

# kosmos

JOURNAL OF MARTINUS INSTITUTE

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Martinus :

4 - 1978

## THE CHRISTMAS MYSTERY

In the message and idea of Christmas is revealed the underlying principle of charity

Now Christmas is again drawing near, and all over the Christian world one celebrates the holy festival, commemorating the birth of the infant Christ. Maybe the original cause of the Christmas festival seems to disappear amidst all the bustle, because the commercial aspect is so widespread nowadays, that it even dominates Christmas, too. But in spite of all that it cannot subdue the real message and idea of Christmas: the display of the principle of charity in the giving of presents, and the special atmosphere of high spirits and joy that follows the display of this principle. So Christmas provides a glaring contrast to the mental climate which results in war, persecution, hate, and death among people. "Glory to God in the highest - - and on earth good will toward men", the Angels sang to the shepherds on Christmas night as we learned as children. "But all this is only a fairy tale or a legend", many people say, and in the same way they consider the story of the gospel for Christmas Day to be nothing but a beautiful fairy tale or a legend, when it tells the story of the poor child born in a stable and laid in a manger. And it really sounds like a fairy tale or a legend when one is told about the Virgin Birth, about the Magi who followed the star, worshipped the child and presented him with rich gifts; and about Herod the king persecuting the young child because he had been told that a new king was born; and how he slew the children of Bethlehem; and about Joseph who had to flee to Egypt so that the infant Jesus could escape his pursuer and grow up to become a world redeemer and serve as a model for all mankind, revealing what it means to be a man made "in the image of God".

According to its most profound analysis the Gospel for Christmas Day is a presentation of principles

Supposing, however, that the Gospel of Christmas Day had never existed. Would it then have meant that humanity had experienced no especial spirit of Christmas with its desire to give presents and to light candles in the darkness? No, the spirit of Christmas would still prevail since it is an indication of a cosmic or universal principle existing in terrestrial man in the same way as does the killing principle - the so called evil - leading to wars. Both principles are natural attributes for terrestrial man in the same way as it is natural to have eyes, ears

and other sensory mechanisms, i. e. they are present in the mental structure of the living being, absolutely independent of whether this being has any knowledge of religion or not. He, or she, who today has no heart to hurt any living being will possess this mental structure, even if he, or she, in this incarnation has not heard a thing about the Gospel for Christmas Day or any of the other gospels or of any other humane religion. Like all other religions - when it does not turn on dogmas - the Christmas Gospel, according to its most profound analysis, is a presentation of principles displaying themselves in the mind of the living being. So these principles are not a product of the Christmas Gospel, but in its own special way this gospel is telling of a principle which now more and more will come to maturity in terrestrial man, although it will do so while being violently opposed and persecuted by quite another principle. But why does the Christmas Gospel not say so openly and directly? Because throughout all the past centuries when the Christmas Gospel was essential to millions of people, those people would not have been able to understand it. Does this indicate, however, that the Christmas Gospel will not come to influence people any more in the future? Absolutely not! On the contrary, people will come to see the religious narratives in quite a new light and with a much broader perspective, so that these narratives will become much more essential to each individual than they were before, because it will become more and more evident that they are not only describing an event which once really took place, but also an evolutionary process which takes place in the mentality of every single being.

The ambiguity of the gospels shrouds them in mystery. All knowledge accessible to man in the first instance can only be acquired by experiencing the revelations of nature, which is the same as being able to read the very book of life and which is the same as being able to understand the language of nature. In order to be able to do so, however, a human being must be highly developed. Such highly developed beings have been described as "wise men". They are beings who have been far in advance of their age and contemporaries here on earth. They have been able to see in the natural processes the ruling principles and laws, which have their place in the physical world as well as those manifesting themselves in the world of spiritual radiations which underlie the physical world. They have talked in such a way about these principles to their ignorant fellow-beings as to produce an inspiring effect suited to their particular stage of development. And the events, they talked about, have really occurred, because time and again the natural principles are reflected in historical events. In the accounts of the Magi and also of the gospels, however, the external events are invested with a certain form, being such a work of genius that they at the same time as they relate the events which have taken place as human acts also relate to the development of the natural or cosmic principles in the mentality of each single being. This ambiguity shrouds the gospels in mystery, and therefore the Gospel of Christmas Day rightfully can be called the Christmas Mystery.

