

STUDY GATHERING ON JESUS IN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY
5TH NOVEMBER 2005 AT HELICON, ZEIST (THE NETHERLANDS)

Speakers are Dr John van Schaik and Seyed Dr Mostafa Azmayesh
Music throughout the gathering by Anke Goorissen (hymns on texts of Hildegard von Bingen, Hadewych and Guido of Arezzo) and the Sufi Simorg Ensemble (poems by Seyed Dr Azmayesh, music by Anne-Marie van den Bercken), translator Hans Hoekendijk.

The gathering is opened with an introduction by Joke Bakker of the two speakers.

Based on the meeting of Dr Van Schaik and Seyed Azmayesh during a lecture of the latter, this discussion now takes place today on the question of the position of Jesus Christ in Christianity and Islam.

This introduction is followed by singing a hymn by Guido of Arezzo under the direction of Anke Goorissen.



Dr Van Schaik is very honoured to have Dr Azmayesh as his guest today and refers to the preparatory talk last night that only took about ten minutes as both agreed on the topic of today and the fact that today would not be spent on theological issues but would rather move on to the mystical aspects of today's topic.

The first theme is the Immaculate Conception (mentioned both in the Bible and the Koran) and the crucifixion/resurrection as written in the Bible and not in the Koran.

In the New Testament the conception by the Holy Spirit was announced by the archangel Gabriel and consequently the child Jesus was born from a virgin.

In answer to this statement Seyed Azmayesh would first like to thank Dr Van Schaik for the opportunity of being here and express the wish that more gatherings like these would and could be held wherein the participants may understand each other more and can exchange each other's cultural situations. It must be understood that Dr Azmayesh was invited as a Sufi lecturer and as such is limited in the knowledge of the Koran but will, however, answer any questions to the best of his ability. My (Dr Azmayesh's) background is of Sufi nature and more particular the mystical aspect of Sufism.

The Koran is explicit on Jesus being born from Saint Mary (Mariam) and is called Nour (meaning Light) and is also called Adam, who has no human parents also.

Van Schaik: Jesus is therefore a unique person, more unique than, for instance, Abraham and Mozes.

Seyed: Yes and about Jesus' birth there is no difference between the Bible and the Koran; the same applies to St Mary, St John and Zachary. When you enter the mihrab – the place to pray in a mosque – you will read a text about Zachary (the father of St John) who went to pray there and met an angel.

In the Koran the conception of Jesus is based on a triangle: God – the sender, Mary – the receiver and Gabriel – the announcer.

Gabriel's annunciation came very sudden and Mary became afraid but Gabriel explained that he just came to tell her that a soul from God would come to her with the name Jesus. Many people would ask Mary how this conception could take place and Gabriel advised her not to talk to these people but leave answering the questions to Jesus who could communicate with the people from the womb.

There are many sura's in the Koran that talk of Mary from the tribe of Eram.

When the Koran was revealed to Mohammed many people did not accept the fact that they were to pray in the direction of Mecca so they left and went to Ethiopia where Christianity had been established. On asking for admittance the governor of Ethiopia asked what their religion was and the people replied by quoting sura's about Mary. As there were many similarities with the texts in the Bible, they were accepted as refugees.

Van Schaik: So we may conclude that there is no difference on the topic of the immaculate birth. There are, however, differences about the death, the resurrection and the redemption in the texts of the Bible and the Koran.

In Christianity the death and resurrection of Jesus is necessary for a Christian to arrive at salvation/redemption at the end of his or her time/the end of time itself.

Seyed: There are different interpretations and different points of view that need not be essential. It is important that the soul travels on, in the form of light after death under the guidance of Jesus. Jesus came as the child of God, as light and it is important to always keep Jesus in mind. It is not only important to believe in the resurrection but it is also important that this second birth – the resurrection – can take place at *any* time (not just on death).

In the Koran you may find several verses about the resurrection of Lazarus. When he had been dead for three days Jesus restored life to him and this can be considered as being both the biological and the spiritual life. Jesus gave the breath of life to someone dead and so made him alive. This means that when you are connected to Jesus you can have a second, a spiritual birth.

