

SPIRITUAL CHRISTMAS

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SPIRITUAL CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

GUIDING HAND FOR INNER REFLECTION
AND INSPIRATION IN THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

ANDRÉ DE BOER

TANJA ROZEMA

Rozekruis Pers

www.rozekruispers.com

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Rozekruis Pers

Bakenessergracht 5

2011 JS Haarlem, the Netherlands

+31 23 532 38 52

info@rozekruispers.com

www.rozekruispers.com

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Preface

In the autumn of 2014, we came into contact with André de Boer, who was filled with the idea to create an online program about the deeper meaning of Christmas and New Year's Eve. He suggested creating a small team that could realize a series of written and spoken texts which discuss the spiritual path that every human being can follow on the basis of the mysteries behind the Christmas narrative.

More and more, people are searching the internet for what they need. That is certainly true for philosophical knowledge, spirituality and wisdom. So we were quickly convinced that creating an online program would be an appropriate way to share the esoteric backgrounds of Christmas and New Year's Eve with a wide audience, and decided to do this by offering daily emails with links to texts that are suited to the day of the year. In sixteen consecutive days, from December 22 to January 6, participants received a narrative from The Aquarian Gospel, followed by a reflection on that narrative.

Many participants were enthusiastic about this online program, not only because the texts appealed to them but also because they could listen to them. In this way the Christmas period received more value and meaning for them. Many asked for similar online programs that deal with the other two major Christian festivals. We honored these requests by establishing the online programs 'Spiritual Easter' and 'Spiritual Pentecost' in the spring of 2016.

In the autumn of 2016 ‘The Mirdad mysteries’ followed, and we are working on two more programs entitled ‘The mysteries of Tao’ and ‘The mysteries of the soul’, planned for release in 2017.

Soon after the first program there came an explicit request to also publish the texts in the form of a book. There was a clear desire to be able to read the texts on paper; also, a book of these texts was considered an appropriate Christmas present. Thus we see that active participation in the digital world is able to increase the interest in the printed word! We are therefore particularly pleased that the texts of the online program ‘Spiritual Christmas’ are now published as a book and an e-book.

This year (2016) the ‘Spiritual Christmas’ program will again be offered through email and the website www.spiritualtexts.academy. The book *Spiritual Christmas* allows you to read the texts offline or read them along with the spoken word.

We especially thank Daniel van Egmond for the profound words in the introduction to this book.

Rozekruis Pers
Doride Zelle

Introduction

THE WONDER OF THE LIGHT-BIRTH

Daniël van Egmond

During the autumn equinox light and darkness are precisely in balance with each other. Subsequently the influence of the darkness begins to increase more and more as the power of the light is fading. The darkness is the deepest around Christmas and we can only wait in confidence until the light is born again. That is how people of yore experienced the alternation and struggle between the light and the darkness in their own lives. Before villages and towns were bathed in electric light, the increasing darkness was almost tangible to the inhabitants and they could not help but eagerly await the new light. They heard stories about the miraculous birth that took place in this darkness in the distant past: God's son was born in a hidden place in order to liberate humanity from the darkness. The light that would soon become stronger again was a sign of this birth. It was not only an external light but could also be experienced as an inner light that pierced the darkness of everyday life.

Christmas has always been interpreted in a spiritual way in the Christian mystical movements. It is not so much important whether the son of God ever came to be born on earth or not; what matters is that his birth is going to take place within us.

Not until the rise of the Rosicrucian movement in the 17th century and the increasing influence of the writings of Jacob Boehme was the inner meaning of Christmas discussed more and

more outside the monastery walls: Christmas is not so much the commemoration of an historical event but rather a miracle that can happen to all of us; it is the birth of this son within us. The Christian Theosophical tradition of Jacob Boehme relates that we are living in darkness as long as there has not been an inner transformation or rebirth. What to our ordinary eyes is light, is deep darkness to the inner being.

