

Love Mirroring Love

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Wisdom is the radiance of the eternal light (זיו אור עולם),
untarnished mirror-icon (מִרְאָה mar'ah) of God's puissance,
image of God's goodness.

Wisdom 7:26



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When lighting the first Advent Candle this year, I invite us, as a contemplative evolution network, to enter into the beauty and wonder of the Incarnation. It is amazing how in each new Advent season, fresh and more expansive insights into the mystery of God becoming human continue to evolve.

Mirror - Icon

As I have listened to the whisperings of love, I have felt stirred to enter into the icon of the mirror of love, which Paul or a close follower, portrays in Colossians: "Christ is the image - icon (εἰκὼν *eikōn*) of the invisible God, ... the first born of all creation, ... the one who holds all things in unity" (Col 1:15-17). Originating from the unifying ground of Christ holding all things together, these shimmering words draw us into their depthless depths, into their naturally unifying field. They take us into the fecundity of Christ as an icon of the invisible God. In biblical Greek, to be an *icon* (εἰκὼν *eikōn*) is not simply to be an image reflecting or mirroring the divine. It is for Christ to be the invisible divine in such a way that the formless One shines forth, is revealed, is encountered in the one who has form. Reciprocally then, when we behold the icon of Christ radiating with invisible divine love, we too become an icon, a mirror reflecting visible and invisible divine love. We are transformed in beholding, until there is only one icon of love. Icon becomes icon.

Hence, when we surrender into the silence, into the depthlessness of this icon of love, we enter into the reflective mirroring of the invisible being made visible, as love mirrors love. In giving ourselves in silent beholding, we open into a spaciousness, an emptiness, a hollowness, where form and formless-ness one. Infused with love knowledge, we behold and see from being held in unity in Christ, in God. Time and eternity kiss. All constructs that set boundaries dissolve.

We see that Christ is the divine radiance made flesh, “the first born”, the eternal Wisdom-Logos who is the origin and pattern of creation. In this naked now of love reflecting love, we participate in the revelatory moment of love eternally first born of all creation and born in finite time having a human face, holding all things in unity. We enter into what Mechthild of Magdeburg calls “a mirror of eternal beholding” (*ein Spiegel der inneren Anschauung*).ⁱⁱ We become transparent and so one in Christ that we share in the divine beholding. We see from our eternal indwelling in Christ. We see that all is truly in one in Christ.

Mirror of Eternity

Clare of Assisi offers us a beautiful way of entering into the eternal nature of this cosmic icon of Christ by gazing into Christ until we become transparent to Christ. Her simple way of prayer teaches us how to follow the desire of our heart, pour out our whole being in love and become poor by yielding into luminous transforming union. Her gentle words reveal to us how to become more and more transfigured and translucent in the kenosis of love, totally giving love’s self to us, as we, in turn, totally give our selves, as love mirrors love. Each word makes us poorer, more dispossessed of all egoic self-reference, more humble, more one with the Christ who has emptied himself totally for love. She takes us into the kenotic self-emptying that removes all images, all possessions, all constructed senses of self, into a silence that fills us with divine radiance:

Place (*pone*) your mind (*mentum*)
in the mirror of eternity (*speculo aeternitatis*),
place your soul (*animum*)
in the splendour of glory (*splendore gloriae*),
place your heart (*cor*)
in the figure of the divine substance or essence (*divinae substantia*)
and, through contemplation,
transform your entire being into the image of the Divine One.ⁱⁱⁱ

Clare’s threefold invocation to place (*pone*), position, penetrate into or fix our mind, our soul and our heart within the mind, glory and substance of Christ, is a naturally flowing movement, illuminating how, as we place our body-heart-mind in the mirror of eternity, our soul naturally infuses in the glory of divine radiance. This kenotic dispossession centres us in the point of the mirror of our soul where our heart opens into the radiance of the divine essence. Bathed in seraphic divine light, we are freed from anything tarnishing the mirror. We become a mirror of the mirror, an icon of the icon, an image of the image, until there is only one icon, one mirror of love, one mirror of eternal beholding. Translucent in the mirror of eternity, we begin to see through the divine luminosity of the mirror of eternity who holds all things together.

Once we gaze through the eyes of eternal divine love, we are also enabled to see the very earthy fleshy life of the Poor Christ that begins at the border of the mirror with the birth of Christ. In Clare’s light filled words:

Gaze closely, ... at the border of the mirror,
to the beginning of the life of this Poor One,
at the poverty of Love wrapped in swaddling clothes

and placed in a manger.^{iv}



Insightfully, Clare reveals to us how this icon of eternity reflects the apophatic nature of the Colossians icon, while simultaneously revealing a vulnerable, poor, very human child as portrayed in Luke's gospel, "You will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes (*ἐσπαργανωμένον esparganōmenon*), (*involvit*) lying in a manger" (Luke 2:10-12). Clare stresses the naturalness of this birth, the poverty and vulnerability of the child needing care and protection. At the same time, she points to how this birth of the Christ child is an involution, an infolding, of all things being gathered, swaddled and held together in this tiny babe. We behold all things, in such a way that finite and infinite embrace. In this exchange of love mirroring love a new, radiant heart-knowing emerges in us.

