Appendix 26

From Advent to Epiphany in the Calendar of the Soul

This essay will integrate elements derived from the approach I have developed over the years in studying the Calendar of the Soul—basically continuing what I have adopted from Karl König[1]—from indications that Rudolf Steiner offered in his esoteric lessons, which I mostly found gathered in the work of Giorgio Tarditi Spagnoli[2], and occasionally from other Steiner sources.

The whole of the Advent and Christmas to Epiphany season can be seen as a continuation of the process of the thinning of the veil between the physical and the astral-spiritual in the human being, a process that is ushered in at Halloween—the polar opposite of Walpurgis Night in which the veil between the physical and the spiritual in Nature is at its lowest. From Halloween forward the soul of the Earth returns from the widest expanses to the center of the Earth, and the human soul follows this contraction so that the ego can perceive itself more clearly and connect to the needs of Earth. In terms of the structure of the Calendar of the Soul, the whole of Advent can be seen as an answer to the call of warning verse 33 (November 17-23) and a preparation for the warning verse 46 (February 16-22). The second one will only concern us marginally in what follows.

What makes the Holy Nights special is a conjunction of conditions that gather at this special time of the year. Twelve nights are the time it takes to harmonize the difference between the solar year (365 days) and the lunar year (354 days: 12 lunar months of 29.5 days). It is a total of eleven days (12 every 4 years), with twelve from beginning to end.[3] This creates a situation of temporal and spatial limbo reflected in a condition of rest and peacefulness of the Earth's etheric body and, if we make room for it, of the human being's etheric body. It's as if the Earth withheld its breath. The soul of the Earth is contracted to its center, whence radiates its Christ ego. The spiritual Sun shines from within and illumines the Earth. The human etheric, slowed down and withdrawn from the onslaught of physical perceptions, can experience the transition from Jesus to Christ, from Christmas to Epiphany.

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[1] This refers to the methodology developed in Karl König *The Calendar of the Soul: A Commentary*.

[2] Giorgio Tarditi Spagnoli, *Le Tredici Notti Sante ed il Natale Antroposofico* (*The Thirteen Holy Nights and the Anthroposophical Christmas*), chapter 2. The notes were presumably taken by Herbert Hahn from Steiner's esoteric lessons, and shared online in December 2013 by Johann Elike Benesch, wife of Dr. Friedrich Benesch.

[3] Giorgio Tarditi Spagnoli, *Le Tredici Notti Sante ed il Natale Antroposofico* (*The Thirteen Holy Nights and the Anthroposophical Christmas*), chapter 3.

A few weeks after Halloween, with verse 33 as we will see below, the human being strengthened in his inner Self can turn to the needs of the world. In other words, she can affirm everything that is set as a challenge in the verse—offering communion of soul and an inner place in which the world can recreate itself. To this effect the soul has strengthened its connection to the Self (e.g., verses 16, 21, 22) and inner resolve ever since verse 24 (September 15-21) emphasizing the "Self-engendered will," which we could also qualify as the "Michaelic will."[4] Likewise, the power of thinking has been announced in the same verse 24, and specifically strengthened from verse 28 onwards.[5] The resolve to steel the Michaelic sword hones the power of thinking and the latter renders more conscious and purifies the will. This intertwined theme will follow us, enhanced and metamorphosed, through the whole series of verses 34 to 40.

Although they are subject to slight changes according to the position of Christmas during the week, most years the verses 34 to 37 correspond to Advent, and verse 38 marks Christmas and the beginning of the Holy Nights. With verse 39 we are fully in the period of the Holy Nights. Verse 40 continues the Holy Nights and marks the time of Epiphany.

Verse 32 ("I feel my own force bearing fruit" … "My inmost being I feel charged with power") emphasizes the feeling of being at home in the world, of gaining strength and assurance. It is the state of mind in which we are prepared for, and can receive the challenge of, verse 33.

Verse 33 (November 24-30)

I feel at last the world's reality
Which, lacking the communion of my soul,
Would in itself be frosty, empty life,
And showing itself powerless
To recreate itself in souls,
Would in itself find only death.