This tradition emphasizes that we should make a radical distinction between the outer and the inner man. We are the outer being, as it is functioning in our daily lives. Our attention is constantly drawn to our sensory experiences. But above all we are governed by the incessant flow of our thoughts, feelings, fantasies and desires. Although we believe that we ourselves are the source of this continuous flow, we are unable to stop it. Consequently we are determined by this stream, rather than the opposite. Since this condition is comparable to the dream state, most traditions emphasize that we are not awake in our daily lives, but rather still asleep. The only difference between daytime sleep and the 'normal' night time sleep is that during the former we do respond to all kinds of sensory stimuli. And just as during sleep we believe to be awake, even in our so-called waking state we are still in a kind of sleep.

But what or who, then, is the inner man? It is the soul which can be born within us. Just as Jesus was born of Mary, so may the soul be born of us, external people. For that reason, Angelus Silesius, a pupil of the Christian Theosophical and Rosicrucian tradition, wrote:

What good does Gabriel's "Ave, Mary" do

Unless he give me that same greeting too?

We can – like Mary – learn to no longer identify ourselves with the incessant flow of thoughts, feelings and desires. But that

implies that we, outer beings, need to wake up and be willing to listen to the words that Gabriel and other messengers speak to us. Living in our darkness, but awakened by these messengers, we learn to say in complete self-surrender: *let it be to me according to your word*. Therefore, Angelus Silesius said:

*Be silent, silent, dearest one,
Only be silent utterly.
Then far beyond thy farthest wish
God will show goodness unto thee.*

In order to receive this message, it should become silent within us so that we can become focused. It means that we no longer automatically respond to whatever we are being told, but that we are really going to listen, and – like Mary – keep the words in our hearts like a seed that will later be able to unfold. This attentive attitude of life is a necessary condition for the inner man – the Son of God – to be born within us. Such an attitude to life means that we learn to listen and observe in a responsive manner. Usually, however, we have already made up our minds before the other person has finished speaking and we do not really listen to what he or she is telling us. Only rarely do we let ourselves be surprised by what presents itself to us in the world. For we have seen it all so many times; by now we know what the world looks like. A receptive mode of perception, however, suddenly allows the everyday things to present themselves to us in new and refreshing ways. That is the beginning of the return of the light! When we are waiting, being quiet and receptive, then the light can penetrate into the darkness of our waking consciousness; then the moment of the inner Christmas has arrived. The outer human being lives mainly from the head; hence the incessant stream of thoughts that constantly drags us along. On the other hand, in the tradition of the Rosycross, the heart takes the central place, often symbolized by the rose. The heart will open, to

the extent that we learn to live our lives with attention.

As Angelus Silesius said:

*Thy heart receives God's dew and all that with Him goes
When it expands toward Him as does an opening rose.*

Dew is an alchemical symbol. When the dew descends from heaven on the outer man who has died, then the resurrection will take place: the soul - the son of God - will arise from the earthly shell of the outer man. Indeed, this process means that the outer man must die. If we no longer speak and act from our own will and desire, but instead become attentive and receptive to the soul, then the outer man actually begins to die. Without this process of dying – without the darkness that precedes the birth of the light – the birth of the soul cannot take place:

*If He should live in you, God first Himself must die.
How would you, without death, inherit His own life?*

Without this birth, our life as an outer human being is infertile. The outer man is composed of dust and will return to dust. This 'dust' refers not only to the physical body but to our entire personality, to everything with which we usually identify ourselves. We should learn to let go of all this, because:

*Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem were born,
but not within thy self, thy soul will be forlorn.*

That sounds serious, and it is. But the annual return of the light which we celebrate at Christmas reminds us ever again of the light that can be born within us. The annual - and daily - return of the outer light nourishes our hope and our confidence that the miracle of the birth can also take place in us.

Bilthoven, oktober 2015.