Van Schaik: Seyed says that the resurrection of Lazarus can be interpreted as a mystical, spiritual birth.

Seyed: Yes, we shouldn't limit the resurrection of Lazarus to a biological resurrection only.

Van Schaik: So there is no difference between the resurrection of Lazarus and Christ?

Seyed: The concept is the influence of soul on matter. The difference is that Jesus was able to come back in his body; Lazarus could not come back in his body on his own – he needed Jesus to do that. Jesus was the Master and Lazarus the disciple. Jesus could come and go whenever he wanted.

Jesus came to Lazarus and restored life to him but he did not tell Lazarus what to do with this life: his mission was only to restore life and he told Lazarus that he was free and could do what he wanted. Lazarus, however, was smart and said that he would follow Jesus.

Van Schaik: in the Koran there is no mention of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus – the text says that Jesus went 'heavenward'.

Can we overcome these differences or shall we conclude that there just is a different point of view?

Seyed: We have two names for Christ: one is Isa (for the corporal aspect) and the other name is Masi for the spiritual aspect. The text in the Koran denies the crucifixion of Masi but says nothing about the crucifixion of Isa. This is the denial that any human is able to torture or crucify the soul of God, the pure light, Masi.

Van Schaik concludes that when Jesus went to heaven this was Masi – not Isa, according to the Koran.

Question: Seyed says that Lazarus received a soul when he was resurrected by Jesus. I always thought that we received a soul when we were born.

Seyed: We can compare this matter with what happens to an egg. The first birth is when a bird lays the egg, the second is the coming into existence of a bird inside the egg and a bird cannot do this on its own; the mother bird is needed. This is the same for the second birth of the soul: Jesus, the master, is needed; the human soul cannot do this on its own.

Van Schaik: Is there a difference between spirit and soul?

Seyed: In the Koran a big part is dedicated to the description of what a human being is. On the surface of the ocean a human is surrounded by the bubbles of the water, but only in the depth of the ocean the pearl can be found.

The word used in the Koran is sabohad in the ocean but also means



which not only means travelling meditating.

Question: *Jesus was born from the and Judaism are therefore closely connection with the Islam as the Islam originated from a sect in northern Africa?*

Jewish tradition and Christianity connected. What is the

Seyed: I think that South Arabia was meant – not northern Africa. At the time of Mohammed there were many communities of Christians and Jews in the Arabic peninsula. At first Mohammed tried to connect with these communities. Mohammed was inspired by the Gnostic ascetic Christian communities and was a mystic. Mohammed was connected to a church in Syria in the city of Basra. There was a branch of Gnostic Christianity which was called Bahira and he received the initiation there when he was twelve. Having received this initiation he went away (as was customary) to spread the views and beliefs. All these people were seekers of God and it was very good indeed that Mohammed returned to the people who were (in the Koran) called the ignorant people. Mohammed was not sent to Arabia but was meant to go to ignorant people (in Arabia).

From the Koran sura 5, verse 82: ‘There is talk of priests and monks – and these were close to Jesus – their heart was soft and they started to cry when they heard the words.’

Question: *Isn't it true that Abraham and Ishmael originated Islam as they 'renewed the house of God in Mecca'.*

Seyed: The Islam has a larger meaning than for Muslims only as everybody who worshipped one God whether he was Jewish, Christian or Muslim was called a Muslim and that is why Mohammed considered and called Abraham, Mozes etc. Muslims. [We hebben dit bij Seyed nagevraagd en hij geeft aan dat het zo correct geformuleerd is.](#)

After a break Dr. Van Schaik says that the hearts of the audience are filled to the brim and flowing over with the search for knowledge and involvement in this matter.

He continues: In the Koran we find nothing written about the death or resurrection of Christ but there is written that the Messiah went up to heaven. What happened to the Messiah when he went up to heaven and where can he be found now?

