

The Christian Community

Perspectives

the sacred
heart II



Lent Easter Ascension Whitsun 2006

Contents

Homily'	2
CARMEL IVESON	
The Heart in Passiontide and Easter	3
PEARL GOODWIN	
The Christian Heart	6
MICHAEL TAPP	
The Paradox of the God-man	10
TOM RAVETZ	
Suffering and Faith	15
DOUGLAS THACKRAY	
Becoming Open for the presence of Christ... ..	17
INTERVIEW WITH VICKE VON BEHR	
Man And The Stars	21
HAZEL STRAKER	
OUTLOOK.....	23
REVIEW.....	26
AROUND THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.....	27

Cover Picture: *I love the sun*, Deborah Ravetz

Deadline for for June–August 2006 issue: 3 April 2006
for September–November 2006 issue: 3 July 2006

Perspectives is published quarterly by The Christian Community, a registered UK charity. It appears on the 1st Monday of December, March, June & September.

Editors:

Peter Howe, Rev. Tom Ravetz,

Deputy Editor:

Deborah Ravetz

Subscriptions & Advertisements:

Kevin Street Tel: 01384 443 268

All correspondence: Perspectives, 22 Baylie Street, Stourbridge DY8 1AZ Tel: 01384 377 190

Fax: (UK only) 0871 242 9000 email: editor.perspectives@cairnlee.clara.net subs.perspectives@cairnlee.clara.net

Lay-Up: Christoph Hänni

Subscriptions:

UK & Europe: £14

Rest of World: £16

Please send cheque, payable to Perspectives, to Subscription Manager (address above), or send for more information.

USA: US\$24

c/o The Christian Community, 906 Divisadero Street San Francisco, CA 94115 (Cheques payable to: The Christian Community San Francisco)

Canada: CAN\$28

c/o Roger Coutts Umstead, 333 Sunnidale Road, Unit 31 Barrie, Ontario, L4N 6H5, Canada encoreanthrobooks@sympatico.ca (Cheques to: Roger Coutts Umstead)

Australia: Enquire for price at: The Christian Community, 170 Beattie Street, Balmain, NSW 2041 tel: 02 9810 6690

New Zealand: Enquire for price at: Gerald Richardson 62A Redvers Drive, Belmont Lower Hutt, tel: 04 565 3836

Advertisements:

Send ads five weeks prior to publication to the Editor at the above address.

Cost: £4 per half column cm.

Quarter page £30,

Half page £56, Full page £110

ISSN: 0967 5485

Printed by Halcon Printing Ltd.

Perspectives

VOLUME 76 No. 2

MARCH–MAY 2006

The new creation begins with a human body—with the Resurrection of Christ. His achievement is prototypical—it creates a possibility that beckons us to follow. The new creation that begins on Easter Sunday is made up of moral substance. This is quite different from moralising or even morality. It is the substance that is formed in our efforts to bring the spirit to birth in our human destinies, with all their struggles and difficulties. It is formed in the chambers of the heart.

A note about the redesign of Perspectives

We decided to give the cover design of Perspectives a fresh look. Jane Belcher of Stourbridge designed the new logo. Our new printer has the technology to print a full colour cover for the same price as the old one-colour ones, so from now on we will be able to create more eye-catching and pleasing cover-designs. We are always glad to receive feedback on Perspectives; contact information is inside the front cover.

THE EDITORS

‘... for they changed their hearts and minds at the proclamation of Jonah, and see: Something greater than Jonah is here.’

LUKE 11, 32

CARMEL IVESON

In both the Old and the New Testament, the heart is connected with spiritual behaviour.

The importance of the heart has been recognized from the earliest times. It was viewed as the seat of intelligence and emotion, as the seat of the soul, as an intelligent organ, as the primary spiritual member of the body, and as ‘king’ or ‘sun’ of all the members of the body.

Only in relatively recent times have human beings seen the heart as nothing more than a pump.

As 21st century Christians, members of the Movement for Religious Renewal, our view of the heart is more in line with the early thinkers than the scientific, mechanistic thinkers of today—and, as we saw in the last issue, scientists themselves are starting to widen their view of the heart and its functions. The mystery of the heart, the importance of this central human organ to the being of the Christ and to the spiritual world is apparent in the frequency with which the heart is mentioned in our central sacrament, The Act of Consecration of Man, especially in its Seasonal Prayers.

In the Act of Consecration of Man we pray that our hearts will go through a process of transformation with the help of Christ.

The manifold, but as yet mainly unconscious, possibilities of the power of the human heart are touched upon in the seasonal prayers. From the ‘hoping heart’ of Advent, through the experience of emptiness during Passiontide, to the transformed heart filled with the rejoicing healing power of the Easter event, we are led in the Michaelmas prayer to the heart itself becoming the instrument from which transformation can come.

Implicit in the Act of Consecration of Man is the acknowledgement that the human heart is not just a pump, nor indeed is it limited to feelings of love and compassion for all that surrounds us. It is the organ through which Christ can be perceived, by which he can be received, and from which his forces can work into the world with transforming, saving power. The heart is the organ through which man’s consecration becomes possible.

The Heart in Passiontide and Easter

PEARL GOODWIN

The epistle, as well as the colour of the vestments and altar, bring each festival of the Christian year into focus within the Act of Consecration of Man. These words which are spoken at the beginning and end of the service tell us of the cycle of becoming that each human soul can experience during the year. They help us to sense how nature, the cosmos and Christ interweave with the human soul in space and time. In many of these prayers, the heart is the central motif. Phrases about the heart are familiar to us all—we can be ‘light-hearted’, ‘we have a heavy heart’, and we can ‘take it to heart’ or be ‘the heart and soul’ to mention but a few. In each of these phrases, the heart represents the whole human being. Whatever the heart feels and experiences, that is who we are, regardless of how we may think about ourselves.

In the epistles and also the inserted prayers particularly for Passiontide and Easter, this goes much further: the heart appears not only as the centre of the soul, it is also an organic centre for the circulation of the blood and the rhythm of the breathing.

Before entering more deeply into these prayers, we need to look more at the heart and circulation from the organic point of view, to see if something comes to meet the sacramental side from the direction of the body. For when one hears those epistles, especially for



Young Mother, Emil Nolde



Prophet, Emil Nolde

the first time, one might wonder how such physiological descriptions of blood and breath can at the same time have so much liturgical and poetic dignity.

It was William Harvey, in 1628, who made it definitely clear that heart was the centre of a closed circulation, meaning that the blood did not leak away into the tissues from open ended capillaries at the periphery of the circulation. This is an observation which applies absolutely to the blood vessels themselves, for they form a continuous network from the heart in the arteries and back to the heart in the veins. However, this is not the case, for the blood, the fluid part of the blood excluding the red blood corpuscles, does leak out into all of the surrounding tissue and organs of the body, and must do so if they are to

have the oxygen and nutrients that they need. This tissue fluid is sometimes called 'white blood' and it has different characteristics to their red blood within the circulation. The white blood bathes every cell of the body, like the sea around rocks; it is lazy and chaotic in character and lacks all definition. At the moment that the fluid re-enters the circulation, its character is completely changed. From being slow, chaotic and colourless, it moves with direction and speed and it becomes coloured through the presence of the red blood corpuscles. This transition describes in organic terms two of the fundamental aspects of human existence. In the colourless, chaotic fluid we have a picture akin to the sap in plants; to life, whereas in movement and colour, direction and speed we have an image of qualities of the soul, whether animal or man. Blood still has life of course, but that life takes on characteristics which allow it to serve the soul. We are completely unconscious of our tissue fluid, but of our circulation with the heart at its centre, we do become aware and we call that awareness feeling, knowing it is there but not always knowing exactly what it is. Blood, then, is the organ of the body that serves as a transition from the unconscious bodily side to the conscious soul-spiritual side.