This verse marks a turning point and calls to a basic understanding of the human being's cosmic role in Earth evolution. Though the Earth is surrounded by astral and ego sheaths, the soul and spirit of the Earth cannot permeate the activities of minerals and plants. "The mineral nature of the Earth, as observed by us, shows itself unable to let the soul and spirit enter into it, and able only to let them surround it with light."[6] In essence mineral and plant realms lack astral thought and the self-consciousness derived from the Ego. Cosmically seen, Nature at the Earth stage of planetary evolution is in a state of dying out. If Nature is to find new life this cannot come from the Earth's astral and Ego sheaths. She must receive what the human being has to give her through his astral and Ego: "…he must, in order to

[4] The theme reappears most strongly in verses 26, 29, 31, 32.
[5] Other verses that emphasize the emerging power of thinking are 28, 29 and 30.
[6] Rudolf Steiner, *The Spiritual Communion of Mankind*, lecture 5 of December 31, 1922, "Spiritual Knowledge Is a True Communion, the Beginning of a Cosmic Cult Suitable for Men of the Present Age."

ensure a future through the Earth, insert into the Earth too the supersensible and invisible that he has within himself."[7] And what the Earth lacks most are active human thoughts, those imbued with Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition.

The four weeks of Advent, as communicated by Steiner to Hahn, are the time for purifying the four bodily sheaths, from the physical first to the etheric, astral and ego, withstanding each time a corresponding temptation.[8] Advent marks the time in which the etheric body is less stimulated by the external world and the human being becomes more able to inwardly perceive spiritual reality. The Earth and the human being are ready to receive the impressions of the spiritual Sun.

Verse 34 (November 24-30): First Week of Advent

In secret inwardly to feel
How all that I've preserved of old
Is quickened by new-risen sense of self:
This shall, awakening, pour forth cosmic forces
Into the outer actions of my life
And growing, mould me into true existence.

Through the Michaelic will and our awakened thinking we can enter the Advent season. The call to our feelings has already emerged in verses 32 ("I feel my own force bearing fruit") and 33 ("I feel at last the world's reality"). It continues in verses 34 and 35. In the first week of Advent feeling calls us to a connection to our higher Self. The first of Advent also marks an appeal to our holy enthusiasm, a call to become something more in relation to what the world needs of us. We seek a feeling for true existence, what Owen Barfield would call "conscious participation" in contrast to the echo of "original participation" in which we partake during spring and summer. A strengthened Self can devote itself to deeds in which it can pour cosmic forces. As the forces of Nature continue to wane our soul faculties rise. The forces of the Father act in the will and the physical body can become more and more the body of hope. We can turn away from the distractions of the external world so that the etheric body remains more receptive to subtler impulses.

Verse 35 (December 1-7): Second Week of Advent

Can I know life's reality
So that it's found again
Within my soul's creative urge?
I feel that I am granted power
To make my self, as humble part,
At home within the cosmic self.

[7] Rudolf Steiner, Lecture of December 31, 1922, "Spiritual Knowledge Is a True Communion, the Beginning of a Cosmic Cult Suitable for Men of the Present Age."
[8] Giorgio Tarditi Spagnoli, *Le Tredici Notti Sante ed il Natale Antroposofico*, Chapter 2.

Outwardly the time of verse 35 is that of Santa Lucia, commemorating the darkest day of the year. The soul, still activated by feeling, becomes now more introspective. Having expressed the desire to pour cosmic forces into its deeds, it now turns to the fount of such forces. In attitude of humility it asks to be part of that source from which the sense of Self is strengthened, the cosmic Self, or Christ. True existence of verse 34 puts us in touch with "life's reality." Through our devotion the forces of the Son can work on our etheric body transforming it into the body of love.

Verse 36 (December 8—14): Third Week of Advent

Within my being's depths there speaks,
Intent on revelation,
The cosmic Word mysteriously:
Imbue your labor's aims
With my bright spirit light
To sacrifice yourself through me.

Before the turning point of verse 33, the force of thinking has been growing in verses 28 to 32 and coming to a certain degree of maturity. It bathes in the sunlight of the soul (verse 30) and offers us insight (32). Now it makes room for the light of revelation speaking through cosmic Word. With the forces of the Holy Spirit acting in our thinking, certainty of knowledge can inspire resolve for sacrifice.

Truly seeking the reality that lives in the sprit requires a capacity for sacrifice. And sacrifice makes possible a deepening of the revelations of cosmic Word and a transformation of our lower nature, purifying our astral body so that it becomes the body of faith.