The atmosphere of helpfulness, generosity, and charity, incident to Christmas, will some day cover the whole year. At present many people think that the Gospel of Christmas Day is nothing but a legend or a fairy tale, and this reveals that they have outgrown the state of mind, when the suggestive power of the mystery was able to influence their religious instinct and feeling. They have not, however, outgrown the announcement of the Christmas Gospel: "Peace on earth and good will toward men". On the contrary, this has become the sincere wish of more and more human beings. The atmosphere of helpfulness, generosity, and charity which in so many ways characterizes Christmas is actually the mentality which ought to prevail throughout the whole year. Were it to do so, Christmas would be less such a time of haste, strain and harassment, than it is now. Mankind, has not, however, progressed so far towards mental maturity as to be capable, for some time to come, to display such a state of charity for a long period of time, particularly not such a general or collective display of the charity principle. Naturally, there are many people who in the course of the year have several times manifested the principle of Christmas by their individual display of consciousness and in their manners and actions. Until now, however, they are as rare gleams of light in darkness, but this is the course development will follow in the future. A general manifestation of the charity principle, like that we experience at Christmas-time, mankind is able to yield for only a relatively short period. The mentality of Herod the king is still the stronger one, and the mentality which is represented by the little weak Christ-child has to flee to Egypt, to the land of mysteries.

The stage on which the Christmas mystery is enacted is terrestrial man's own consciousness

The Gospel of Christmas Day will not continue to be a mystery, or a truth which you simultaneously are able as well as unable to see. The mystery must be cleared up for the human beings who have developed far enough to be able to see the hidden truths about man which this gospel holds. This refers to those beings who carry the good tidings of Christmas in their own mental structure as a longing for, and as a beginning manifestation of love to their neighbour, although they feel that all the naive beauty of the Gospel of Christmas Day is only a thing for children and simple souls. The Gospel of Christmas Day, however, is absolutely not naive, when you get behind its outward form. On the contrary, it relates the change in manners and creative display from naivety and primitivity to the high intellectuality which terrestrial man is undergoing just now. The Christmas mystery is enacted on the stage which consists of man's own consciousness, and the persons appearing in the mystery are the mental forces or principles which together build up this consciousness. The principal character of the Christmas mystery is of course the infant Christ, and the roles of the other characters are based on their attachment to this small being, to this passive principal character. The importance of the infant Christ is due less to what he was in the beginning, than to what he is going to grow into, and to the great possibilities which are held by this small child, who therefore must be guarded, aided and protected against the dangers threatening him, dangers which are personified by Herod the

king, who is a representative of brutal force and dictatorship. Terrestrial man's consciousness is still a mystery to himself, but through the disclosure of the Christmas mystery the cosmic principles and energies of this consciousness will be brought to light, because even there a still passive force is found which holds great future possibilities: the still dormant Christ-consciousness which will make terrestrial man a real human being, make him man in the image and likeness of God.

Humanity and charity are not products of religion, but of man's experience of suffering and pain. According to the Gospel of Christmas Day the infant Jesus was born in a stable and laid in a manger, and even this setting is fitting as a symbol of the very condition of terrestrial man. The stable is a place for animals, i. e. the animal kingdom, and in the stable you find the manger holding little infant Jesus, who is of another world than that to which the stable and the animals belong. Terrestrial man's single-poled physical organisms are all together "mangers for an infant Jesus", i. e. mortal frames for a Christ-consciousness that is still in its tender years. King Herod, the evil power in the Christmas mystery, plots against the life of this future competitor for the kingdom, he who is said to have been born in Bethlehem. Precisely the same takes place in terrestrial man's inner world. Here the principle of the right of the stronger, of might against right, i. e. of anger, hate, bitterness, irritation, egoism and so on, is destroying the humane qualities, which still are found only in a tender and passive state in his mind. From the Gospel of Christmas Day we have heard, however, how the infant Jesus escapes king Herod's soldiers, and it is in the same way with the humane powers in the consciousness of mankind - they are kept down only apparently. For some time Herod the king may triumph and think that he is in power because all children of Bethlehem have been killed. He does not know that the three Magi, for whom he feigned friendship, have presented the child and its parents with rich gifts and so helped them to escape to a place beyond his reach. Which powers do the Magi represent in terrestrial man's consciousness? They represent the mental powers by which the great world religions have given inspiration and stimulation. I have mentioned before that he who has no heart to harm any living being will have this mental structure, even if in his present incarnation he has never heard of the Gospel of Christmas Day, or the other gospels, or of any other humane religion. Humanity and charity are not products of the religions, but of the lessons, especially the painful ones, which a human being has learned during many incarnations from his life-experiences, i. e. from the very speech of life. As a consequence, however, of this change consciousness based on experiences, which makes man turn away from brutality and violence, and inspires him to feel a longing for humanity, those faculties grow up which enable man to receive the gifts of religions, and this is the very infant Jesus in the consciousness. By the aid of the presents he was taken to Egypt, the land of mystery, and the religious mysteries afford him protection and aid against the wickedness of the world until he has reached such maturity that he, with his growing and still stronger Christ-consciousness, is able to resist the dark forces