With this we can begin to understand what the epistles for Passiontide and Easter are telling us. If life can become directly soul-bearing in the blood, may it not also become an anchor for the spirit, and even for Christ, who identified the human spirit with His own? In the Passiontide epistle the relationship between soul-spirit and blood is made clear by its absence. There is longing in the blood and want in the breath, that part of the circulation that meets the air in the lungs. All of this comes to consciousness as the experience in the heart of emptiness—a non-presence. The heart is able to read the condition of mankind even when we as individuals are busy with our own lives and may be less aware. In Holy Week itself, where there is an intensification of these processes, the blood experiences sorrow in identification with Christ's Passion, but there dawns hope in the breath, the sense that at the very bottom, where the grave is, something new can arise. And the heart experiences this as the activity of fire, of burning, of something that is going to happen.

At Easter, it is the inserted prayer that tells us directly of the connection between spirit and life. We hear that Christ invades our 'pulse of life'—the circulation. We could put this another way: He incarnates into a bodily being, not once, 2000 years ago, but each year if we give Him the possibility to do so. The epistles themselves are full of wonder about the blood and breath. The heart, in its newfound fullness and warmth, praises and rejoices—the blood has soul qualities of fulfilment, and above all of grace, the freedom to not be so bound by necessity.

Let us turn once more to the heart itself, and its relationship to blood and breath. In this context we can understand the breath as that part of the circulation that comes newly enlivened from the lungs, enters the left side of the heart and from there flows into all of the arteries. The left side of the heart senses what breathes in from the cosmos, not only as substance but also, especially at night, our higher being and our ideals. Not for nothing did the ancients call this being that held the highest spiritual principles of humanity ATMA. We could say that the left side of the heart knows what we want to be. The right side, on the other hand, receives from the veins all the blood that constantly learns what the body has been doing, even what each step that we take means. The right side perceives what we have actually done. The heart compares the two in its deep wordless way. We call that 'conscience'. At Easter, if we are indeed graced with Christ's closeness to us, perhaps the two, our ideals and our reality, can take a step closer together.

This may seem all too biological; it could even seem to diminish the greatness and seriousness of Easter as a spiritual event. But Christ came to the earth to enter the soul and life of humanity, not to stand aloof above us all. And that has concrete reality in our physiology, in particular in the heart and circulation. His deed starts the process that restores us to the archetypal intention of the gods: that the human body should be a temple in which the Divine can dwell.

*With gratitude to Dr. Armin Husemann
whose thoughts on heart and circulation have been such a great help.*

The Christian Heart

MICHAEL TAPP

The heart is a mystery. The quickest way to discover this is to look up heart in a dictionary, an experience which can no doubt be repeated in many different languages. My Collins English Dictionary has forty variations of meaning or use. Only two refer directly to the physical heart and then thirdly: 'this organ considered as the seat of life and emotions'. Not only would most of the rest of the forty variations come under this heading, but so would also a further two-thirds of some 35 compound words, such as heartfelt or heartbroken, which follow as single entries. What is common to all these references is the relationship of heart to life, to the life of the body and/or to the life of the soul. Although the connection of the heart to the life of the physical body would have been obvious from earliest times, its relationship to the other parts of the human constitution would surely have been of much more interest. The development of language alone would suggest this.

What unites all the variations we find in the dictionary is the 'centre of life' position of the heart, in the body or in the soul. All see the heart within the whole human being: the heart reflecting or affecting the whole. To lose heart is to lack motivation, to disengage; to take heart is to stand up and act, to be encouraged. The whole is affected by the disposition of the heart. This heart is not the purely physical heart, it is the heart with other forces, life and soul forces. They are many and varied. There is the reflective element: heart-searching, alone, or in a heart-to-heart conversation with another person, perhaps wrestling with a moment of destiny. We can be cheered by meeting someone after our own heart. We can have our heart in our boots or in our mouth or on our sleeve, as well as in the right place. And there is the compassionate heart, just plain have a heart. All these expressions, and many more, come out of daily life and out of our humanity. And does not each of us have his or her own heart profile which projects the core of our humanity? The heart reflects every nuance of life.

Our heart as the organ which facilitates the constant renewal of the blood is the very centre of the body's life. But this life, this body, does not exist for its own purpose. It is there to serve as the vehicle for a being of soul and spirit. This being is centred for its life in the heart in which all our experience is mirrored and through which we project ourselves into the world.

In proceeding from our everyday language to that of the Bible we move to a deeper level: the heart as 'the centre of life' for the unfolding of the religious and spiritual life, indeed as an organ which has to do with the path towards Christian fulfilment.

Christ's introduction to this path was given in the parable of the sower. As the sower sows, some seeds fall on the path where they are eaten by birds, some fall on rocky ground where they fail for lack of soil, others fall among weeds which smother them, while others fall on good soil and prosper. The disciples ask Christ why He speaks in parables. In His

answer He distinguishes between those to whom the secrets of the kingdom of heaven can be made known and those to whom this is not possible, for they do not have the necessary basis for understanding. He quotes from the prophet Isaiah:

*You shall indeed hear but never understand,
and you shall indeed see but never perceive.
For this people's heart has grown dull,
and their ears are heavy of hearing,
and their eyes they have closed,
lest they should perceive with their eyes,
and hear with their ears,
and understand with their heart,
and turn for me to heal them. (Matthew 13,14)*

And then Christ interprets the parable:

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.

(Matthew 13,19)

He then elucidates what happens to the seed in other sowing conditions, which following what He has said above will also reflect the conditions of the heart into which the word is sown. The heart here is clearly an organ of perception and understanding for the word. The seed is itself the bearer of spiritual substance which can be received into the human heart and unfold as the basis of the higher life. For Isaiah, the people suffered from dullness of heart which clouded their senses and their ability to understand, with the consequence that they did not know the nature of their restricted inner condition and realize their need to seek healing. Isaiah would surely still have a point today. The parable of the sower is a clear picture of the indwelling of the Word, the Logos, in the human heart.

At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, in which Matthew collects the teaching of Christ which sets out the step from Judaism to Christianity, there are the nine beatitudes. The seventh of these is:

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (Matthew 4,8)

We can be reminded here of the words of the Act of Consecration of Man which lead up to the reading of the gospel: the celebrant prays that his heart may be filled with Christ's pure life so that he be worthy to proclaim the Word. Unsaid but surely implied is that the congregation hears these words with reference to themselves, in the spirit of what became clear above regarding the heart that receives the Word. We all need to come to the sacrament with the striving for an open heart that it be touched with Christ's pure life. We cannot claim that our hearts are pure. Neither can the celebrant, except as a gift of grace for his particular task at this moment. This theme is pursued further when in the Offertory it is made clear that the service is needed precisely because of our fallen nature, while in the

Transubstantiation it is the positive aspects of human nature—the pure thinking, the loving heart and the willing devotion - through which the offering is made, all of which may be seen to be centred in the heart. For all participation in a religious or spiritual activity it is helpful to ponder the heart and bring it to peace, to an openness to receive, to direct it towards the ideal of purity.

We can see this ideal in Mary, the mother of Jesus, who responds to the annunciation as ‘the handmaid of the Lord’ and with total acceptance of the angel’s message. And then we hear twice, once after the visit of the shepherds and again after the twelve year old boy Jesus had been found in the Temple, how she lived with these events, pondering them in her heart. Is one not moved every time one hears these words? Is it not because we feel that Mary and the heart are one? And because too, we are moved by her purity of heart?