DECEMBER 22
PREPARING YOURSELF

DECEMBER 22 REFLECTION PREPARING YOURSELF

In this book you will find the texts of the daily emails that were sent to the participants in the online program Spiritual Christmas during the Christmas season of 2015/2016, from December 22 – the day after the winter solstice – until January 6, the day of Epiphany. The texts allow you to contemplate the esoteric meaning of Christmas and the Christmas season. By focusing your attention on it you create a receptivity to a very spiritual process: the Light-birth within yourself. That is the Christmas miracle of awakening and activating the divine being within you. It is the beginning of a completely new spiritual path that never ends. In English, the time period following Christmas has a meaningful name: ‘holidays’, which literally means ‘holy days’, days that can be seen as a gift to focus on healing in the broadest sense of the word. These days, when you can be ‘vacant’ from all your usual worries, allow you to be filled with healing powers. The word ‘vacant’ means ‘empty’, while the word ‘holy’ is related to ‘being whole’. According to several traditions the cosmic ‘gates to the divine’ are wide open during the period from December 24 until January 6. This time period from Christmas until Epiphany is also referred to as the twelve holy nights. This idea is not based on historical events of more than two thousand years ago; rather it concerns cosmic processes.

Spiritual development

Where did the idea of the twelve nights originate? Long before Christianity arrived in Europe, the Germanic and Celtic peoples

celebrated a midwinter feast (or Jul-feast) sometimes lasting eleven days and twelve nights, following the winter solstice. That time period is exactly the difference between twelve revolutions of the moon around the earth, in 29.5 days (354 in total), and the 365 days it takes the earth to complete one rotation around the sun: $365 - 354 = 11$ days and 12 nights.

The number twelve expresses fullness and completeness. Think of the 12 signs of the Zodiac, the 12 hours of the day and the 12 hours of the night. Consider also the 12 tribes of Israel, the 12 disciples of Jesus and the 12 Knights of the Round Table. Twelve is the product of three and four: $3 \times 4 = 12$. The twelve holy nights can be seen as stages along the path of spiritual development, symbolically indicated in the twelve hours of the Nuctemeron of Apollonius of Tyana, the twelve labours of Hercules and the thirteen songs of repentance in the Gospel of the Pistis Sophia.

In many traditions three is considered a divine number, while four is considered an earthly number. From this point of view the number 12 encompasses both the earthly and the divine.

Humanity also holds both the earthly and the divine within itself. Human beings as we know them are indeed manifestations of the divine, but they themselves are not divine and never will be. Our physical bodies will eventually die. The physical body is dust and will return to dust.

The bridge between time and eternity

Several wisdom teachings speak about an immortal divine principle, lying dormant in every human being, that is just waiting to wake up and be active. Based on that awakened and active divine principle, the human being can become a bridge between time and eternity. What matters is not that we will enter eternity, but that the eternal being within us may be vivified. That is the core of all Gnostic teachings and also of esoteric Christianity: the human being is twofold.

The daily texts contain reflections inspired by selected chapters of *The Aquarian Gospel* of Jesus the Christ. This book by Levi Dowling was published in 1908.

The Aquarian Gospel was chosen because it expresses the essence of inner Christianity very powerfully and purely. Inner Christianity is also sometimes referred to as original Christianity, esoteric Christianity or Gnostic Christianity. Gnostic Christianity locates the divine within the human being; outer Christianity declares that the divine is only external. Moreover, *The Aquarian Gospel* considers other world religions as well, all of which express certain aspects of what we may call ‘universal wisdom teachings’.

Various researchers have argued on the basis of solid arguments that, from the historical point of view, *The Aquarian Gospel* as well as the Gospels in the Bible are incorrect. Probably they are right. For us it does not matter because the narratives are full of deeper meaning. And that is something which will become increasingly apparent in the course of this program.

Focus

We recommend that you read the daily narrative of *The Aquarian Gospel* just before bedtime and the accompanying reflection the next day right after getting up. In this way you end and begin every day with focus and openness. You take the narrative along in your sleep, where unconsciously it may open sources of inner knowledge. And you can carry the text of the reflection in your heart throughout the day. Sleep is most beneficial when the night consciousness can raise itself into an area where the ordinary waking consciousness cannot follow.

“The sleep of the body becomes the sobriety of the soul” are the profound words of Hermes Trismegistus. By directing ourselves inwardly, the quiet of the body can become the freedom of the soul. In the spatiotemporal nature there is no place of rest for the

soul. During sleep, however, it may travel to the place where the turmoil of the opposites cannot exist: the Temple of Silence. In that sacred place, it is nourished with the essence of a higher human life and receives the rich teachings of universal wisdom.

