

*The Gospels are like a hall of mirrors or melodies that reveal in manifold ways who  
and how you really are and can BE!*

It must seem strange to the ordinary reader of last Sunday's reading taken from the Gospel of John that the character John the Baptist would say of Jesus, *I myself did not know him*. Indeed he repeats it later: *I myself did not know him; but he who sent me . . . said to me: he on whom you see the Spirit descend . . . baptizes with the Holy Spirit*.

Not to quibble, but how could John the Baptist say he didn't know Jesus when Luke's Gospel connects John the Baptist and Jesus at the very time of their birth, their mothers being close cousins – and therefore the boys too? I mean close enough to have in some way grown up together? Even later as active adults in Matthew's Gospel John the Baptist seems confused about what Jesus is up to. While he is in prison John sends his disciples to ask Jesus, *Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?*

It makes us modern folk think maybe the Gospel writers should have hired a good editor to scan such seeming discrepancies and publish a more coherent, not self-contradictory account of Jesus. I mean how can the Gospel of John itself wander off into episodes and style so different from the other three! I mean – in our age when biographies require thorough editorial checking even for typos, copious footnotes and indexes before they pass muster – it seems accuracy was hardly the norm when these Gospels were written.

But scholars now agree that the Gospels were not intended to be biographies. They were meant to be broadcasts – in the sense of nets broadly cast into the sea – to catch and disentangle our minds and hearts from the everyday –often- hopeless world we live in. They were composed not so much to “inform” us but *to draw or even drag us into Gospel experiences* of Jesus here and now – like not so much the cure of only the actual paralytic let down through a roof in Mark's episode but of the scribes who are scandalized that anyone but God can forgive another's sins – to which Jesus says to them and to you: *Sure you can. Watch me*. And then he turns to the man on the stretcher and says: *Your sins are forgiven!* And then to the spiritually paralyzed scribes and you and me: *See! It's easy – read my lips: “Your sins are forgiven.” That wasn't hard, was it?*

So also the episodes of healing a blind person or of Jesus walking toward you upon the waves of your distress to bring you calm or of the woman about to be stoned to death to whom Jesus says, even as the crowd dissolves: *Where are they? Has no one condemned you? Neither do I*. These Gospel episodes are designed to *happen* even as you read them – and happen to *you*, whether you are simply a face in the crowd or even a Pharisee. They are not dead letters upon a page but alive, emerging from the page to embrace you as you are and can be. They are about Christ not as a figure out of the past but as one “Event” after another whose touch is just an inch or two from your own fingertips.

John's Gospel says: *In the beginning was the Word* – the Hebrew word for Word can also mean Event, a Happening. So when you immerse your imagination into a Gospel story something is supposed to happen! In some way or other you should be able to *pick up your pallet and go home*.

**Geoff Wood**