In the verses 36 to 40 we will see a growth of the presence and activity of cosmic Word in us. Whereas feeling is no longer mentioned after verse 35, from verse 37 to the end of the Holy Nights warmth of heart grows in importance in supporting our desire to co-create to which we have been called by warning verse 33. The will first refined by thinking is now imbued with heart warmth. The external cosmic Word, acting from the "spirit's fiery worlds" of the realm of the First Hierarchy (verse 13), is now present in our soul through our "heart-high gladness" (verse 38) and the "love-worlds of the heart" (verse 40).

Verse 37 (December 15-21): Fourth Week of Advent

To carry spirit light into world-winter-night
My heart is ardently impelled,
That shining seeds of soul
Take root in grounds of worlds
And Word Divine through senses' darkness
Resounds, transfiguring all life.

The whole strength of the Self is now aligned head and heart, light and warmth, with cosmic Word. Through the presence of cosmic Word we

become truly able to sow transformative forces in deeds that go beyond our egoism—seeds that can fall on spiritual ground and germinate at the appropriate time. This desire to pour something cosmic and objective in our deeds further refines our will, now permeated with heart warmth.

The human being may feel at his loneliest at this moment of the year, at the time in which we can let the Christ impulse take root in our consciousness. The ego, eager to transform the double, anticipates the Mystery of Golgotha. On the other hand, the human being can also expand her consciousness. During the time of the Holy Nights, Steiner indicates that the processes taking place in the Earth, particularly the mineral sphere merge with those of the plant kingdom. Plants and minerals have a single consciousness. At the time of the Holy Nights the plant kingdom "becomes aware of the secrets of the stars and uses them, so that in the springtime the plants may unfold again and bear blossoms and fruits in accordance with the mysteries of the cosmos."[9] And when the human being can unite with this merged consciousness he can partake of revelations similar to those received by Olav Åsteson at this time of the year.

A certain progression can be seen in the Advent verses through which inner changes manifest in our presence in the world, that presence through which "the world's reality [can] … recreate itself in souls" (verse 33). Our growing sense of Self/connection with the Higher Self has brought us to the cosmic Self and the possibility of hearing cosmic Word within. Our desire to pour cosmic forces in our deeds at the beginning of Advent has rendered us able to sacrifice soul substance so that "shining seeds of soul take root in grounds of worlds" by the end of Advent.

<u>Verse 38 (Christmas)</u>

The spirit child within my soul
I feel freed of enchantment.
In heart-high gladness has
The holy cosmic Word engendered
The heavenly fruit of hope,
Which grows rejoicing into worlds afar
Out of my being's godly roots.

The cosmic Word that we bring into the world through our warmth of heart can take residence and be born at the center of our soul. This is a reminder of that "light that [gave] warmth to simple shepherds' hearts" at the first Christmas. It generates depth of relationship within and hope without. What the human being attempts on her own is only an echo of what the Logos accomplished at the historical Christmas. The light that shone in the middle of the darkness of civilization to prepare for the turning point of time shines now in our soul at the deepest of the yearly personal and collective darkness.

[9] Rudolf Steiner, *The Year's Course as a Symbol for the Great Cosmic Year*, lecture of December 31, 1915.

What we hear in the terms "spirit child" and "heavenly fruit of hope" indicates still something more, something primeval in nature. If we live the course of the year in the spirit of the Christ impulse and unite with cosmic Word during Advent we are approached by what was called in olden times the "Son of God," the being whom our soul carries in the very early years but is no longer adapted to the external nature of man and is unable to develop ego-consciousness. This can be contrasted with the "Son of Man," our present constitution whose physical body awakens ego-consciousness.[10] The Son of God is the soul with which we are connected during the first three years of childhood—when we are not yet with our ego-consciousness—but our physical body cannot carry it past the first three years.

It is the task of the human being, through conscious apprehension of spiritual reality, to transform his external sheaths so that the Son of Man is gradually permeated by the Son of God within the fully conscious ego. This is what happened at the time of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan.[11] If we can permeate the soul of childhood with the reality and content of the spiritual world, then we have a picture of that Christ-like Selfhood of which St. Paul is speaking when he expresses the "Not I, but Christ in me". This is the childlike soul, which we can perceive in our heart, though it may not still fully penetrate the human being.

Week 39 (December 29-January 4): Holy Nights

Surrendering to spirit revelation
I gain the light of cosmic being;
The power of thinking, growing clearer,
Gains strength to give myself to me,
And quickening there frees itself
From thinker's energy my sense of self.

