

## ... Trailing Clouds of Glory ...

Robert Louis Stevenson, the writer was always physically weak and spent long spells coping with illness.

He never bothered about dressing neatly and usually looked 'a bit of a wreck' as the saying goes.

One day on the street a man finely dressed, tall and strong, walked towards him. R L Stevenson caught his look of disgust and almost contempt.

As he came within a yard Stevenson stepped in the man's path and said, "God made me". The arrogant man didn't hesitate a moment and replied:

"Well, God made a mistake!"

The Kosmos welcomes our birth. We are not a mistake.

The body says,

"Listen to me!  
I am the supreme gift of the divine.  
I am miracle of love made by love.  
I am celebration  
I am dance!  
I am the pleasure of God!"

- Joy Cowley  
"Incarnation"



What good is it to me for the Creator to give birth to his/her Son if I do not give birth to him in my time and my culture?

- Meister Eckhart

Enclosed is the daily lectionary taking us into February 2012.

HAPPY NEW YEAR EVERYONE

May peace, joy and love be more than fine words at Christmas. May they be the gift tags you can put on your experience.

L.J.R.

# SHALOM

in the HCUC

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## Dear Friends

Here we are at the end of another year of Shalom. This is the last number for 2011. All being well I plan to restart into another series in 2012 some time in February.

- ★ For this issue there is one very obvious theme: **CHRISTMAS**. Calls for an effort to put Christ back into Christmas seem to be diminishing. Maybe that's because the word "Christ" has so little meaning for people in society today. Even if we know that Christ is not Jesus' surname and is more a description of Jesus' inner nature, this helps very little.
- ★ Of the high points on the Christian calendar Christmas gets top ranking—above Easter and Pentecost. This is not surprising when we see how much else has grown out of this season. When we think of Christmas what comes into our mind?

### Christmas has many faces and facets

- ★ Christmas = holidays, barbecues and beaches, getting and spending, carols, cards and camping, families together, parties, children and presents. It also has its shadow side:- families divided, poverty, mounting debt, road accidents, loneliness. We can make a long list and not even feel the need to mention the birth of Jesus.
- ★ The positive element is almost hidden, buried under a heap of our cultural customs, and unexamined assumptions. How to express the positive element? Christmas holds out to us an expectation of family (love, togetherness, security), fun (escaping from excessive stress, being free to love and enjoy being ourselves), food (enough to meet our physical needs, and enable children to grow and be healthy).

These basic aspects of life spring from our deep down conviction that a human incarnation, our physical existence is meant to be the spring-board for experiencing love, harmony and peace. This built-in knowingness has been confirmed by the birth of Jesus. Our human life is a gift—not a mistake.

For all the misunderstanding, opposition and rejection Jesus encountered he never swerved from his constant and confident YES! to this human existence. At every step he affirmed people and their potential, healed the sick and disabled, accepted and honoured the outcasts and rejected. An overwhelming affirmation of the importance of our birth.

### ★ AND THERE IS MORE ...

When the Gospel writers put their stories of Jesus together they reflected the understanding that they and others had reached—at that point in time. It was a pretty profound understanding they had reached. They wrote their account of the birth of Jesus so that there were layers of meaning in them. The story of the historical and geographical facts (referring to Roman governors, and places like Nazareth and Bethlehem, and shepherds and hotels) are all surface bits. ‘The more’ lies beneath and in places pokes through in very obvious ways. They use signs and symbols to draw our attention to the dimensions they consider to be more important. We could say they want to draw our attention to the most important aspect of our human birth and existence. And what is the important aspect?

It may seem exaggerated to say that our birth and beingness has cosmic significance. However the birth narratives of Jesus, especially in Matthew and Luke, are full of cosmic symbols and wider meanings than just the birth of another human being.

Let’s take a brief look at some of these signs.

### ★ Fingers Pointing to the Moon

In this case it’s a finger pointing to the cosmos. So we need to know that for first century writers angels and dreams and stars and glory are all fingers pointing to vaster dimensions, to something greater than ourselves. So great, in fact, that it defies definition, and yet is part of who we are, and assures us we belong in the scheme of things. We are meant to be. Our lives are not mistakes.

The writer Ken Wilber insists on referring to the Kosmos, rather than the cosmos. Why? Because he says we have come to think of the cosmos as the physical universe or physical dimension. For Wilber Kosmos includes cosmos, but has vaster dimensions, beyond the world of scientific materialism. It has mind and spirit and vast emptiness beyond what we can see through telescopes, visit with cameras in space, and measure.

### TWO EXAMPLES

★ STARS — The magi saw the Star and went exploring until they found Jesus. A great story and not necessarily historical fact. The underlying dimension is the really significant bit. Stars were the most obvious part of the Kosmos—now we have black holes! We also know that we (our bodies) are composed of star-dust. This is the stuff of our origin. When we forget or cut ourselves off from our origin it spells disaster. The word disaster—literally spells dis (separated from) aster (the Greek word for star).

★ ANGELS — Angels are the messengers from the unseen spirit realm. They are subtle high speed energies so they are diaphanous or completely invisible, or only seen by people who have reached a similar subtle state. Wings of angels suggest the ability to escape the earthbound heavy energies.

Today we may discover other “fingers” pointing to the Kosmos. The key significance remains—what the birth of Jesus highlights is that we are all born with stars pointing to our potential, and angels singing of the divine radiance and beauty that fills the Kosmos—and us, can we dare to believe this?

Sincerely and  
Shalom to You, Lester