Seyed: Every human being has two aspects: a visible and a non-visible aspect. Jesus had these two aspects too; he was born as a human, called Isa, the son of Mariam. He also has another, heavenly, name that existed before his birth and that name was Masi. The reality of Jesus has many layers and the deepest aspect is called Masi and nobody could touch that substantial aspect. When we talk about heaven we often say that heaven is far away, however more true is that we are far from heaven. How to reach heaven? You can reach heaven through the door in your heart.

Van Schaik: If heaven is close and we are far from heaven, do we ourselves erect these thresholds or barricades between ourselves and Jesus?

Seyed: Yes. When I, for instance, close my eyes, I cannot see you. Because of this lack of information I am in the dark, blind and when we close our eyes we are limited in the sensorial perception. The place to see God's throne, to see Jesus, the archangels, is a place out of time

and place. That is why we must change ourselves and become without time and place in order to meet him.

Van Schaik: Masi is always nearby then. Can you come to Masi when you follow Jesus?

Seyed: Yes, of course.

Van Schaik: What can you tell us about following Jesus?

Seyed: You are to follow the discipline of Jesus and fight the false self. You become a disciple by following the practice and not being engaged in a rational interpretation. That is the difference between practicing and talking (about it).

The Gnostic mystics followed the practices of Jesus and considered themselves as followers of Jesus although some of them did (or do) not go to church.

Van Schaik: Would you say that Sufi's are true Christians?

Seyed: No, I do not want to narrow Sufi's down to that. However, they consider themselves as followers of Masi.

In mystic poetry you will find about seventy percent references to Jesus and about thirty percent to other prophets, including Mohammed. In Hafez' poetry you will find no reference to Mohammed at all but many to Jesus. To be quite clear: when Hafez writes about Jesus, he is referring to Masi who is described as 'the doctor of love'.

Van Schaik: Hadewych (1210-1260) talks or sings very little of Jesus or God but she does extensively about 'love'. Is there a similarity?

Seyed: Yes.

Van Schaik: Another element of christian mysticism in the Middle Ages was that you needed to follow the suffering of Jesus and needed to suffer yourself also. Does this exist in Sufism?

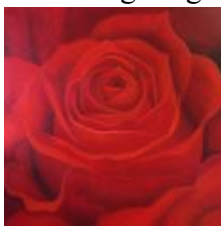
Seyed: You will not find this in Sufism. There is 'suffering' but this is the sadness or nostalgia of the soul and also the sadness caused by (living in) the material world.

You need to empty your heart in order to bring the nostalgia into your heart and that nostalgia and the love are overwhelmingly big and so need a lot of room. When love dominates your heart, you will suffer but this suffering is a side-effect of love which is completely different from the suffering when you are torturing yourself.

Van Schaik: Hadewych wrote a letter to her fellow-nuns in which she wrote about the absence of Christ, the forsakenness which actually was no sadness but part of the mystical path.

Seyed: This is not the 'absence' but the 'farness'. The story of the nightingale and the flower explains this. The nightingale awaits the arrival of the flower for a whole year and when there,

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flower only stays for some five days and when the flower has come, it is only there to go away again. That is the suffering, sadness, the farness and not the 'absence', because the Beloved there, is never absent.

Schaik: Van Ruusbroec (1293-1381) says that mysticism is for that which you already have.

Seyed agrees.

Question: *When quoting from the Koran, please add the exact sura and verse.*

Another question: Could you say something about (the role of) Jesus as redeemer of all humanity, the whole cosmos apart from the redeemer of the individual soul?

Seyed: I can divide my answer in two categories: one is the theological way that renders many possibilities, raises many questions and many answers and the other category is by referring to Jesus as the 'doctor of love'. There is a very famous saying: 'Nobody can enter the Kingdom of God if the second birth is not realized.' That is why a mystic always lives in the present, in the 'now' as this second birth can take place at any moment.