Another important saying in the Sermon on the Mount comes in a passage which compares earthly and heavenly treasures:

‘For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.’ (Matthew 6,21)

This statement seems both simple and easily understandable, and is perhaps therefore quickly put aside; but it is to be taken seriously. For as will surely be clear, whatever lives in our hearts is of vital significance in determining both our short term and long term motives in life, from what we set out to do today to the overall pattern of our life. Yet we probably are mostly not very conscious of the connection of treasure to heart. Certainly our values today are under considerable stress, yet that very stress can pull us up and make us consider what our values really are. We can learn not to wish for things that we do not really need. Real treasure enhances our lives and in today’s world is to be found, for instance, in the ideals which inspire us to provide human and practical substance to those in need. Or we can treasure the gifts of nature and work to ensure that they are not lost. There is plenty to move the heart. Just as we treasure our family and friends so can we also treasure causes, because they have to do with people’s lives or with the future of the earth. Treasure is not only what we wish to possess. It is also what we wish to bring about for the general good. We do gain treasure for the heart through what we do in this way.

This brings us closer to the deepest aspects of the heart which we find in John’s Gospel and in Paul. John actually uses the word ‘heart’ less than the other evangelists, even if its use in his Epistles is included. What we have in its place is love. And we have it in great abundance, both as noun and as verb.

But we can look at two places where John does speak of the heart: twice ‘let not your hearts be troubled’ (John 14,1 and 27) and then the pair: ‘sorrow has filled your hearts’ and ‘your hearts will rejoice’ (John 16,6 and 22). These are all words of comfort from the One who is celebrating the Last Supper with his disciples during which Judas leaves to betray him. There is then an exchange between Peter and Christ in which Christ tells Peter that he cannot follow him at that moment, nor lay down his life for him, and that during this night before the cock crows three times he will deny him. At this point he comforts the troubled hearts of the disciples. There follow the farewell discourses of Christ, in which

one can surely say that Christ opened his heart to the disciples and then, at their conclusion in the High Priestly Prayer, also to the Father. Christ tells the disciples that the troubled heart is to be soothed by faith in God and in himself. The discourse then turns from belief to love: 'Whoever truly loves me bears my word in himself, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and dwell with him for ever'. He leaves his peace with them. No need to be troubled. Faith—Love—Peace, gifts from the heart of Christ just as from that same heart the great sacrifice is about to take place.

Nevertheless Christ recognizes that this event will fill the disciples with great sorrow. It cannot be avoided. But this sorrowful event is the prelude to a great joy. 'So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice.' The chapter closes with the ultimate words of comfort: 'In the world you have tribulation, but have courage, I have overcome the world'. The meaning of the original Greek is 'cheer up' or perhaps, 'take heart.'

In these discourses we can get an inkling of what lived in the heart of Christ himself: the whole knowledge of his mission to ensure that humanity and the rest of creation had a future, indeed that the divine intention could take further steps towards its fulfilment. As further content we can take the seven I AM sayings in John's Gospel in which Christ reveals the nature of his being, indeed what lived in the heart of his being in his relationship to humanity: the living bread that feeds our hearts, the light of life that dispels our darkness, the door which leads to pasture, the shepherd who lays down his life for his flock, the bearer of resurrected life which brings eternal life to those who unite with him in belief, the way, the truth and the life, and the true vine embracing who abide in him. All of these we can imagine embraced within his great heart which poured out its love for humanity and which he continues to offer for all who seek him.

As a postscript we can turn to Paul whose understanding, based on his own experience of the Risen Christ, has a unique place in the New Testament. Through this experience he knew what the indwelling of Christ in the human soul meant: that, in the words of the Act of Consecration, Christ's passion and death, resurrection and revelation can live as thinking in the soul, or, should we say, in the heart—a heart thinking that knows Christ's deed not just as a fact of history or as a theology, but as a reality experienced. Paul out of his biography as a rabbi wrote of his personal transition: 'Through the Law my higher self died to the Law in order to live for the realm of God. I am crucified with Christ. So it is not I who live, but Christ lives in me. The life which I have now in my earthly incarnation I have through devotion and faith in the Son of God who loves me, and has given himself for me.' (Galatians 2,19)

And to this may be added: 'But then, in the fullness of time, God sent His Son, born of a woman and subject to the Law: he was to set free those who were under the spell of the Law, so that we might receive sonship. Now that you have become sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts; it calls out: Abba! Father! So you are no longer a servant, but a son; and if a son, then also an heir through the will of God.' (Galatians 4,4–7)

Quotations from the Revised Standard and Madsen Versions

The Paradox of the God-man

TOM RAVETZ

*It is I, I,
I lay between you, I was
open, was
audible, ticked at you, your breathing
obeyed, it is
I still, but then
you are asleep.*

The central belief of Christianity, that in Jesus Christ God became man, is a paradox. Human and divine realities are a contrasting pair. For the Incarnation to have done something for human beings, the otherness of the divine is essential. But for the Incarnation to be real, not a mere visit by a god from above in disguise, divine and human must have merged. The paradox of the God-man has been a challenge for Christians from the very beginning of the Church. In the gospels we hear the reactions of those who saw the man, Jesus, in front of them. Some of them knew His parents. How could they believe, when confronted with a man, that God is at work in Him? How it can be right to say of Him, as Thomas does at the very end of the Gospel story: ‘My Lord and my God.’? After Ascension, the disciples experienced a different side of the paradox. They experienced the power of the ascended Lord and needed to explain how it could be true to say that this power came from one who had been and somehow still was a man.

Paul summed up the central problems of Christian theology in the letter to the Corinthians when he said ‘I preach Christ crucified, a scandal to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks’ The scandal of Christ is not his humanity—the Jews expected a glorified human Messiah—but the kind of humanity, most

crucially his death on the cross. The Jews held that he who ‘dies on the tree’ is ‘cursed’. They were waiting for a powerful Messiah-King who would restore the empire of David and the honour of Israel, ushering in an age where God’s values would be achieved miraculously on the physical plane. It is hardly possible to imagine a greater contrast with the message of a human messiah who died the disgraceful death of a common criminal, naked and exposed on the cross.

The ‘foolishness’ of the Gospel message is that it states that God can truly become man even to the point of dying. For the Greeks, the philosophers of the age, this sentence is nonsense. God is everything that human beings are not: eternal and unchanging, all-powerful, all-knowing. He belongs to a completely different order of things. It is not only hard to imagine that He would ever want to become man; it is impossible and ridiculous.

Faith seeking understanding

The development of the understanding of Christ in the first centuries of Christianity is an impassioned groping towards understanding, rather like a lover’s attempt to account for his love. At the beginning of theology was a deeply-felt experience. Christ had done something for humanity and the world that changed everything. But who was He? What had He done? Why had it been necessary? And how did He bring it about? Finding clear answers meant much soul-searching.

As often happens when we try to explain what matters most to us, theologians became one-sided in their thoughts. Thus ‘heresies’, one-sided attempts to resolve the paradox

of the God-man, emerged. There were those who said that Jesus was a simple man who had fulfilled the messianic hope of the Hebrew Scriptures. Their response was the same as those who knew his parents. Later, Arius also saw Christ's closeness to us. He is a brother creature, one far greater but of the same order of being as man. But to fix Christ in one place, so close to humanity, was one-sided. Along with the comforting closeness of Christ, Christians experience something different in their worship. Through Christ, they know that they can enter into relation with ultimate reality, with the Godhead—not merely with a higher order of created being. Out of the struggle to do justice to this experience, the doctrine of the Trinity emerged.

Other theologians were passionately committed to articulating their experience of the divinity of Christ. Saint John had said 'and the Word was God.' The Gospels were full of stories of His wonders, His healings, His supernatural knowledge. How easy to affirm then, that He only seemed to be man. These heresies—called docetic, from the Greek 'to appear'—could not encompass Jesus Christ's humanity. This was seen as a mere semblance, a disguise that He had assumed in order to remain hidden on the earth. Before the crisis of the Crucifixion He escaped back to heaven.

