathes ...

The first delicate signs of a completely new life, deep in the human heart, are immediately surrounded by the unknown forces of the new life, a life to which Mary-within-us had directed herself with unshakable certainty. And the child is “wrapped in the dainty robes that Mary had prepared”, which means that the child is immediately surrounded by light forces that protect him from harmful influences.

Then this newborn is carefully laid down in the manger of the animals; and immediately three men appear in snow-white garments. They bring three gifts: strength, wisdom and love. Those are the three fundamental forces that make everything possible, the invincible forces that require a completely new life. For no human being of this world would be able to endure perfect power, absolute wisdom and all-embracing love.

Opening up the new life within a human being is therefore like an all-encompassing love, like being irradiated by hitherto unknown forces that well up from an unfathomable source in the heart ... The light birth, the birth of the light-in-man, has taken place.

Gnostic Christianity considers the birth of Jesus as the birth of the new soul in a person who became like John. John is the one who has the power to purify himself by following a new path. The new soul is the higher vehicle, ‘the new garment’ which will ultimately allow the human being to enter his original world once again.

The paradise myth in the Book of Genesis, at the beginning of the Old Testament, tells the story of Adam and Eve; a man and a woman who left their birthplace (paradise) and obtained a new residence (outside of Paradise).

With the birth of Jesus at the beginning of the New Testament, the return journey begins. There we read of a man and a woman, Joseph and Mary, travelling from their home to their place of birth. Mary is pregnant by the Holy Spirit. She is a virgin in the spiritual sense, pure and untainted, completely oriented towards the higher life.

Joseph is the free builder, he who has purified his thoughts and directs them towards the soul. He symbolizes the aspiring human being who deliberately and perseveringly works and builds while staying focused on the divine. That work brings about a continuous process of purification that is guided by the soul.

A higher octave

We can describe the Joseph and Mary within ourselves as the new thinking activity and the new way of feeling which are caused by the touch from the domain of the soul. In this sense, Joseph and Mary can be seen as a higher octave of Zacharias and Elizabeth.

After all, Elizabeth symbolizes the longing that is oriented to the good of the world, while Mary represents the orientation toward the higher life. The two are therefore related to each other and both bring forth children with a special task: John, who has the task of adopting the outer life to the new inner life; and Jesus, the child in whom pure Love, the highest possible in this universe, assumes a physical form.

Jesus is born in the greatest darkness of the night in a cave in Bethlehem (meaning 'bread house') where 'beasts of burden' reside as well. Our inner 'beasts of burden' have done their job: the persevering, goal-oriented ox caused us to proceed ever onward and the donkey carried us on the most inaccessible roads of life. They brought us 'home'. They belong to us and therefore they stay in the cave where the soul-being is born.

And what could this cave be other than our own human heart? The human heart is like a cave system with one special birthing room: the right ventricle. There is the manger where our 'beasts of burden', the ox and the donkey, found their food with which we were able to complete our journey so far.

But after all the preparation and purification, the same feeding place became a place where a completely different life-force could descend: Light itself. Food and energy for a whole new journey with which the entire personality will joyfully cooperate.

In many cultures, a cave is an ancient symbol of a shelter, an image of birth and rebirth. Ritual meetings were often held in caves. Caves were also shelters for cattle and a refuge for people in times of danger.

The ox and the donkey

Where do the legendary ox and donkey come from? In the first chapter of the Book of Isaiah, verses 2 and 3, the following is said on behalf of God:

I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.

So the cattle know who feeds them and where they belong, but people have forgotten where they come from, who feeds them and who guides them.

In a certain tradition, the ox and the donkey represent the 'Jews' and the 'Gentiles'. The donkey symbolizes the Gentiles, the heathen who are suffering under the burden of sin and idolatry. The ox is then a symbol for the Jews who live under the yoke of the law, like an ox wearing a yoke during ploughing. In this instance, the yoke refers to being fully connected with and guided by the divine. The word yoke is derived from the Latin word 'iungere' meaning 'to connect' and is still recognizable in the word yoga, for example.

Thus, the ox and the donkey stand together at the manger of Jesus, which symbolizes the idea that the inner light birth is not restricted to one single race or country but that it is a calling for all humanity. Every human being is able to celebrate the inner light birth at the appropriate moment in his or her life, in his or her own year zero.

God in man

The Light Messengers, the visible and invisible spiritual leaders of humanity, descend into the world of time and space to support and guide humanity at every step on the spiritual path.

The divine birth cannot be forced. You can only create the conditions for this birth to take place. How do you know if the new soul is born in you? The famous mystic Meister Eckhart wrote about this:

Now you turn your face entirely to this birth. Yes, you will encounter this birth in everything you see and hear, whatever it is. You are like someone who looks for quite a while at the sun, and afterwards sees the image of the sun in whatever he looks at. As long as you do not seek and perceive God in everything, this birth has not yet occurred in you.