Question: *Many great Sufi Masters were inspired by Zarathustra and Mani. Does this tell us something of the origin of Sufism?*

Seyed: Sufism is without origin. The path of love, the path of substantial evolution exists even before the birth of humanity and there are many different names for this path. It all comes down to: 'when you find yourself, you will find God'.

The word Sufi was first written in Islamic texts and there are many explanations about the origin of the word: Suf means wool and Sufi's dressed themselves in a woollen cloak; the origin of the word Sufi would be Sophia (think of the Ayah Sophia in Istanbul, the capital Sofia of Bulgaria), the word meaning wisdom; the name of a city Kuf in Southern Iraq, in existence 1200 hundred years ago, or a man with a name similar to Sufi who was given the possibility to build a temple by a Christian prince. Suf can also mean the skin of an animal and Mohammed was said to have Sufe companions in the mosque.

Although the name Sufi is not written in the Koran, it is sure that the name existed before the Koran was written.

So philologers have made extensive searches for the origin of the name but all of this is talk about the origin of the word, not of the path.

Question: *Is it true that the relation between body and soul cannot be understood by thinking rationally?*

Seyed: Yes, that is true. Sufi's follow the path of substantial evolution but following this path cannot be limited to the Sufi way alone; the same path was followed by the Gnostics, people who study the ways of the Kabala; these are all different branches, different systems, different methods to discover your true self.

In Sufism the hermeneutic language plays a very important role and that is why the Sufi interpretation of a text can be so different from other interpretations. To a Sufi each letter can be like an

ocean. You must know the language and understand what they are revealing and how mystics use specific language to either hide or reveal things. Sufism can be described as a certain kind of interpretation of a text. That is why you can be a Christian and, at the same time, be a Sufi and that is also why someone can be a Muslim and a Sufi at the same time.



Van Schaik: Theresa from Avila wrote a book called *The Citadel* in which she describes the seventh phase as the phase of God. She describes that it was as if her soul was divided in a spirit and a soul. She said that she felt like 'a three-fold' body, soul and spirit.

Is this true?

Seyed: Sufism uses a different vocabulary: substance – essence – existence. The deepest layer is in the hidden world. There are the realities of an elementary nature, a physical nature, an astral nature. The travel takes place from the body to the heart in four steps. During the steps the ego (called nafs) has to be fought and conquered. In the heart another seven steps have to be made. When you go into the depth of yourself, you travel to blackness (not: darkness) and in this blackness, which is full of colour, you will find the pearl in the deepest depth of the ocean. When you have found this pearl, this real substance, you will have found God.

The Simorg Ensemble now sings a song with the words Hu madadi (Hu is one of the names of God – madadi is help me) Hacq madadi (Hacq is yet another word for God meaning Truth and madadi is again help me).

A seeker sings this song, repeats these words as a reminder of God, as remembering God. In this melody and text is a hidden rhythm as is in all mystical poetry. This rhythm is a reminder

of the 'thought' of God and this particular rhythm is widely used in mystical poetry. The rhythm is very important and Rumi explained: 'You are water and you are the jar of water – do not leave me thirsty'.

Water is very important and so is wine: 'come to me and change the grapes under my feet into wine'. In the middle of paradise is a centre where four rivers meet; the four rivers of wine, water, milk and honey.

A film is now shown of glass stained windows of the cathedral St. Foy de Conches in Normandy. (Also see annexe).

In Sufism you will find the same symbols as used in these Christian glass stained windows: the wine – the winepress – the teacher – the student.

You can see the description of a path, from the egg in the heart to the bird, to the wine-maker.

Van Schaik asks whether you could say that the mystical path of making wine is a transformation, a transmutation of Jesus in Messiah?

Seyed answers affirmatively and adds that there is a travel from the visible to the invisible (from the surface to the depth) – then there is the creation, by the connection to a master, followed by the initiation. Then there is the becoming of and the being of a master who can make or change a pupil in pure substance.

Question: *Could you say that the crucifixion is the destruction of the ego? (because 'Masi' cannot be touched by any human).*

Seyed: in one of the windows you see a winepress which is the cross.