The two heresies were rejected, but the two tendencies they represented remained in the great schools of theology roughly grouped around the great cities of Alexandria and Antioch in the early centuries. The Alexandrian school emphasised Christ's divinity. This divinity had assumed 'flesh', the carapace of a human being. The great theologian Apollinaris thought this through to its extreme. His picture of the Incarnation was that Christ replaced the nous, the intellectual seat of initiative and centre of the personality of Jesus Christ. Only if this were true could Christ have lived a perfect life, unsullied by the impure thoughts and de-



The Doctor, Emil Nolde

sires of a fallen human soul. Apollinaris' pupil and fellow fighter against Arianism, Gregory of Nazianzus, was forced to oppose him. He saw that it was vital that Christ be fully human, otherwise He could not have penetrated the whole of human nature: 'What He has not assumed, He has not saved.'

The Antiochene school emphasised the reality of the human being, Jesus, and his willing submission to the divine Christ. It was important to distinguish between the human and the divine in Jesus Christ. A great proponent of this tendency was Nestorius, whose followers however went so far that the humanity and divinity started to seem quite separate. A great point of debate with Nestorius was the question whether it could be right to call Mary 'Theotokos', the God bearer. Nestorius affirmed that it could only be proper to call her 'Christokos', the Christ-



Egyptian Woman, Emil Nolde

bearer, that is, the bearer of the one who was to be united with God.

The climax of the quest to understand the person of Jesus Christ came at the fourth great Council of the Church at Chalcedon in 451. The Definition of Chalcedon is a great dialectic, a dynamic movement between extremes. It affirms the unity of Jesus Christ ‘one and the same Son’ and moves through a series of four concepts that are applied in turn to His divinity and His humanity. He is ‘perfect in Godhead ... perfect in manhood’ ‘truly God and truly man’; ‘of one substance with the Father as touching the Godhead... with us as touching the manhood’; ‘begotten of the Father before the ages as touching the Godhead, born from the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, as touching the manhood’. The Definition then moves between the opposites of unity and distinction.

Jesus Christ ‘is known in two natures, without mixture, without change, without separation and without division’ The two natures contribute to forming ‘one single person’.

Chalcedon describes a space, something in-between. Its multiple contradictions are highly abstract, but they can never rightly be described as static. The formulation of Chalcedon suggests in its very paradoxical language the dynamic of the Incarnation. In its ‘in-between’ it brings to expression the weaving and working together of two different spheres.

Historically, Chalcedon was a very limited success. Although it remains the touchstone of orthodoxy in the churches of the mainstream in both East and West, the hope that it would unite the different strands of Christian thinking was disappointed. To this day, there are groupings of Christians who hold to the different extremes: Monophysites who see in Jesus Christ a melding of the divine and the human nature into one; and Nestorians who see the importance of the distinctness of the natures.

In the broad stream of orthodox Christian theology, the subject of the Incarnation has not received much attention since Chalcedon and its immediate aftermath. Remarkably, the Reformation made little contribution. Only in the nineteenth century did Christians turn again to Chalcedon and its achievement—and then it was to reject it as abstract. The Incarnation came to be seen in symbolic terms, a figure for saying that in Jesus the ‘God-consciousness’ was maximally developed.

Son of Man

*What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives not shelter, the cricket no
relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water.*

T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*

It is a great riddle to scholars of the New Testament why Jesus used the title 'Son of Man' to describe Himself, and why the early Christians, including even the writers of the New Testament, did not use it. 'Son of man' was a way of saying 'I' in Aramaic. In the book of Daniel, it is the title of a representative of humanity's future. Saint John used the same language in his Apocalypse. Ezekiel is called 'Son of Man' by Jahwe when he has to prophesy.

Christ refers to the Son of Man in the third person. The grammar that strains to bear all this meaning has a strange parallel the grammar of Jahweh, who tells Moses to tell the Israelites 'I am who I am has sent me.' Grammar explodes—either he should say 'He who says 'I am who I am' has sent me' or 'I have sent myself'. It seems that in speaking of Jahwe, the third person, which distances me from what I am referring to, is not possible. We are used to speaking to God as 'you'. Here we learn that we can only speak of him as 'I'. When Christ speaks of himself, the title 'Son of Man' expresses that the true 'I' of humanity is its future which is hidden in Christ. Christians needed twenty centuries before they could begin to understand this revelation. The great prophet of Christ in the twentieth century, Rudolf Steiner, described it as the 'apocalyptic I'.

One of the first prophets of the apocalyptic I was the English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. His life was one of failure and struggle; he was ostracised by his family and friends. Born an Anglican, he became a Jesuit out of a longing for true spiritual experience in worship. His superiors did not understand him; his teaching career was a disaster. His superiors rejected his poetry, and he was forbidden to write more, because, they said, it fostered vanity. He did finally destroy his poems, and they were only preserved to be published posthumously by his friend Robert Bridges disobeying Hopkins' express wish.

In the poem *That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection* Hopkins indicates the depths of depression and desolation he had plumbed:

*Man, how fast his firedint,
his mark on mind, is gone!
Both are in an unfathomable,
all is in an enormous dark
Drowned. O pity and indignation!
Manshape, that shone
Sheer off, disseveral, a star,
death blots black out; nor mark
Is any of him at all so stark
But vastness blurs and time beats level.
Enough! the Resurrection,
A heart's-clarion!
Away grief's gasping, joyless days, dejection.
Across my foundering deck shone
A beacon, an eternal beam.
Flesh fade, and mortal trash
Fall to the residuary worm;
world's wildfire, leave but ash:
In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
I am all at once what Christ is,
since he was what I am, and
This Jack, joke, poor potsherd,
patch, matchwood, immortal diamond,
Is immortal diamond.*

In the depths of despair, Hopkins realises that the Resurrection fulfils his humanity. 'I am all at once what he is, since he was what I am' This is the mystery of the Son of Man. When I am truly myself, he is at work as my 'I' within me.

The theology of the apocalyptic I starts from the personal and shows how living a destiny, with its sufferings and moments of glory, reveals the living Christ. Dogmatic definitions of the person of Christ fall away. Instead, this theology describes the gesture of the seeking human being who strives towards that space between God and man, between heaven and earth, where Jesus Christ is at home.

You are still asleep

*It is I, I,
I lay between you, I was
Open, was
audible, ticked at you, your breathing
obeyed, it is
I still, but then
you are asleep.*

Christ explodes the limitations of our humanity. He shows how hollow the idea of the good life is, which we examined in the last article—and how it closes us off to the essence of our humanity, which is the essence of His humanity too. For centuries Christians murmured the words ‘God became man’, but only the theology of the apocalyptic ‘I’ gives us words to describe what this must mean.

To promise human beings Batman—even in his guise as Christ—desecrates the memory of those for whom he did not come. Childish images of Christ the conqueror are an escape. The scandalous Wounded Healer has a far greater promise. He unites with that part of us which itself has the power to save, to redeem.

This is the apocalyptic ‘I’, which shines out in the darkness and pain of the modern world. After the needle’s eye of modernity, which stripped us of the old images of the divine, we enter a new world that begins to fill, not with a cut and dried definition, but the description of a gesture, a movement infinitely tender and precious, a movement from heaven to earth, from God to man—‘I am what he is, for he was what I am’

*Years, years, a finger
feels down and up, feels
around:
seems, palpable, here
it is split wide open, here
it grew together again—who
covered it up?*

Jesus Christ God and man weaves between heaven and earth, opening and closing to both realities like a heart, filling our heart. As in the earliest Church, it is through the liturgy that we experience what we can only grope to explain. In Lent we feel the heart

growing empty, then the flame that purifies it. At Easter, the grave of the earthly body is ‘empty’; the ‘heart is full.’ Jesus Christ’s heartbeat ‘ticks at us’. Its rhythm becomes our rhythm. Our breathing is taken into his cosmic breath. The superheroes are a disturbing dream, a deceitful nightmare. When will we awaken to His heartbeat within us?