The themes of light and warmth alternate within the Advent and Christmas verses. These are the light of thinking and the warmth of devotion and love, the foundations through which the human being can co-create. A redeemed thinking makes possible to operate from the ground of true freedom, reaffirming our sense of Self. The warmth of our devoted heart fires us for selfless deeds to meet through our transformed and constantly purifying astral and ego the needs of Earth to which we have awakened. This is a slow process that doesn't culminate at Christmas but with the attainment

[10] Rudolf Steiner, "The Son of God and the Son of Man," lecture of 11 February 1911, (GA 127).
[11] "The human Ideal was once actually placed before mankind on the earth. Through the Baptism in Jordan, the soul with which we are connected during the first three years of childhood—but in this case completely permeated by the ego and in unbroken connection with the spiritual world—entered into a human body from which the earlier soul had departed. And then, after three years, this soul from the spiritual worlds shattered the bodily sheaths." Rudolf Steiner, "The Son of God and the Son of Man," lecture of 11 February 1911 (GA 127).

of cosmic thinking, which "awakens love within the hearts of men" (verse 48) after the turning point of verse 46 (cross 7).

Verse 40 (January 5-11): Holy Nights and Epiphany

And when I live in spirit depths
And dwell within my soul's foundations,
There streams from love-worlds of the heart,
To fill the vain delusion of the self,
The fiery power of the cosmic Word.

What is said above is confirmed here. The process continues with the purifying flame of cosmic Word acting within as the humanly generated and purifying "love-worlds of the heart." The birth of Jesus at Christmas is crowned with the birth of Christ at Epiphany. We end the time of the Holy Nights in a polar gesture to that of Christmas. Whereas our "heart-high gladness" looked at the "heavenly fruit of hope" and rejoiced "into farthest worlds" now we look inward to "spirit depths" and "soul foundations" to the purification of the heart and the cleansing of "the vain delusion of my Self." The desire for a spiritual birth will be crowned in verses 44 and 45 of the "spirit birth."[12] The lower Self, that sees in the higher Self its true being and capacity to co-create, will usher in the spirit birth through which the relationship will be as if reversed. The higher Self, objectively experienced in the soul, will look at the lower Self as the vehicle for its presence in the world.

The Theme of Light and Warmth and the Monthly Virtues in the Time from Advent to Epiphany and Beyond

In other places I have looked at the Calendar of the Soul in relation to the monthly virtues which Steiner mentioned only very briefly.[13] Herbert Witzenmann has expanded upon Steiner's indications in his *The Virtues: Contemplations*. The theme of light and warmth, transformed thinking and heart's courage found in the Calendar echoes in the virtues of the year. In the time of Sagittarius (November 21 to December 21) control of Speech becomes feeling for truth (against talkativeness, gossip) Under the sign of Capricorn (December 21 to January 21) courage becomes the power to redeem (against timidity and anxiety).

Under the sign of Sagittarius through control of speech we can rise from subjective opinions to a perception of objective reality. In the interchange between human being and world, the macrocosm cross-fertilizes the microcosm and vice-versa: self knowledge leads to knowledge of the world;

[12] For the overlapping of this theme from Michaelmas to after the Holy Nights see Appendix 18: Sense of Self and Spirit Birth, available at https://www.millenniumculmination.net/cos-appendix-18-sense-of-self-and-spirit-birth.pdf

[13] This theme is developed in *Exploring Themes of the Calendar of the Soul*, Appendix 4: "Monthly Virtues in Relation to the Calendar Verses" also available at https://www.millenniumculmination.net/calendar-of-the-soul-months-and-virtues.pdf.

knowledge of the world leads to self-knowledge. True knowledge unleashes creative force for world transformation, responding to the call of verse 33.

Truth that awakens in the mind has to find residence in the heart, where it strengthens the desire for further self-development. Cosmic Word alights and takes residence in the heart that wants truth to give rise to a new experience of being. Truth asks us that we be changed before we attempt to have an impact on the world.

Under the sign of Capricorn that leads us across the threshold of the cosmic Midnight of the coming year the streams of time past and future meet and are harmonized. From the past we carry the urge to bring compensation to our karmic shortcomings. The stream of the future manifests in the capacities we bring into the present incarnation. With acceptance of destiny and the courage steeled in the heart we can acquire a consciousness of immortality and the ability to redeem in the human world and in Nature.