A lot of force is needed to crush the grapes (the ego) and so the path of substantial evolution is not an easy one.

Question: *We have seen the archangel Gabriel in these windows. Could you tell us some more about the other (arch)angels?*

Seyed: The four archangels form the corners of the throne of God. Gabriel is the messenger between the divine and material world. The angels and archangels have their own special world and their own hierarchy.

The name Gabriel is composed of two words: Jab meaning the necessary power God needs to the manifestation of power and the supremacy of God in the visible and invisible worlds and Iel which means God.

The word algebra can also be brought back to the origin of the world. Gabriel is the domination to execute; the will of God must be executed, also being the eschatological aspect.

Van Schaik: Christian mystics generally speak of the (mystical) unity with Christ. In Christianity the belief is that someone will generally meet Christ after death and that Christ returns at the end of the days. You could say that through the mystical path Christ is brought from the future in the present. Is there a similarity in Sufism?

Seyed: a seeker is exposed to two worlds: the visible, material world and the invisible world inside the seeker him/herself. This means that you can meet Jesus in both the visible and the invisible world. How, however, will you distinguish Jesus from the seven billion people? You just cannot. That is why you have to meet Jesus in your heart first, before you can distinguish in the material world in between all the people alive. He is waiting to come to this world but only when three hundred thirteen people are able to know/distinguish him.

Van Schaik: When I have developed myself, will the temporary become the eternal?

Seyed: The Messiah *is* here but we cannot distinguish him. He is here because he is the axis of the universe and without him the universe could not turn. We are now in a period of

occultation (of darkness) and we are therefore blind – when we could open our eyes, we could distinguish him.

Question: Is there a difference between Christ and Messiah?

Van Schaik: in the ‘hadiths’, authorized sayings and actions of Mohammed is talk of Isa returning at the end of the days, stories of Mohammed on a horse, with a sword to judge, etc. We hebben bij Seyed nagevraagd wat nu het goede woord was, Masi of Mohammed.... en Seyed geeft hierover de volgende uitleg:

Seyed: In the hadith, it is said that :.... before the end of Time, Isa-Masih (Christ) will be sent by God to the people. He is coming just before "Mohammad-Mehdi". He is coming for announcing the arrival of Mehdi. This Mehdi is a savior who come for re-establishing justice among the humans. His real name is "Mohammad", and he is from the family of the prophet of Islam. Mehdi is his surname, meaning "guide". He will come, and by a divine force dislodge injustice, and restore totally Justice for 72 years in the world. He will confront "Dajjal" (equivalent of Anti-Christ)/....

In these category of hadith a lot of sayings of "Armagedon" and "Apocalyps" of Christianity is penetrated. In reality, you cannot distinguish between Mehdi and Mesih. As they are the same person, with the same mission, in two bodies with two names !!

Seyed: Mas in Arabic means pouring water on or washing the head. When holy water is poured on the head, this is a ceremonial action, an initiation.

The thoughts and imaginings that make the inside of the head dirty are cleansed away; the ego stops functioning and leaves you concentrated only on your heart. Then you can hear the heart beat and the rhythm of the heart. That is when the door is opened to the parallel world. An elementary phrase in Sufism is Baba ab dad, meaning father (or teacher) gave water. The teacher gave the second birth; ‘I died and received the second birth’.

The teacher gave water and the second birth took place. The teacher said: ‘now you are free and you can go wherever you want.’ A clever student, however, will remain close to the source. A not so clever student will have the illusion of water and will be like a wanderer in the desert as the followers of Moses in the desert were when he gave them the water and they preferred to go elsewhere.

Dr Van Schaik now chooses to hand Dr Azmayesh the first copy of his latest book on Christian mysticism which Seyed considers very important as a bridge between two cultures and is very grateful for this gift.

What is most important is the search for unity as in sura 3 verse 64 (Imran family) where it is said to come to one word and not make each other into Lords. In the Torah, the New Testament and the Koran is written to come together for respecting one thing, to worship one thing – God.