Dancers, Emil Nolde

*The quotations are
from Death Fugue by
Paul Celan*

Suffering and Faith

DOUGLAS THACKRAY

The play by Samuel Beckett, 'Waiting for Godot', written in the Fifties, opened new dimensions in the art of drama. In it dramatic tension was, paradoxically, created by a minimum of movement on the stage—just two people talking with little if any interaction between them, each living in his own empty world and yet both seem to be expecting some sort of solution to life's problems to come with the arrival of Godot, who in fact never appears.

In one sense the play is a parody of the human tendency to project or mirror needs and the search for gratification. It is a theme akin to the experience of those kinds of people who have made requests to God and who have waited for a long time without, seemingly, getting an answer. In the silence of waiting for God a lot can happen. We are thrown back on ourselves by the question 'Why has there been no answer?' The silence can go on until we supplicants come to understand that it is not through the intensity of our feelings that we can convince God to make things happen the way we want them to come about. Confronted by our insistence, often He simply removes Himself and in the ensuing void we have the opportunity to begin to think about what we are asking for in our petitions, and why. In this silence it is possible to see the wider ramifications of what we are asking for and how this relates to our fundamental responsibility to carry, with grace if possible, the more difficult aspects of our lives.

If we look in the Old Testament book of Job we can get a feel for these possibilities. Here God and the Devil are testing Job and he lets us know what this feels like when he says, 'my foot has held fast to His steps. I have kept

His way and have not turned aside. I have not departed from the commandment of His lips. I have treasured in my bosom the word of His mouth' Job continues his lament that despite all this faith and trust, God has abandoned him and despair has been sown in the field of his destiny because of the loss of all that he owned and everyone and everything that he has loved. It is from this low point that he finds the power to reaffirm his belief, saying 'Oh that my words were written graven in the rock for ever, for I know that my redeemer liveth, and at last will stand upon the earth and after my flesh has been destroyed I shall see Him and my eyes shall behold him. My heart faints within me.'

Job's suffering without 'justa causa', a just cause, presents a theological problem, which is picked up by Job's counsellors, who argue that it is impossible that God punish a good man. And yet Job has been flawlessly good. But there is another interpretation that the counsellors do not broach: perhaps it is God's intention that mankind be responsible for the suffering in the world; in which case perhaps Job can be seen as a forerunner in God's experiment to help humanity to evolve onto a higher plain of development.

As we know from Job's lament, however, mankind is in no fit condition to assume this charge without the advent of the 'Redeemer', who would bring this latent capacity to fruition through His power of sacrifice and love, so that God's plan for man's evolution to a higher plane could then be fulfilled. If we search the gospels for clues to this, we can find them in those parts that address the last judgement. Jesus' teaching on this final mo-

ment in the drama of salvation is summed up in the phrase: 'As much as you have done this (or these things) to the least of my brethren, you have done it unto me.'

With this pronouncement, the possibilities of salvation no longer remain in the world of religious concepts, isolated from life. It shows the two strands of Christianity's mission to be 'ora e labora'—prayer and works. Both are necessary, through prayer and active living, in the development of true compassion. Here we find a hidden warning to Christians not to pin their salvation solely on the intensity of their religious faith but to also anchor these feelings in the recognition of the needs in the world of the others who share our reality. In short, salvation requires the faithful to find their place in the reality of the surrounding context and environment. In this way mankind can find a point of freedom between the polarities of inner and outer action, in the union of opposites, the Yin and the Yang.

Christ took upon Himself our personal sins, to help us to transform ourselves, which can happen through the Sacrament. The Sacrament exists to flow into the world as a healing force, not just for the worshipful individual but for the world in its suffering entirely. The 'lesser' brothers' needs can become, through compassion, our needs, and we can become healed through them. When we extend a hand to him or her, we meet the hand of Christ also.

When we witness the needs of the Other, a critical choice emerges, a scenario shift, one might say. For the Other's need, when recognized with depth and sensitivity in our responses, presents an opportunity for the deployment of compassion. Or, on the other hand, there is the option of remaining indifferent to the situation or person in question.

In the devotional conscience there is a constant struggle between personal need and the needs of others. Where do we draw the line on being my brother's keeper? One place to find

an answer to such questions is within the Act of Consecration of Man. There we find the possibility of instruction in what is appropriate to the question in hand. In our offerings to the divine, we may sense that Christ awakens our compassion but also increases our ability to cope in practice with the tasks that compassion requires—how often, or how much, etc. Our guarantee that this is so is to be found in the parable of the Good Samaritan where it is clear that 'being good' is the doing good in the right measure.

Job's great pain unexpectedly releases a surge of inspiration in which he knows, without any doubts whatsoever, that 'my Redeemer liveth'. This understanding erupts through the crust of despair and breaks into the open as a heart-rending cry. His words 'my heart faints within me' express a threshold experience of union with the divine. Something similar happens with the disciples when they are walking on the way to Emmaus weighed down with the pain of having lost the suffering Christ on the cross. They remembered afterwards 'how their hearts burnt within them' when the Resurrected one spoke.

Pain transformed into understanding, could this be an experience of our true being? Can it be that we are supposed to recognize that God's love for us includes pain and loss of all kinds as well as joy and happiness, as both are agents of possible transformation? The answer is yes. To be a true human being requires the dark and the light, without which life would be no mystery at all.

Is it possible to love God unconditionally, above everything, without thinking of advantages or Pascal's wager, that in face of the uncertainty about God's existence we might as well believe? Are we able, like Job, to affirm God in the face of our pain? Job never forgot to also glorify and pray to God notwithstanding his afflictions. His example shows that prayer can open our horizon to see further into

the veiled areas of our life. When we focus on what God wants, we can also actively recall those moments when we have been touched by his grace in the past and, remembering, sense greater gratitude and confidence in divine providence. The sign of our love of God is our unconditional acceptance of His will for us, that we like Job will always strive to remain open to the possibility of His grace.

These observations began with a discussion of the lost characters in Beckett's play. They are lost because their faith is negligible. We however have the possibility of waiting within an inner kingdom that is strong, and

where patience comes easily. . When we go towards the 'lesser brother' we are walking in faith. Faith becomes action and time becomes space. Christ will intervene in the world only after we have taken the first step. He has placed His body and His blood at our disposal and He tells us to take it, so that we cross the threshold between personal wants and needs and touch and help the Other. He makes social conscience possible. A purely personal Jesus is a contradiction in terms. The proclamation from the altar by the priest to the congregation of the 'Christ in You' is the awakening within you to see the divine in the Other.

Becoming Open for the presence of Christ

Ulrich Meier in conversation with the new Erzoerlenker, Vicke von Behr

Ulrich Meier: What is the task of the generation which is now taking on responsibilities in The Christian Community? How do you see the further development of The Christian Community?

Vicke von Behr: We have to remain a movement for religious renewal. We can illustrate this with the following example: The Waldorf School Movement was founded to offer an education which recognizes what the souls incarnating on the earth need for their development, unlike the state schools which aim to make them into good citizens.

In the same way, The Christian Community wants to be the home for those souls who yearn to lead a religious life in community on the earth. If you consider how quickly the conditions of life on earth are changing in our time, you will realize how much the needs of each generation differ from the other, far more so than ever before. The spiritual world is certainly aware of this. The

question is only: How awake are we, and what are we doing about it? How much of what we pray for is alive among us, as the Gospel, as pastoral care or as social ideals?

UM: And in more concrete terms?