unaided by mystery but by means of his logical day-consciousness displaying brotherly love in his thoughts, words and deeds. Many terrestrial beings have arrived precisely at that stage of their development. In their mind the Christ-consciousness has ripened so much that they no more belong to the "land of mystery", i. e. that they have developed so far that the religions can inspire them no longer until the religious mysteries are revealed, thereby making evident the cosmic laws and principles which previously were covered under the raiment of mystery. However, we have now come into the evolutionary fields resulting from the revelation of the Christmas mystery, and they do not belong to the subject of this address. Before I come to the end I only want to mention that the idea of the Virgin Birth, which has been misunderstood by so many, can be explained when seen in the light of cosmic laws and principles.

Christ was not born of a virgin. His Christ-consciousness, however, was

When the infant Jesus in the Christmas mystery is characterized as born of a virgin, this does not imply that Jesus of Nazareth had no earthly father. And that certainly does not make him less divine. On the contrary! When a human being who in all respects has had to share the fortunes of his fellow-beings in this world, but yet turns up to be quite exceptional, this is no less than divine.

Divinity is not disclosed by opposing the laws of nature, but by showing a consciousness and faculties which are thoroughly consistent with these laws and therefore the capability of utilizing them in a way which cannot be done by ordinary, terrestrial man, because he is still without knowledge of more than a small fraction of these laws. But what, then has been brought into this world by a Virgin Birth? It is the Christ-consciousness, which has developed through many incarnations and which has no earthly father. This also applies to the Christ-consciousness developing in the consciousness of every terrestrial man or woman. It is inherited neither from mother, nor from father, and it is not presented as a gift but has to be developed, based on the experiences gathered from life to life.

During this process of development, however, terrestrial man is not left unaided. The angels, who in the night of Christmas sang to the shepherds, saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men", are the tools and organs of the eternal Godhead and therefore they represent that part of the world redemption which is inaccessible to the physical senses. "Secretly they go among us" we sing in a beautiful Danish Christmas carol, and even this is no more a legend or superstition. A host of unseen beings, who must not of necessity be endowed with white wings and gowns - which verges on pure superstition - is always ready to stimulate, inspire, and help us when we pray for it, and at the same time are tuning in our consciousness and personality on the wavelength which is the keynote of the universe and of Christmas: to give help, happiness and blessings to other living beings.

The promising message of the angels: Peace on earth, and good will toward men, will become a reality in the physical world

Thus the gospel of Christmas Day has a message for every single being, a most

personal message which, the mystery being revealed, will relate the great and decisive events in the human beings' lives on their way towards full maturity of the Christ-consciousness. Joseph and Mary, representatives for the masculine and the feminine principle, both have principal parts to play in the Christmas mystery in the same way as the masculine and the feminine pole still have their parts to play among the terrestrial human beings as the sexual functions of male and female. Why have Joseph and Mary been placed in the stable by the evangelists? Because they still belong to the animal kingdom. In the mature Christ-consciousness, however, the unfoldment of the masculine and the feminine principle will become fused into a single, purely humane unfoldment, and not until then will the promise of the angelic message materialize in a physical world. This will take quite a long time, but a time will come when peace has grown into reality on earth, also good will toward men, and then each single human being will help create the glorious universal peace, the promising announcement of which we celebrate each time we are celebrating Christmas.

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Translated from "KOSMOS" no. 25 and 26, 1972 by Ingrid Okkels

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