Upon awakening, the soul will transfer the inner certainty obtained to the physical human being. In this way sleep can be a blessing for those who seek for the truth.

We wish you an inspiring Christmas period.



DECEMBER 22 NARRATIVE THE BIRTH OF MARY

Chapter 1 of *The Aquarian Gospel*

The Birth of Mary Augustus Cæsar reigned and Herod Antipas was ruler of Jerusalem. Three provinces comprised the land of Palestine: Judea, and Samaria, and Galilee. Joachim was a master of the Jewish law, a man of wealth; he lived in Nazareth of Galilee; and Anna, of the tribe of Judah, was his wife. To them was born a child, a goodly female child, and they were glad; and Mary was the name they gave the child. Joachim made a feast in honour of the child; but he invited not the rich, the honoured and the great; he called the poor, the halt and the lame, the blind, and to each one he gave a gift of raiment, food or other needful thing. He said, The Lord has given me this wealth; I am his steward by his grace, and if I give not to his children when in need, then he will make this wealth a curse.

Now, when the child was three years old her parents took her to Jerusalem, and in the temple she received the blessings of the priests. The high priest was a prophet and a seer, and when he saw the child he said, Behold, this child will be the mother of an honoured prophet and a master of the law; she shall abide within this holy temple of the Lord. And Mary did abide within the temple of the Lord; and Hillel, chief of the Sanhedrin, taught her all the precepts of the Jews, and she delighted in the law of God. When Mary reached the age of womanhood she was betrothed to Joseph, son of Jacob, and a carpenter of Nazareth. And Joseph was an upright man, and a devoted Essene.



DECEMBER 23
RECOGNISING THE INNER BEING
WITHIN YOU

DECEMBER 23 REFLECTION RECOGNISING THE INNER BEING WITHIN YOU

Spiritual development is often seen as the start of a long and arduous journey. In a way that is right, but those who devote themselves to real spiritual development soon experience that in practice almost everything is different than they had imagined. To actually follow a spiritual path requires that we find the inspiration for this in our lives so that we become aware that we are twofold beings affected by both heaven and earth. On this basis and through an urge from within we strive to give expression to our inner heavenly being in daily life. Although the journey may be long and at times difficult, it is a journey that everyone must begin at some point, in this life or in a future one.

Reaching a limit

The path of the soul, situated between heaven and earth, between the personality and the inner man, will at some point arrive at a border. The human being at the border is aware that he/she could still evolve in a number of ways: the social, cultural and scientific horizons have not yet been reached by far...

But what lies beyond these horizons? What do those opportunities for development really contribute to finding the truth? Is achieving this development what one really wants?

Beyond that border two paths diverge: the outer path which we have been following for so long, and an inner path. At this crossroads the human being who consciously chooses the inner path, due to an irresistible urge, will actually give shape to the inner

being. On that path, the outer person can learn step by step how he can best fulfil his mission and vocation as a 'creative being' and give way to the other-one-within: he makes the paths straight for the one who comes after him. Put in this way, a spiritual path is a process during which two beings, an outer and an inner one, are both born and accompany each other on their way.

In order to properly understand the path we should keep in mind that man is a dual creature. Hermes Trismegistus states that of all creatures only man is twofold, for only man has a mortal body and an immortal soul. Every human being is the inhabitant of two worlds: the outer world of matter and the senses, and an inner world of higher consciousness.

Therefore human consciousness is also connected to both worlds. One part of the consciousness is connected with the personality and covers the entire spectrum of human perceptions, passions and thoughts, from the highest down to the lowest.

We are quite familiar with this personal consciousness (which includes the unconscious): it makes us who we are and we need it to be able to maintain ourselves in life. We make ourselves known to others by means of this personality. It manifests itself in our likes and dislikes, our talents and shortcomings, and it determines how we respond to the material world. Through the five senses, which open the windows of our consciousness to the material world, the material world in turn determines our consciousness. The other part of our consciousness is related to our 'True Self'. This 'inner man' is invisible and does not manifest itself as powerfully as the 'I', but it permeates our lives like a fragmentary perception that one could characterise as a silent yet relentless call saying "look for me, seek me...". Very occasionally the sound seems to fade away.