VvB: When I worked in the Berlin congregation, I experienced that what you could expect of the children in the confirmation classes changed significantly within ten years. If you give the lessons in the same way as you did ten years ago, you do not meet the questions the children have today. Their questions change, as do the gifts they bring along. They have a longing to shape their lives out of inner freedom, in particular the religious life. As priests and religion teachers we need to be able to respond to this. The children need to experience us moving with the times, being interested in new developments, including technology. If they don't find this with us, then they will go and look elsewhere for answers to their questions.

UM: It strikes me that many of the hindrances that barred the way to religious experience for previous generations have now disappeared.

VvB: Today there is a great openness regarding spiritual matters. The recent 'angel renaissance' is only one indication of this. The question is, what are people doing with it, and which new hindrances are replacing the previous ones.

UM: It seems to me that the traditional anti-religious attitudes are losing their significance. Recently I met a young man who said: 'I need rituals in my life.' As plain as that! I don't think this would have been possible twenty years ago.

VvB: I followed what happened at the Catholic World Youth Day in Cologne in 2005: the sermons of the new pope, but even more the interviews with the young people in which they were asked about their expectations and experiences and what they thought about it all. It made me realize how difficult it is for the Catholic Church to respond to their sometimes provocative questions. It was also striking how impressed the young people were not so much by what was said to them, but by the fact that there really is someone who has dedicated his life to the spiritual world. One of them said: 'What impresses me is this: This is a man of God.' These are mostly young people who have not much of a religious education, but who took part because of a longing to experience a representative of the spiritual world. They found this longing answered in the fact that there such a man stood before a million people and preaches about God. Of course, this is a challenge to us as well: that the rising generation expects more than mere tradition: it expects an experience, a perception of the present working of the Christ. We in The Christian Community should have it much easier, as we are not so much tied by traditional concepts

and ways of telling the gospel. At the same time, we too find it very difficult. The coming decades will be decisive: Can we demonstrate clearly enough that we have a real connection to the Christ in our time?

UM: Where are the truly contemporary elements in our congregations, and where does The Christian Community prove itself to be a movement for religious renewal?

VvB: An important task will certainly be to make the celebrating of the Act of Consecration of Man more transparent. We mustn't rest on our achievements, as the people who join us now have ever greater difficulties to experience the language of the cultus, of the rituals.

UM: What do you mean by 'more transparent'?

VvB: In the seventies I studied drama, and I was able to see on stage the great actors of the post war period. They still used 'stage language', a way of speaking on stage which is entirely different from everyday speech. This was completely lost in the eighties and today Faust is recited in an entirely 'normal' everyday language. With this 'stage speech' we have lost the last link between our everyday language and cultic language. Occasionally I meet young parents who come to the Children's Service who are taken aback by the 'seriousness' with which the service is spoken, because they are not used any longer to the fact that the cultic word needs to be experienced in an entirely different sphere from everyday language. However, we must not mix up cultic speech with speech formation. It was said about Rudolf Frieling that he could celebrate in a way which gave the listener an immediate experience of the spiritual world. This is what I mean by making the language transparent, or opening it up.

One of the most important ways of meeting The Christian Community is to experience the reality of the sacraments. This

however is only possible if the speaking in the service is so transparent that this reality can be perceived by the human beings. I think this is one of our main tasks, to celebrate more and more in accordance with the spirit. This does not mean that we speak magically or suggestively, but rather the opposite, that we speak out of an awareness of the spirit in such a way that what is spoken becomes real.

UM: I experience both in the language of great actors today and in experiencing the celebrations of some of my colleagues a certain form of tenderness and lightness, something transparent, —in a positive sense. The language does not weigh down upon the listening congregation, but the speaking is carried inwardly.

VvB: This is a decisive aspect, and it includes the question of how priest and congregation work together. In the Mass in ancient times, the congregation experienced the holy communion taking place in its feeling. Only a few understood the Latin text, and the mass anyway was not audible throughout. Many people who regularly attend the Act of Consecration of Man know it by heart. Now it is important that the priest speaks the 'let us worthily fulfil' in such a way that the congregation can join in inwardly, and that what is spoken becomes a reality in community.

The power of what can come about can be intensified infinitely. When we are able to develop this strength, then the radiance of what occurs will spread far beyond this particular congregation, this particular place.

UM: A member once said to me: 'I am going through the words.' I think this is a beautiful way to express this.

VvB: Very true. The universal priesthood becomes a reality among the members. They feel more and more that the Act of Consecration of Man is not celebrated to satisfy personal religious needs, but that it is for the



Double Face, Emil Nolde

whole of mankind, and that it is this which the spiritual world expects from us. When I look into the future of The Christian Community, I hope that this sense of responsibility will take hold among us and that this becomes apparent in what we do together, not in order that The Christian Community grows into a bigger movement, but that what wants to flow into the world through The Christian Community, can indeed do so.

UM: Do our congregations have a task beside the sacramental life, as communities in the wider community? Are we in this respect less active than other churches? Is there anything missing?

VvB: If in our communities we really lead a life that springs from the strength of our core, then others will experience this community life as renewing. The effects of celebrating the sacraments together will radiate into the world. The only way to spread the gospel is when other people experience us transformed, when they ask themselves, where does this inner glow come from, where does

this love flow from, where does this strength have its source. Then we can say with the word of the Gospel: 'Come and see'.

UM: In my congregation the question arose, and I think it is very timely: There are many children who are still-born, or who die very shortly after birth, and there is a lack of provision for this situation. There are self-help groups of parents who are looking for an undertaker, who contact the funeral office, the parish office, in order to provide gravestones for these children. Does this have anything to do with The Christian Community, or is this a purely individual initiative of the people concerned?

VvB: I would attempt to approach such a question in a practical spiritual way. First, you have to ask yourself: What do these souls experience, who break off their incarnation before or shortly after it begins? There are ways to understand the special experience of a very small child. You also have to ask: What is the experience of the parents? How can the parents be supported? I could imagine that there are many possibilities, also within The Christian Community. The children's funeral clearly addresses the parents; in this case it is evidently the parents who need more support than the departed young souls, who will easily find their way in the spiritual world. This challenges us to develop a social-religious creativity to explore all the possibilities out of The Christian Community, in order to be able to help and support in those special situations of life.

UM: For me these are new aspects. But there must have been similar possibilities in earlier times, otherwise there would not be any old people's homes of The Christian Community or other institutions for certain life situations in our area.

VvB: This is exactly what I have tried to describe more generally earlier on: that the energy which emerges in the individual souls

of this religious community engenders the formation of groups or brings about the foundation of an old people's home or a kindergarten. It is not necessarily The Christian Community itself which founds the initiative. I think it is much more appropriate that the members of The Christian Community initiate a kindergarten or other similarly needed project, than making this the responsibility of the congregation, although this is also possible. But the central task of The Christian Community is to provide the spiritual strength.

UM: I have introduced the wood carver Peter Lampasiak, a member of our congregation, to the leader of the local authority responsible for graveyards, and the two of them put on some impressive events. He carves dead trees on the graveyard, and is very popular with many people and also appeared in the press. He was interviewed and talked about the life of the soul after death. I think this is a positive example. As a representative of our congregation I helped to facilitate it. However, I had to accept correction. I suggested that there might be a community grave for our members, but the official wanted written confirmation from every interested person, that they are formally members of The Christian Community. I intended this to remain open, and so nothing came of it. But there are now works of art on the graveyard, and our members want to book their plots near them.

VvB: I think this is really interesting, how indeed impulses from within the congregation appear in public. A lot of good could come from this. And I also find it good that we don't have a clearly defined membership, but that these are people who are seeking, who are on the way, who are beginning to take part step by step, before they decide to assume responsibility for this community. We are all on the way together.

