

MAGDALENE CHRISTIANITY

Mary's Gospel

*Inner
Themes*

4

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Mary's Gospel – Inner Themes # 4

GUIDING THE ASTRAL; NURTURING THE 'I'

I AM the door of the sheep. (Jn 10:5)

I AM the good shepherd. (Jn 10:14)

John's gospel is written from direct experience married to the profound revelation and knowledge that came after the resurrection of Christ. These two related sayings in chapter 10 are interwoven with a long exposition by Jesus of their meaning in relation to his purpose and destiny. In her gospel of the heart Mary's approach is more immediate and focused on her feelings at the time, which concern the transforming of her emotion- and sense-based astral. Experience and love would bring her to understanding.

The Lamb of sacrifice

In biblical times lambs were sacrificed to Yahweh in the Jerusalem Temple at Passover, the most important Jewish feast. Why were sheep chosen? As animals they represented the astral of the whole community. And the learned scribes understood that this sense-based aspect of the soul must be offered up so the divine could enter. Still, the offering had to be young pure white rams without blemish for such a sacred role.

It is a strange contradiction that a creature becomes holy through its slaughter. But the ritual practice has ancient roots that go back to that Palaeolithic age when animals were precious as food and deeply revered, hence the beautifully rendered animals in cave art.

Living sacrifices would over time be debased and today such offerings to a god have almost gone. Yet a feeling for sacred offering lives in our souls and finds new expressions beyond religion. We still celebrate individuals who are willing to give of self to help and even risk their lives to save others – rescuers, firefighters, care workers, doctors and nurses on the frontline come to mind in disastrous years such as 2020-21.

The imaginative symbolism of sheep is rarely considered in a society like mine, Australia, where sheep are commodities to use up. The larger the property the less the relationship with them. On the vast sheep stations loss is acceptable. Only when the amount of loss is financially crippling, say in times of drought, does extra care become vital until the time comes for the flock to be shorn or herded into trucks to be sent to slaughter or shipped live overseas.

Children's nursery rhymes do give us an idyllic view of sheep, and lambs especially: *What do you do little lamb all day? Skip in the sunshine and sleep in the hay.* And lambs are sweet, gamboling about or suckling with their little tails wildly circling. I know of children on smaller farms who are given an orphan lamb to care for until it can rejoin the flock. It is a job suitable for the youngster because it aligns with a deep cultural memory that attributes innocence, purity and potential to lambs.

On the Way of the Shepherd

Before his death in 1997 my teacher Mario Schoenmaker was known around the world for his spiritual readings. He would sit with a client and attune clairvoyantly to 'the sound of your soul' and interpret what he perceived in the colours of the aura. And to conclude he spoke of the Overself – a symbolic picture of the soul's purpose at that given time. This is the symbol he gave me at our first meeting.

The Overself is a picture of the inner self. You have little lambs that you embrace, push towards the pen and symbolically your soul is saying to you that the lambs, which stand for inner qualities that have a certain beauty, a certain purity, a certain innocence, [you need to] embrace these and perceive them as pure and lead them in such a way that you can use them properly, that would be your task.

Qualities to love and nurture, to bring out, to strengthen and direct when necessary.



A romantic view of the shepherd by August Friedrich Albrecht Schenck

The traditional shepherd has disappeared from modern sheep stations and farms, giving way to multi-tasking farmers and farm workers. Where old ways endure, shepherds, often children of the family, are still significant. In first-century Palestine you would find shepherds dedicated to that employment. These shepherds spent most of their time with their flock keeping it together and serving as guardians and protectors. In the gospels we have the idealized shepherd who knows each sheep by name, and every one of them is precious. The sheep recognize their shepherd's distinctive call and will only follow his voice.

But sheep can easily stray, as can our astral nature. It is our I AM that helps us to transform this tricky part of our being. I AM is our shepherd.

A good shepherd would watch all through the warmer nights when hungry wild animals roamed. For winter shelter they might use the stone-built sheep folds dotting the moorlands. And it seems that the protective door was guarded.

John 10 alludes to this. A thief could try to climb into the fold to steal sheep, but the gatekeeper only opens to the rightful shepherd who leads his sheep out to pasture. 'I am that door' Jesus says, and he is also the good shepherd. This shepherd loves his sheep; he is no hireling who will run off at any sign of danger. The good shepherd will give his life to save his sheep.

The good shepherd exemplifies Yin qualities

The shepherd portrays the I AM qualities revealed in Jesus Christ, qualities we need to develop. But as a metaphor the male gender of the shepherd hides something vital about I AM.

From the time of the ancient Greeks there has existed the idea of a lost golden age when people lived in harmony with one another and the natural world. This is a genuine soul memory of a real way of life. We can refer to my first portal, to the Palaeolithic age in *From the Age of the Ancient Creatrix* and even further back in human evolution. Beyond the many dangers of existence people did live closely attuned to nature's cyclical rhythms, and high esteem was given to the attributes of 'mother' – the woman as maker of life, loving nourisher, nurturer and protector. Those ancient human cultures were gynocentric and matriarchal.

In the I AM sayings, the shepherd embodies these feminine, yin, qualities. The feminine is part of the Christ. Yin always must balance the yang. And both are essential if we are to express Christ in us.

As the central female disciple Mary Magdalene portrays the balance in a fruitful relationship with spirit: through listening and speaking. Her inner journey begins with open-hearted listening imbued with Wisdom that enables her to hear the Word. And as both a culmination and the beginning of a new life, through her awakened I AM she brings the message of the living Christ to the other disciples. Her words resonate down the ages. They tell us how to be and act in the world, now: Listen and know; hear and then speak.

Soul work - being an offering



The Book of Revelation (also written by John) paints a picture, in allegorical and mystical language, of heaven and earth that ‘was and is and will be’. Chapter 5 refers to the Lamb. All the beings of heaven cry, ‘Worthy is the lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing.’

This Lamb is the Christ, the mighty *elohim* who was the incarnated sacrifice, who died and rose again. This is I AM who is the spirit of the world.

So it is that we must become the sacrificial lamb, to offer up our lower self that we may hear I AM, and enable the pure qualities of the divine Word to speak through us.

❖ I AM the door of the sheep – May my speech be infused with the Word.

❖ I AM the good shepherd – May Wisdom’s guidance nurture my listening.

In seeking for the personal meaning, it is helpful to ask what kind of ‘thieves’ in the astral we need to let go if I AM is to live in our souls. As you contemplate these I AM sayings here are some questions you might consider.

Who and what am I listening to? When have I observed the impact of my words? What are my inner qualities? How am I expressing what is best and pure in me? What aspects of myself am I willing to offer up to Christ in me?