Disciple of the soul

The first step on the gnostic-spiritual path is the awareness of this inner voice and a conscious recognition of one's own duality.

Not until then can a definite decision be made to seek the other-one-within. Walking the path can be seen as passing through an inner gate – as a journey within ourselves from the outer life to the inner life. A deeply felt desire to find the other-one-within is a prerequisite for finding the entrance to the passage, to that gate. And this longing inevitably leads us to the place where the perceived but as yet unknown soul resides; it leads us to the heart of man.

The 'Other One' is a being which – like an ungerminated seed – lies hidden in our hearts. It stems from a higher human order, one linked with love, wisdom, compassion, friendship and unity. We carry the germ of that Other One with us in our hearts and its image will not let go of us. It incessantly arouses feelings of homesickness and disquiet, the sensation of belonging somewhere else. This is a sign that the seed is germinating, that the "Inner Man" is about to be born and that the outward man is called to contribute to this birth.

Through the ages, love and compassion have always been considered to be the core of all spirituality, and it has been experienced that the way to God is through the heart. But besides love, high reason and inspired activity are important also.

A purified thinking faculty is indispensable on the path to higher soul life because only a pure mind will be able to encompass Wisdom. Love ensures the awareness of the unity of all existence. Awareness of unity is the vehicle of Love. Wisdom brings us knowledge and guides the movement of the soul to its origin. The power of activity drives the soul forward to that movement. Therefore the experience of unity connects us directly with the responsibility for that unity. It is a special responsibility which can express itself through our individualised personalities as soon as we are willing to be 'disciples of the soul' and to orient ourselves to the high lessons of the soul.

Being of service

Being of service is therefore an obvious aspect of the soul and therefore of the disciple on the path. Whereas formerly 'service' was identified with suffering and sacrifice, the disciple of the soul will be able to understand the meaning of 'being subservient' in its highest form: to joyfully surrender to the new order of the inner life, in all circumstances and within all social, political, cultural and scientific contexts.

Experiencing one's own duality – the experience of 'not being the one who you essentially are' – and the desire to fully express that higher Self in your life are the starting points for a spiritual path. From this experience you immediately enter into a different relationship with yourself and there will be a new focal point in your life: the pure and higher state of life that you know to exist. The focus on common issues such as worldly success, individual wealth and prosperity will gradually and naturally fade into the background, giving way to a new orientation.

A new certainty

So the way to your true identity begins with a birth, the birth of a new inner certainty. The life that follows is a life of striving to bring the highest within yourself to manifestation, provide it with vitality and bring it to maturity. And that is why the Christmas narrative in *The Aquarian Gospel* begins with the birth of... Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mary is born from Joachim, a Jewish scribe and a rich man, and Anna of the tribe of Judah. In honour of the birth Joachim prepared a feast where the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind are invited

...and to each one he gave a gift of raiment, food or other needful thing. He said, The Lord has given me this wealth; I am his steward by his grace, and if I give not to his children when in need, then he will make this wealth a curse.

Someone who tries to respond to the whispers of the soul will always spontaneously think and act from unity. It cannot be otherwise than that Mary, the woman giving birth to Jesus, is born to such parents. Who are these parents? Joachim (meaning 'may Jehovah exalt') and Anna (meaning 'grace') are aspects of ourselves! It is these forces of our personality that are released through the purification of our daily life and by our focus on the good in this material world.

These purifications have led the heart and the head to a border and prepared them for a higher form of life. Mary (meaning 'bitter/sad' and also: 'the sea', the life field of the soul), this unshakable inner certainty, is destined for a special purpose in life, and at the age of three she is 'received in the temple': the ever-so-tender inner state is protected and prepared for its high task.

Once she is mature, Mary is betrothed to Joseph, a carpenter and a dedicated member of the Essenes. The goal of the Essenes was primarily inner development, and Joseph represents the manifesting power within us that will execute the assignment together with Mary. In this way the path to the new life is being prepared by means of a new certainty and a new inner strength.



*Behold, for soon the Day Star from on high will
visit us, to light the way for those who sit within
the darkness of the shadow-land, and guide
our feet unto the ways of peace.*

The Aquarian Gospel 2: 26