Man And The Stars

March–May 2006

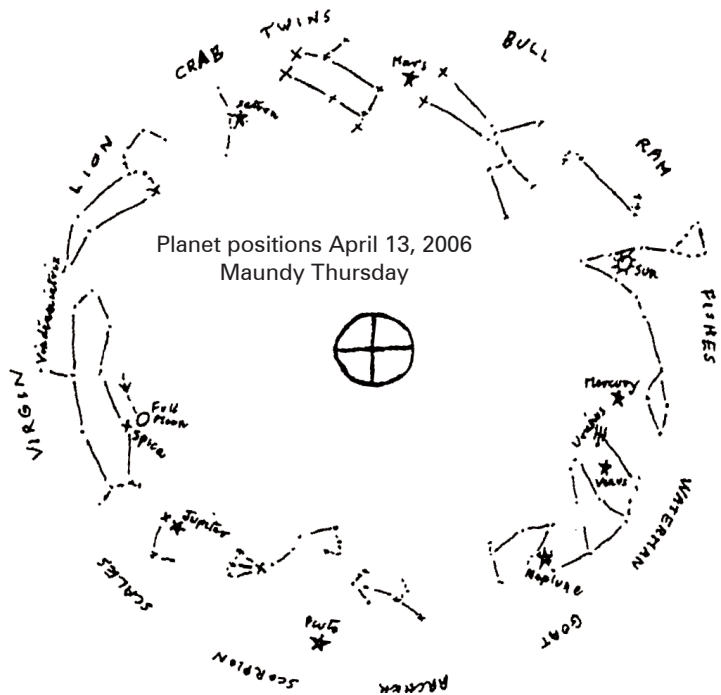
HAZEL STRAKER

The Sun still moves in front of the Waterman until March 12 when he enters the region of the Fishes. Then he meets with Mercury who is looping in towards the Earth and goes back to let the Sun catch him up. Uranus is far out behind the two. full moon is on the 14th at 23.35 in the Virgin with the Sun and Mercury opposite. The moon passes through the outer shadow of the Earth, the penumbra, and may be seen to darken slightly. At 18.25 on the 20th the Sun passes the March equinox point on his yearly path giving equal time day and night everywhere on the Earth where the Sun is visible. New moon on the 29th gives a total Sun eclipse at 10.15, not from Brazil, Nigeria, Lybia, north western tip of Egypt, Turkey, parts of Russia—and ending in the northern tip of Mongolia. It is visible in the UK as a partial eclipses. Many people in Europe observed the total eclipse in August 1999 but there will not be another one visible in Europe until 2026.

Venus is visible very low in the south eastern morning sky before sunrise in the Goat, where she meets with the moon and Neptune on the 26th. Mars is passed by the waxing moon in the evening western sky on the 6th in the Bull. Saturn in Crab is visible most of the night meeting with the waxing

moon on the 10th, Jupiter rises about midnight retrograding in the Scales and is passed by the waning moon on the 19th.

On April 3 the waxing moon passes Mars, then Saturn on the 7th. She becomes full opposite the Sun at 16.40 on the 13th, Maundy Thursday, very close to Spica, the main fixed star in the Virgin signifying the ear of wheat in the Virgin's left hand. Spica will be outshone by the light of the moon. On Quiet Saturday of Easter Week, the 15th, the waning moon overtakes Jupiter and passes very close to Venus on the 24th. All these events are visible from the U.K. At 19.44 on the 27th, the moon becomes new as she overtakes the



Then and Now

*Once there was only Now;
Then, slowly, Next appeared;
Next meal, next time, next week, next day.*

*A new dimension,
A golden, unsubstantial veil
Reflecting back today's reality.*

*But, Present loses power to Future
And Past is born.
Three states, three tenses,
I am, I was, I shall be,
(or could be, or may be).
The wider angle blurs the focus
Till Present dwindles, and becomes
The ante-room to golden, insubstantial promises.*

*When, wearying of dreams
We seek to focus on the present,
And learning, start to savour it
We find, that for each of us,
Reality is rooted in our past.*

*This Past is cluttered up with withered
Still-born schemes and wild ideas,
And fertile seeds
Which, given care and tender nurturing,
Can still develop shoots
And bring to present flower
What in the past was not achieved.*

BETTY COLVILLE

Sun who has just moved into the Ram area on the 19th.

On the 2nd and 4th May the waxing moon again passes Mars and Saturn respectively. Mars moved into the Twins on April 12 whilst Saturn is still in the Crab. Full moon at 6.51 on the 13th in the Scales is irradiated by the Sun just about to enter the region of the Bull. On the 4th May Jupiter is opposite the Sun thus visible all night and overtaken by the nearly full moon on the 12th.

Uranus still traverses the Waterman region, Neptune the Goat becoming retrograde on May 23. Pluto, near the boundary to the Archer moves back into the Scorpion on March 30.

Easter Sunday each year should fall on the Sunday following the first full moon after the Sun has passed his March equinox point. Therefore the full moon always falls in the week between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. At the original Easter the eclipsed full moon fell on Friday, the day of the Crucifixion. This year the full moon falls on April 13, Maundy Thursday or the day of the commemoration of the Last Supper. The moon is moving before the constellation of the Virgin which contains the two fixed stars Vindematrix, the grape-gatherer and Spica, the ear of wheat. In the Greek myths, the Virgin holds a bunch of grapes in her right hand and a sheaf of corn in her left. This year the moon enters the Virgin region on April the 11th, passes below (above for southern viewers) Vindematrix on the 12th and moves on so close to Spica when full on the 13th that from some parts of the Earth she moves right in front of that fixed star.

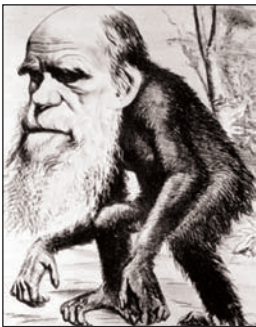
Could this be a challenge and a plea from the Spiritual Beings shining through the stars to us to offer up to them our deepest thoughts about the words of Christ at the Last Supper? We can of course get much help from the Act of Consecration of Man but how do we think and act in our daily life to the Earth over which we walk and whose products we consume?

OUTLOOK

Darwin's Terrible Dilemma

DON CRUSE

Charles Darwin is today considered one of the greatest figures of science, and certainly one of its best-known representatives. What did he do to deserve such recognition? Contrary to a common assumption it was not he who gave us the idea of 'evolution,' Goethe had already done that, and the good Dr. Paley whose work had inspired Darwin, was an evolutionist—but also a theologian. What then did Darwin accomplish? In a nutshell, it was he who took religion out of science. His 1859 theory of Origins was the first to turn the idea of God into an 'unnecessary hypothesis,' although this had not been at all clear-cut to begin with. It was much more of a touch and go situation, because Darwin had studied theology, and in an early (1845) version of his theory he had openly speculated that 'natural selection' arose from the conscious working of a 'great being'. Had he continued with this line of thought, however, science, which desperately wanted to emancipate itself from religion, would probably have ignored him like the plague. In the theory for which he is now famous, however, the 'great being' has completely disappeared leaving 'natural selection' to be viewed as a totally unconscious activity that is attributed to nature herself.



Caricature in the
Hornet magazine

What is wrong with this? Surely this was far too big a step for him to take without it having very serious consequences. Yes indeed, hugely serious consequences are there for all who value simple logic, but Darwin was only margin-

ally aware of them, and he failed to realise that in course of time they would have the power to destroy totally his great theory (great in its historic significance).

Natural Selection— can nature without Mind 'select'?

