

An Imagined Pre-Christian Christmas Dialogue

by Donne Hayden

Earlier this week, in looking for material to use in this year's Christmas Eve program, I found a little poem by U.A. Fanthorpe that I had squirreled away in a file labeled "Christmas Stuff" on my computer. It didn't fit with the rest of what we're planning for that night, but the poem stuck in my mind, and the message this week rose up around it.

"The Wicked Fairy at the Manger"

My gift for the child:
No wife, kids, home;
No money sense. Unemployable.
Friends, yes. But the wrong sort—
The workshy, women, wogs,
Petty infringers of the law, persons
With notifiable diseases,
Poll tax collectors, tarts;
The bottom rung.
His end?
I think we'll make it
Public, prolonged, painful.

Right, said the baby. That was roughly

What we had in mind.

What a succinct statement of the life on which Christianity is based!

My personal understanding of Jesus-who-became-the-Christ is that he was a great soul sent to teach humanity the power of Love, and I perceive the soul-known-as-Jesus as the incarnation or “enfleshment” of Love, an *avatar* of Compassionate Love. The word “avatar” refers to the descended self of a Hindu deity; C. G. Jung used “avatar” to refer to the *embodiment* of a quality or concept; an archetype. My understanding of Jesus-as-Avatar-of-Love is informed to some extent by reading Jung’s account of his own near-death experience.¹

He writes:

At the beginning of 1944 I broke my foot, and this misadventure was followed by a heart attack. In a state of unconsciousness I experienced deliriums and visions which must have begun when I hung on the edge of death and was being given oxygen and camphor injections. The images were so tremendous that I myself concluded that I was close to death. . . .

It seemed to me that I was high up in space. Far below I saw the globe of the Earth, bathed in a gloriously blue light. I saw the deep blue sea and the continents. Far below my feet lay Ceylon, and in the distance ahead of me the subcontinent of India. My field of vision did not include the whole Earth, but its global shape was plainly distinguishable and its outlines shone with a silvery gleam through that wonderful blue light. In many places the globe seemed colored, or spotted dark green like oxidized silver. Far away to the left lay a broad expanse - the reddish-yellow desert of Arabia; it was as though the silver of the Earth had there assumed a reddish-gold hue. Then came the Red Sea, and far, far back - as if in the upper left of a map - I could just make out a bit of the Mediterranean. My gaze was directed chiefly toward that. Everything else appeared indistinct. I could also see the snow-covered Himalayas, but in that

¹ C. G. Jung, “A Vision of Life After Death,” *One Hundred Major Modern Writers: Essays for Composition*, Robert Atwan and William Versterman, Eds. (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1984), p. 366-68.

direction it was foggy or cloudy. I did not look to the right at all. I knew that I was on the point of departing from the Earth.

Later I discovered how high in space one would have to be to have so extensive a view - approximately a thousand miles! The sight of the Earth from this height was the most glorious thing I had ever seen.

[To digress a bit—Two years *later*, in October 1946, a camera mounted on a V-2 missile launched from White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico sent back the first photos of earth from space from only 65 miles up. “Before 1946, the highest pictures ever taken of the Earth’s surface were from the Explorer II balloon, which had ascended 13.7 miles in 1935, high enough to discern the curvature of the Earth.”² Although we have become accustomed to seeing such photos, in 1944 when Jung had his near-death experience, *no one on earth* had seen it from out in space. To me this makes his experience more credible, certainly less apt to be the result of delirium.]

I encourage all of you to read the rest of Jung’s experience but I want to skip to near the end where he says that he is distracted from visions of a temple he is preparing to enter by the likeness of his doctor floating up toward him. Jung says, “In life he was an avatar of the temporal embodiment of the primal form, which has existed from the beginning. Now he is appearing in that primal form,” and Jung continues:

Presumably I too was in my primal form, though this was something I did not observe but simply took for granted. As he stood before me, a mute exchange of thought took place

²Tony Reichhardt, “The First Photo From Space,” *Air & Space Magazine*, November 01, 2006. <<http://www.airspacemag.com/space-exploration/16045732.html>>.

*between us. The doctor had been delegated by the Earth to deliver a message to me, to tell me that there was a protest against my going away. I had no right to leave the Earth and must return.*³

What Jung calls the “primal form, which has existed from the beginning,” I understand as the soul; the “temporal embodiment” I take to mean the form in space and time occupied by the primal form when it “visits” earth. I have long suspected that the soul or primal form we call “Jesus Christ” was the temporal embodiment of compassionate Love, sent to earth to accomplish a specific purpose. I suspect, too, that this great soul knew what it was getting into when it agreed to come to our cantankerous, contradictory little planet.

I was led to imagine a conversation between two entities I call the “Spiritual Director Supreme” and “#1 Soul” discussing said great soul’s decision to make a trip to earth.

Spiritual Director Supreme: Look at them, will you? They are evolving nicely, brain and intelligence developing with great vigor, but what energy for destruction they have! They’ve had consciousness now for several thousand years, but only a few individuals seem to be tuning in to the higher frequencies.