Cosmic Word takes root in my heart where I nurture and develop courage. I can manifest my innate strength at the time of winter's deepest darkness, and anticipate confidently the sense-world's revelation. Cosmic warmth and cosmic Word deepen and bring into the world what cosmic light has unfolded in and through our thinking and sense of Self. We can now amplify this thread and revisit the verses 34 to 40 in an overlapping way as a path of conscious incarnation according to Steiner's indications offered to Herbert Hahn in the esoteric lessons.

The Time from Advent to Epiphany as an Incarnational Path

In the course of verses 34 to 41 we go from a recapitulation of our previous lifetimes to the passage through death, the movement of ascent into the spritiual world up to the cosmic Midnight, the descent to birth and full incarnation. Under this light the weeks of Advent act as a recapitulation of our past lives, as a progressive path of building of our bodily sheaths—physical, etheric, astral and ego—from the time of our first incarnation, from ancient Lemuria to the present.

The 24th of December commemorates the human being's exile from Paradise and her knowledge of death. With Christmas, as we saw above, the Christ impulse in our soul renews the innocent childhood forces, the Son of God, withheld for humanity's future progress and brought back to us through the place we have given cosmic Word and the Christ impulse in our heart. The following two weeks of the Holy Nights mark the soul's journey after death. Roughly a little more than the first half, to New Year's night, corresponds to the ascent to the planetary spheres up to the cosmic midnight, the second part to the journey back to Earth.

The first part of the Holy Nights corresponds to the forming of the hexagram, the symbol of the macrocosm and of the paradisical soul of the Nathan Adam withheld in the spiritual world until the time of the God's incarnation on Earth. The purity of the lily also describes the soul of the

Shepherds adoring the child. This purity is echoed in verse 39 dominated by an atmosphere of light ("spirit revelation" … "light of cosmic being" … "power of thinking growing clearer") and affirmation of our sense of Self.

The night of the New Year marks the passage of the ruling of one Archai to another, and here takes place something like a suspension of time through which we can reconnect our lower Self on Earth with our higher Self in the sphere of the Sun, rendering the human being open to the realm of Inspiration. This corresponds to the cosmic Midnight hour after which we prepare the formation of our bodily sheaths in the second half of the journey after death. Steiner indicates at this time we are also released from our folk-spirit. This double separation from the Spirit of Time (Archai) and the folk spirit allows us to bring forth new impulses in the space-time continuum. This is the reason why we are invited to express our wishes for the new year into a empty/ pregnant spirit space.

The nights that follow the cosmic Midnight correspond to the second half of the journey after death and the forming of the pentagram, symbol of the microcosm. Historically this was mirrored in the path of the Kings undertaken no longer on the wings of innocence, like the Shepherds, but upon the soul's transformation through wisdom, daughter of earthly experience. Here we welcome a return to incarnation.

This descent journey of incarnation corresponds to verse 40 which has a completely different gesture of verse 39. The second part of it "There streams from love-worlds of the heart, To fill the vain delusion of the self, The fiery power of the cosmic Word" indicates that the soul descending to a new incarnation must undergo a transformation and purification, a strengthening of its resolve. The Self, affirmed in verse 39, is vigorously challenged in verse 40. The new incarnational impulses meet with resistances and the soul must steel itself and recognize the illusions that stand between the ideal and the soul ground fraught with inner hindrances.

The movement from Advent to Epiphany is completed, quite appropriately, in the next three verses that take us beyond the Holy Nights and Epiphany and inaugurate yet completely new qualities. Verse 41 will serve as an example.

<u>Verse 41 (January 12-18)</u>

The soul's creative might
Strives outward from the heart's own core
To kindle and inflame god-given powers
In human life to right activity;
The soul thus shapes itself
In human loving and in human working.

In this verse both cosmic Word and the spirit child continue to resound in the background. They have taken residence in "the heart's own core" and are now completely turned to the needs of Earth. The fruits that have matured in the soul can continue to live and manifest in "human loving and

in human working." The movement continues in the next two verses. In verse 42 the soul "anticipat[es] through warmth of heart the sense world's revelation" and in verse 43 "it gives to world appearance through forces of the heart the power to be."

The path that was set forth with verse 33 has now confirmed and affirmed the "communion of my soul" through which I offer the world the opportunity "to recreate itself in souls" now aware of their cosmic mission.