

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

Christmas and Easter in the Initiatic Tradition



Izvor Collection



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Chapter One

The festival of the nativity

The four cardinal festival days of the year – Christmas, Easter, St John's and Michaelmas – do not owe their existence to chance nor to the arbitrary decision of some religious leader of the past; they correspond to specific cosmic phenomena.¹ During the course of a year the sun passes through four cardinal points (the spring and autumn equinoxes and the summer and winter solstices), and each of these four periods is marked by a tremendous input and circulation of energies, affecting the earth and its inhabitants – plants, animals and human beings. Initiates, who have studied these phenomena, tell us that if humans are attentive and receptive to these currents and prepare for their coming by tuning in to them, they can be transformed by them.

Christian tradition holds that Jesus was born at midnight on the 25th of December, when the sun had just entered the constellation of Capricorn. Symbolically, Capricorn is related to mountains and grottoes, and it is in the depths of a grotto that

the child Jesus was to be born. During most of the year, people and nature are both very active, but, as winter approaches, many kinds of work are brought to a halt, the days grow shorter and the nights longer. The time is then ripe for meditation and recollection; it is time for men and women to enter into the depths of their own being and make things ready for the birth of the Child.

When the sun leaves Capricorn it enters Aquarius, and Aquarius is the water-bearer, the symbol of the waters of baptism, the outpouring of life, and the currents Aquarius brings are currents of renewal. Next, the sun enters Pisces, the sign in which the great draught of fishes occurs, which Jesus spoke of when he told his disciples he would make them 'fish for people'.

But let's get back to the birth of Jesus. Every year, at midnight on December 25th, the constellation of Virgo rises over the horizon (this is why Jesus is said to have been born of a virgin). On the opposite horizon can be seen Pisces, and in mid-heaven the magnificent constellation of Orion is visible, with the three brilliant stars of the 'sword belt' which, in popular tradition, represent the three kings or magi.

Whether or not Jesus really was born on December 25th at midnight is not particularly important. What is important, however, is that

this is the moment at which the Christ-principle, the light and warmth that is destined to transform all creatures, is born in nature, and that at this moment heaven itself is celebrating the festival of the nativity. All the choirs of angels sing their joy, and all the saints, great Masters and initiates rejoice together, praying and giving glory to the Almighty, as the Christ is born in the universe.

And what about human beings? What are the masses doing to celebrate the birth of Jesus? They are crowding into bars, night-clubs and dance-halls, eating, drinking and carousing – what a mentality! And the most astonishing thing is that even highly intelligent people seem to think that this is a perfectly normal way to celebrate the nativity. Instead of being awake to the importance of this event (which only takes place once a year), when the whole of nature is intent on preparing to receive the new life, people's minds are elsewhere. And this is why they not only receive nothing but even forfeit the grace and love of heaven. For what can heaven possibly give to creatures who remain insensible to its divine currents? Disciples, on the other hand, have been busy preparing for this event. They know that the Christ is born into the world on Christmas Eve in the form of light, warmth and life, and they take care to make everything ready within, so that the Christ may also be born in them.

Jesus was born two thousand years ago in Palestine, but that is the historical aspect of Christmas, and, as you know, the historical aspect is of secondary importance to an initiate. It is the cosmic event of Christ's birth which is of far greater importance, for it is the first manifestation of life in nature, the beginning of all outpourings. But the nativity is also a mystical event, for the Christ, the principle of divine light and love, must be born in each individual human soul. This is the true birth of Jesus, and so long as we do not possess that light and love in our soul, the divine Child cannot be born within us. We can celebrate and wait for its coming as much as we like, but nothing will happen!

Jesus was born two thousand years ago, and in memory of that event people go to church and sing that he came to save them from sin. And then, since they are already saved, they feel free to go on sinning, eating and drinking to their heart's content for the rest of eternity. That is how most human beings understand the birth of Jesus. Only very few ever think about working, studying and making a personal effort so that he may be born in every human soul and spirit. If the coming of Jesus into the world two thousand years ago was all that was needed for the kingdom of God to be established, how is it that that kingdom is not yet with us? Surely, all wars, suffering and sickness should already have disappeared!

I am not denying that the nativity of Jesus was an historical event of first importance, but the essence of this event lies in the cosmic and mystical aspects of the festival, for not only is the Christ born each year in the universe, but it can be born at any moment in each one of us. You can reread the Gospel account of the nativity and sing 'Unto us a child is born' as often as you like, but if the Christ does not come to birth within you, yourself, all those other things are meaningless. What is needed, then, is for every human being to have the desire to bring the Christ to birth in their soul, to become like the Christ so that the earth may be peopled with Christs. Was it not this that Jesus was asking for when he said, *'Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these...'* And where, I ask you, are works greater than those of Jesus?

For some, the Christ is already born; for others, it will soon be born, and for yet others, alas, it will be born only several centuries from now. What counts is our preparedness. It is extremely important to prepare ourselves for the festival of the nativity a long time in advance so that we are able to understand all that it means. For example, Jesus was born in a manger between an ox and an ass; what does that mean? And what do the shepherds and the three wise men mean? You will

perhaps say, 'Oh, everybody knows that!' Well, we'll see if everybody knows, and what they think they know!

Of the four Evangelists it is St Luke who gives the most detailed account of the nativity. The others mention it only briefly or not at all, beginning their Gospels with the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan by John the Baptist. So I shall now read you the account of the birth of Jesus in *The Gospel of St Luke*.

'In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

'In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they

were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Christ, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

*"Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he
favours!"*

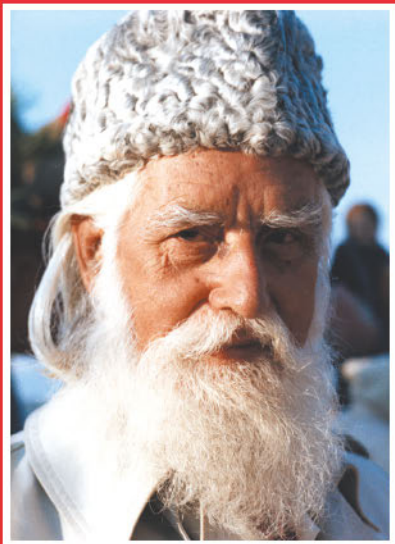
'When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

'After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

‘When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”’

‘Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God saying,

*“Master, now you are dismissing your servant
in peace,
according to your word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the presence of all
peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.”’*



The Bulgarian philosopher, teacher and spiritual Master, Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov (1900-1986), moved to France in 1937. His work deals with the many aspects of initiatic science, but says, 'I have particularly tried to clarify one subject: the two natures of human beings, their higher nature and their lower nature, because this is the key to resolving all problems.'

The festivals of Christmas and Easter, celebrated every year throughout Christendom to commemorate the birth and resurrection of Jesus, are part of an ancient esoteric tradition pre-dating the Christian era. The fact that they coincide with the winter solstice and the spring equinox is evidence of their cosmic significance. From this we learn that human beings, who also belong to cosmic reality, are intimately associated with the processes of gestation, birth and blossoming that take place in nature. Christmas and Easter – the second birth and the resurrection – are really two different ways of celebrating the regeneration of human beings and their birth into the spiritual world.

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