#1 Soul: Yes. Have you seen the quantity of destruction and violence in the area controlled by that Roman crowd? I’m impressed, however, by the little tribe of Israelites. For centuries they have at least been aware of the *possibility* of having a relationship with the

³ Jung, p. 368.

Ultimate Divine Presence. One particularly promising group I've spotted recently is in Palestine, where those Galilean "holy men" have been stilling their minds and connecting to the Spirit.⁴

Spiritual Director Supreme: I've had my eye on them for a while. They seem to understand that when they seek relationship with us, spoken words are only the beginning. I have watched some Galileans move into "internal silence" for "lengthy periods of time"⁵ until finally they enter a deeper level of consciousness and sit quietly in the Presence. That's promising. But only scattered groups here and there on the planet are doing such work.

The greater number of them seems to be guided entirely by animal instincts required for their physical survival. Perhaps we made the survival instinct too strong . . . Souls who go there and return report what a struggle they have, encased in that brain and body with those instincts. Only occasionally do they remember where they really come from.

Many souls on the planet are working hard, but I believe we must do something to show the Creatures how to live with each other—send a good role model. Perhaps some of them are bright enough now to understand.

#1 Soul: I'll go. Let me give it a try.

Spiritual Director Supreme: You're sure? It's liable to be quite unpleasant—a really dirty job.

#1 Soul: Someone has to do it. I hate to ask someone to do something I wouldn't do myself.

Spiritual Director Supreme: Well, if anyone can handle it, you can. Where do you want to enter? What situation will you choose?

⁴ Inspired by *Jesus: A New Vision* by Marcus Borg, p. 44.

⁵ Ibid.

#1 Soul: Where they least expect it. They are so devoted to wealth and power, I should go somewhere among the poor and powerless in earth terms. What about entering into that stream of Galilean Holy Men? There's a little town called Nazareth where many of them live.

Spiritual Director Supreme: Galilee is a real backwater. Can anything good come from Nazareth?⁶

#1 Soul: I think it will work. Let's find a good birth mother—someone poor and pregnant . . . I've got it! I know just the woman. I noticed her the other day when I was watching one of the Holy Men. She is in great distress because she was raped by a Roman soldier⁷ and finds herself pregnant. She's afraid her family will cast her aside, which they are quite likely to do.

Spiritual Director Supreme: Ahh ... She would be the perfect mother—completely counter-intuitive for the Creatures since they expect an important birth to have an important person as the vehicle. I do think we should let her know what's coming, don't you? Maybe send her a dream or vision announcing that her child will be special?

#1 Soul: I leave that to your originality, O Creative One.

Spiritual Director Supreme: I'll work on it. Now let us consider the shape of the life you can anticipate; I want you to know what you're getting into.

⁶ John 1:46.

⁷ James Tabor, "The 'Jesus son of Panthera' Traditions," *The Jesus Dynasty* website, July 13th, 2006. Accessed Dec. 13, 2009 < <http://www.jesusedynasty.com/blog/2006/07/13/the-jesus-son-of-panthera-traditions/>>

"The Greek philosopher Celsus relates in polemical work against the Christians preserved by the Christian theologian Origen that he had found it "written" that Jesus was the son of a Roman soldier named Pantera (*Contra Celsum* 1. 69). This text dates to the late 2nd century. Origen replies that the story was concocted by those who refused to believe that Jesus had no human father and was conceived by the Holy Spirit."

#1 Soul: Working in the counter-intuitive mode has real possibilities. Born poor to a poor and powerless family—living among the simple and ordinary people—working class. I *would* like to be well-equipped with intelligence and good story-telling skills—stories work well for teaching earth Creatures. Perhaps I can use their own language in ways that show them where true power resides—not in their earthly kingdoms, but in Love. I could call Love the *Kingdom of God*. . . . Or maybe the *Kingdom of Heaven*.

Spiritual Director Supreme: Whatever you need, you shall have it. We'll make sure you have an abundance of the Spirit and a generous supply of Light. Going in as you're planning to do, you are not likely to have much time, you know. These creatures can be vicious when their petty knowledge and power is challenged.

#1 Soul: True. I seriously doubt I'll live to be an old man. Depending on how the Creatures respond, however, we might be able to use my death in some way. If it were dramatic enough, we could use it to generate attention.

Spiritual Director Supreme: Stay as long as you can, but with your talent, a few years of active teaching should be enough to plant the seed of Love. After that, we can nurture its growth wherever it crops up and help it to flourish.

This brings me to the end of my imaginary dialogue, which might have ended with a scene like this one from another Christmas poem by U.A. Fanthorpe:

"BC-AD"

This was the moment when Before
Turned into After, and the future's
Uninvented timekeepers presented arms.

This was the moment when nothing
Happened. Only dull peace
Sprawled boringly over the earth.
This was the moment when even energetic Romans
Could find nothing better to do
Than counting heads in remote provinces.
And this was the moment
When a few farm workers and three
Members of an obscure Persian sect
Walked haphazard by starlight straight
Into the kingdom of heaven.