Rumi wrote: do not seek yourself, seek Unity, eliminate duality, Unity is what I seek, Unity is what I speak, Unity is what I explain.

Do is two and is found in the word duality – Khod is the real self. Rumi: ‘I eliminated duality in myself and I found Unity in the universe; I found unity in the visible and the invisible world. I am neither a Hindu, a Jew, a Christian, I am neither from the West nor from the East, I only seek Unity. Unity is the path of Love.’

This very important poem of Rumi was set on the rhythm of Aly Jan nam – Tan tan tanan.

Question: *Is the Masi from the abovementioned hadith the same as the returning Messiah?*

Seyed: Masi is always present, always there, but people are just not aware of this presence in this period of occultation, this dark period which is the same for Sufi's as Christians.

Question: *Why is the word Christ written in the bible, not Masi?*

Answer from the audience:

We now have a new translation of the Bible and now the name Messiah (Messiah, Masi) is used about sixty times instead of the word Christ in the earlier translation.

Masi and Messiah/Messiah mean the same: the anointed one. Christ is originally a Greek word (Christos) also meaning anointed.

In the Koran Jesus has two names: Isa (from Yeshua) and Masi which is not from the Judaic but from the mystical language. The word Christ is not mentioned in the Koran – only Isa and Masi.

Question: *After Jesus was baptized by St John he received his 'call' and became Christ. In Christianity we have Christ and anti-Christ. Is there some same sort of reference in the Koran?*

Seyed: It is difficult in the West to make room for a mystical interpretation because we hear so much of Islam and the Islamic intolerance. The Sufi path is the path of love and the same is found in the New Testament when Jesus is called the doctor of love.

Question: *Can you find this path of love in the Koran also in spite of the fact that we hear such violent and aggressive sayings from the Koran?*

Seyed: The Koran gives a path of love also but some 'narrow-minded' persons who read the Koran will find these points. If, however, these persons would be 'broad-minded' they would find love and light as the path of the Koran. This kind of misunderstanding is not something of Muslims only, just think of the Christians who went on Crusades and that had nothing to do with (the teachings of) Jesus.

Remark: 'Islam' means peace word.

Question: *When a Christian which version would be the*

Seyed: There are many



actually there is no good translation at all. If there are one million five hundred thousands readers of the Koran, there would be one million and five hundred thousand interpretations. Take for instance the word Jihad which is used in the Koran and is nowadays interpreted as a holy war (on non-believers). The original meaning of the word Jihad is the struggle a seeker/believer fights inside him or herself against the nafs (the ego).

Seyed just bought a Dutch translation of the Koran but regrets to say that the translation of Islam is not correct as the word is translated as submission.

At the end of this part of the gathering the participants are kindly asked not to give applause to Seyed as he participated today with a view to spreading knowledge and not to receiving applause.

After thanking the speakers, the musicians and all participants, the Sufi Simorg Ensemble ends the gathering of today with music.

Brief summary of the gathering on November 5th, 2005

The historic Jesus in the New Testament and church.

Immaculate conception.

In Christianity the immaculate conception is of the utmost importance to express that Jesus is both human and Son of God. Mary is made pregnant by the Holy Ghost (Matt. 1, 20 and Luke 1.35). In the confession of faith this is called : ‘received from the Holy Ghost, born from the virgin Mary’. However, Marc and John ‘postpone’ this birth of the Son of God to the baptism in the river Jordan. There are old versions of the Gospel of Lucas where it is written: ‘You are my Son, today I have procreated You’. In that case Jesus was born from Joseph and Mary and only after having been baptized in the river Jordan became ‘Son of God’.

This was taught for instance in the Nestorian Christianity that was very influential in the region of the silk-route. In traditional Christianity this is evident: Jesus was the Son of God from his birth on.

The Immaculate Conception is written down in the Koran also, Muslims believe this.

Crucifixion and resurrection.

In Christianity the crucifixion and the resurrection are essential doctrines. The New Testament is very explicit on these subjects. Other Christians like the Gnostic Docetics were called heretics.