We then become what Marguerite Porete calls "the mirror of a simple soul" (*le miroir des ames simples*). We are "led back through annihilation (*reconduite par anéantissement*) – or in Clare's words through becoming poor, "to the state in which Love received us in the beginning" (*en l'état où Amour la reçut au commencement*).^v We return to our primordial unity in divine Love where we are "in nothing" (*en nient*) so nothing, only God remains.^{vi} As the mirror of our soul becomes "nothing" we become a mirror of eternity. Illumed only by divine light, our eternal memory of being held eternally in Christ, the first born of all creation awakens, along with our participation in the historical event of the birth of Jesus. We behold and see that we are an icon of eternal contemplation intensely involved in mirroring the infinite in the finite, the finite in the infinite. We participate in incarnating divine love.

Becoming a Communal Mirror

When we shine in this way of placing ourselves in the mirror of eternity, our soul in glory and our heart opens into the divine essence, into the advent scene of the the *Visitation*, we see how Clare's radiant mirror of eternity and Marguerite's annihilated mirror are embodied in communion. In this illumination by the artist of St Gudile,^{vii} the artist immerses us in visual beauty as he imparts an atmosphere of quiet wonder, poverty of spirit and luminous glory. He centres the point of our vision and invites us to enter into the sacred moment of the face to face

mirroring of love between Mary and Elizabeth, and their womb to womb consecration of each other.



As we behold and pour out our mind, soul and heart into the colourful soft folds of flowing fabric, we are drawn into the choreography of entwining hand gestures that allows us to enter into the intimate moment of the touching of each woman's womb. The touch quickens our heart and awakens a sensualized transcendence where, as we touch, we are taken into the unseen infusing of divine life within. We enter into a communal epiphany as the radiance of the joy of Mary and her babe is reflected in the child in Elizabeth's womb leaping for joy, (Lk 1:45) and the presence of the divine within our own heart-wombs leaping. Joy leaps and love illumines. Our hearts quicken inviting our own: "Let it be done to me according to your word" (Lk1:38). Mary's response is to sing, "My soul magnifies (μεγαλύνει *megalýnei*) God." Elizabeth's soul magnifies God. Our souls magnify God. The longing to say with Jessica Powers, "I live my Advent in the womb of Mary"^{viii} is realized. Our heart knows that we are called to actively participate in magnifying God by giving birth to the divine personally and communally by incarnating divine love.

Paul reminds us:

Now we all,
with unveiled (ἀνακεκαλυμμένω *anakekalymmenō*) faces (προσώπῳ *prosōpō*)
beholding as in a mirror (κατοπτριζόμενοι *katoptrizomenoi*)
are transformed (μεταμορφούμεθα *metamorphoumetha*)
into the image - icon (εἰκόνα *eikona*) of the Lord (Κυρίου *Kyriou*),
reflecting light from glory to glory (2 Cor 3:18).

We unveil our faces and become a brighter reflection of the one we love through beholding the mirror of eternity. Beholding as in a mirror, from (κατά *kata*) according to and (ὄπτρον *optron*)

mirror that includes (ὄψ *ops*) eye, face or sight, literally means to look and see one's self in the mirror Christ and be metamorphized into Christ. This metamorphosis, from (μετά *meta*) a change of state, and (μορφή *morphē*) form or appearance, is a total transformation, into what Teilhard de Chardin calls Christogenesis. As the mirroring of the infinite in the finite intensifies, we realize that through our contemplation, we participate in the entire universe being brought to fulfilment in Christ the Omega point. In removing the veil, by beholding and becoming one with Christ, we consciously participate in the work of incarnation.

This is Advent's secret that we enter into as members of our contemplative evolution network. We meet one another in our communal heart space and like Mary and Elizabeth heart-womb touches heart-womb. In this touching, we truly see each other with all our pain and all our joy together, as one mirror of eternity. We magnify God. Face reflecting face, reflecting face, becomes one face, one icon of love. Our "We" metamorphosises into a luminous icon of love revealing love. Beatrice Bruteau reminds us how critical it is that we, in communion consciousness, affirm that we are an icon of the Great Mystery. She asks:

What are we? Forms of the Formless.
Who are we? Beloved children of God.
How are we? Born of God out of Love,
out of the self-giving, self-sharing that Love is.
Why are we? Expressing the expansion of being, to be more in every way;
exegeting the Invisible, incarnating the Absolute,
giving artistic utterance to That which is beyond all speech.^{ix}

We are a radiant mirror of divine love mirroring love loving. This Advent may we leap for joy!

ⁱ "The Nativity", from Manuscript, [Horae B.M.V. : illuminated ms. on vellum]. [Paris ca.1490], State Library Victoria.

ⁱⁱ Mechthild of Magdeburg, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, 5.7. My translation.

ⁱⁱⁱ Clare of Assisi, *Letter 3 to Agnes*. My translation.

^{iv} Clare of Assisi, *Letter 4 to Agnes*. My translation.

^v Marguerite Porete, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, Ch. 137. My translation.

^{vi} See, *Mirror of Simple Souls*, Ch. 118.

^{vii} Master of the View of St Gudule, "Visitation" from an altar panel for the Carmelites, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium.

^{viii} Jessica Powers, *The Selected Poems of Jessica Powers*, ICS Publications, 1999, 81.

^{ix} Beatrice Bruteau, "The Sign of Contradiction," *The Theosophist*, August, 1999, 896.