Christ died voluntarily on the cross to redeem our sins, to reconcile. Through his resurrection He is the first ‘Resting in Christ’ and thus enables us to return to God. Liberal Christians today do not believe any of this: they find that crucifixion and resurrection rather belong to Christian fundamentalism.

I myself believe the following: death and resurrection of Jesus Christ actually took place. That fact is valid for all humanity on earth. He brought evolution to another plane. All of nature was glorified says the Eastern Church. The Western Church always emphasized suffering and death; the Western Church placed more emphasis on the resurrection. The ascension (admittance to heaven) is much more important in the Eastern Church. The ascension of Isa is written in the Koran. Muslims believe this.

Jan van Ruusbroec, a mystic who lived in the middle ages (1293-1381) described the mystical path in three main stages: that of the corporal life, that of the life of the soul and that of the life of the spirit. In the corporal (or human) life the issue is to follow the life of Jesus. That means: meditating on the life of Jesus as written down in the Scriptures and at the same time following the 12 Christian virtues. When this is done someone shall – by grace – experience the ‘first arrival of Christ in the heart’. That is an experience of the ‘presence of Christ’. In the second stage one is enlightened: the capacities of the mind, will and memory acquire a dynamic of their one whereby someone can experience creation, understands the mysteries of belief and see the divine origin of man. This is the second arrival of Christ in the three capacities of the soul. The third arrival of Christ is in ‘the unity of the spirit’ – the unio mystica. In other words: the mystic path runs from Jesus to Christ to God.

Ruusbroec says: ‘in history we can see these three arrivals of Christ also: when becoming a human, at the eucharis and the daily arrival in the heart. Mysticism has a direct connection with the latter.

Dr John van Schaik

Heavenly music ...

You can find a very interesting icon in the oldest church on Cyprus. On this icon the archangel Gabriel announces the birth of Jesus. On the top of the icon we see a white dove in a beautiful ray of light, flying in the direction of Mary.

Exactly the same picture can be found in the cathedral of St. Foy de Conches in Normandy. Here we find a painted glass window showing God in the top. With the right hand he commands: 'Be'. A very powerful ray of light goes from this holy scene to the left of the picture where Mary sits in front of Gabriel who announces to her the will of God. This picture dates from the Renaissance but the cathedral itself is nine hundred years old. I would like to compare this tableau to a poem about the human being and his inner substance that was written by the Persian poet/mystic Avicenna (980-1037AD).

In this poem the inner (substantial) reality of man is a pigeon, a pigeon taking place in the corporal body on the command of God: 'Be'.

The pigeon comes from 'the land' of nothingness. This process can be compared to an egg. When an egg is placed in a breeding machine a small bird inside the egg will appear. This bird was not in the egg before the process began so it came from 'nothingness'. The long travel from this nothingness to the enclosed space of the egg started out on the first vibration of the command of God: 'Be'.

The small pigeon grows in the egg but has to brake free from this cage to spread its wings and fly. How can we free this pigeon, this real self from the shell of the ego?

Our ego is broken down by the hidden influence of the guide during the process of initiation. This process can be seen on the second painted glass window in St. Foy de Conches. We see John the Baptist, the holy guide, baptising Jesus with the holy water. He represents God and connects Jesus to God by means of the ceremony of initiation. The pigeon, the essential self of Jesus, is free and flies above his head. At the feet of Jesus we see a duck. The duck is a water bird - it can walk, fly and swim. The duck is not afraid of the turbulent ocean of the material world.

The initiation is the starting point of the second stage in the substantial evolution.

How can we educate this free bird and learn this bird to fly?

This happens under the protection, the attention and the education of a teacher.

When an advanced student leaves his/her body and spreads her/his wings he or she calls out: 'Each moment we hear love calling from each direction, we fly in the sky, who comes to watch this event?' The pupil flies, carried by majestic wings and says: 'Sometimes whirling like the universe, sometimes like on wings of angels.'

Seyed Dr. Mostafa Azmayesh