Darwin understood the deceptive character of the term 'Natural Selection' and, in later editions of the Origin of Species, defends himself for introducing it:

In the literal sense of the word, no doubt, Natural Selection is a false term; but who ever objected to chemists speaking of the elective affinities of the various elements?—and yet an acid cannot strictly be said to elect the base with which it in preference combines. ... Everyone knows what is meant and is implied by such metaphorical expressions; and they are almost necessary for brevity. (1876 ed., 66)

We must sympathize with Darwin, for he is faced with the task of describing as undirected a process, which we can hardly imagine as occurring other than through the direction of some intelligence. However, in the above argument he fails to take into account that the intentional phrase 'elective affinities,' as it was used in the chemistry of an earlier era, was manifestly not the single most important component in a theory that had dismissed God the Designer as 'an unnecessary hypothesis.' This factual omission has a very serious consequence in logic, because as long as God still existed in the background as the presumed source of natural design, it was logically acceptable to make use of intentional idioms in describing the way nature worked. In dismissing God, and spiritual forces in general, Darwin unknowingly deprived his theory of legitimacy in the realm of logic, because intentional words and phrases always denote either a spiritual or a mental

activity, and since the natural world is not a human creation the remaining alternative, even if not God in any accepted sense, must at least be God-like. This is not just a careless mistake that can easily be set right. Because of the way in which our minds work, the use of intentional idioms in Darwinian argument, of which the word 'select' is only the first of very many, cannot fail surreptitiously to invoke the presence of spiritual/mental creativity, even when the theory in which they are being used purports specifically to deny it. This 'false term' and its many companions are what makes the theory appear to work, and so must go to the very heart of its validity. It does not matter one iota that the theory claims an absence of divine creativity in nature, if the language in which that claim is made directly contradicts it. The theory is then founded on a falsity; its power to convince is based either upon our lack of attention—and perhaps our subliminal willingness to overlook a total contradiction in logic now deeply embedded in our habitual use of language—or upon our dismissal of this contradiction as a matter of no consequence because we do not recognize its full import. Neither response is acceptable to those of us interested in upholding a rational foundation for science.

Darwin's Language

Consider the following passage from *Origin*, in which the intentional/mental idioms are italicized:

It may be metaphorically said that Natural Selection is daily and hourly scrutinizing, throughout the world, the slightest variations; rejecting those that are bad, and adding up all that are good; silently and insensibly working, whenever and wherever opportunity offers, at the improvement of each organic being. (1876 ed., 68–69)

This passage, among many others, caused the writer Stanley Edgar Hyman, in his book *The Tangled Bank*, to observe that:

Darwin starts by insisting that Nature is not a goddess, but a metaphor. As soon as he begins to talk about Nature, however, she is transformed into a female divinity with consciousness and will.

What we seek to draw attention to is the fact that this is much more than a question of literary style—a style for which Darwin has often been justly praised—but is first and foremost a matter of logical contradiction. Darwin throughout the exposition of his theory is using language which not only strongly connotes conscious direction in nature, but is rendered unworkable without that connotation, so that its use is much more than just 'metaphorical.' This practice, begun by Darwin, has since come to permeate all of modern evolutionary theory, creating difficulties that I shall explore further here.

Darwin's use of intentional idioms is not only misleading but logically false, because with the claimed absence of a Deity the source of the creativity it suggests can only be human.

The neo-Darwinists of the present day do not suffer any of Darwin's qualms on the matter of intentional language. Richard Dawkins claims that this practice is merely a 'biologist's convention'. The American materialist philosopher Daniel C. Dennett, writes that the use of intentional idioms in the defense of Darwinism is 'inescapable',¹ but then adds that they are only used 'as if' they were true. This suggests that in order to make the Darwinian theory appear plausible we must pretend that such descriptions are true, while knowing all the time that they are not (see essay #20). The problem is, of course, that the vast majority, both within academia and without, have not yet even begun to seriously question their truth—even brilliant minds have simply been taken in by it all.

The 'as if' contradiction results in a complete abdication of logic. It is like being faced with a logician who argues that he can only sustain proposition 'A' (materialism) by making copious use of the principal thesis contained in the antithetical argument 'B' (spiritual/mental causes) and that he is justified in doing this because otherwise he cannot prove the truth of 'A'.

1 Daniel Dennett *The Intentional Stance*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1987, p. 314.

This profound irrationality is obscured throughout neo-Darwinian literature by a rampant reliance on intentional idioms, and by the often repeated but absurd claim that nature has 'Design, but no Designer.' The only way in which such a claim can even appear to be proven, is by the further use of intentional language. This means that irrationality couched in the use of language, is now being buttressed by circular argument.

The neo-Darwinian claim that nature has 'Design, but no Designer,' if deprived of the support given it by the use of intentional idioms, becomes unsupportable and fails immediately, because no non-intentional argument in support of it has ever been proposed.

If—despite the fact that the misuse of intentional language results in a serious logical error—one wishes to persist in the assertion that nature has 'Design, but no Designer,' one must then be prepared to look very closely indeed at the true meaning of the word 'design,' and all of its possible ramifications, especially as they concern both the 'creation' and the 'failure' of designed entities. We must be prepared in fact to show that the word 'design' has a non-mental meaning, which can be fully defined without the use of intentional language. In Darwinian argument this is never attempted; the word 'design,'—together with so many other intentional words and phrases—is simply left to work its unconscious and dubious mental magic on the mind of the reader.

No matter how unconscious its workings, one cannot sustain an irrational premise by simply adding more irrationality, which is what the present neo-Darwinian argument for Designer-less Design attempts.

Design is a spiritual/mental concept that cannot in any normal sense have a non-mental meaning, and if a non-mental meaning is claimed for it, and then justified with the use of intentional idioms, that justification can only be false. The phrase 'natural law' is used to indicate a range of non-mental and non-fallible phenomena (i.e. the known laws of physics and chemistry), and if a mental (and there-

fore fallible) content is attributed to it, even if that were possible, that content must still have come originally from a spiritual/mental source. Some non-Darwinian evolutionists have made this claim, which is somewhat in keeping with the current vogue in cosmology to postulate the active involvement of a God, either before or after what are termed 'singularities' (the Big Bang and Black Holes)². This is done in order to avoid the suggestion that spiritual/mental forces could be creatively at work in the present, a prospect traditionally seen as a threat to scientific predictability. In the era before quantum physics predictability was considered essential in all realms of scientific enquiry—except, interestingly, where human creativity itself is concerned.

The fact that it is human creativity that is imported into Darwinism by the use of intentional idioms, may help to explain why after nearly 150 years the Darwinian theory has proven to have little or no predictive value. Human creativity is utterly unpredictable, you cannot predict on the basis of what went before what will happen next in a Beethoven symphony. Ironically, a theory that originally promised to extend scientific predictability into the biological realm, by adopting materialism as its founding assumption, has failed to deliver predictability.

Simple logic then, demands that we take seriously the possibility that intelligent forces beyond the present concept of natural law (i.e. spiritual forces) have been and still are at work in the biological realm. This does not in any way mean the end of science, only that we must abandon scientific materialism and the unproven assumptions concerning the nature of reality that go with it. Only then can we undertake to transform science into a discipline truly capable of understanding life itself, and therefore less amoral in its wider influence. It is science's failure to do this, and its materialistic, utilitarian approach to the natural world, that lies at the very heart of our current ecological crisis.

2 See *A Short History of Time* by Stephen Hawkins,

A testament in oil, wood and paper

ANNA PHILLIPS

*Francis of Assisi
Paintings for our time*

By Greg Tricker

Green Books, Oct. 2005, £25

Greg Tricker prefers to immerse himself in themes to inspire his work. He paints his subject with a very immediate and personal response which at the same time goes right to the heart of his chosen theme and thereby makes it come truly and objectively alive.

First the artist himself describes his impulse to delve deeper into the life of St. Francis with brush, hammer and chisel, mind and soul. This is followed by an introduction by Jeremy Naydler into St. Francis' way of poverty and a historical background into his life and times by Johannes Steuck. But the main bulk of

the book is 115 pages of plates of paintings, woodcuts and stone carvings. Each plate is accompanied by a short story related to it. It is a well proportioned, well designed and beautifully finished overview of the creative result of Greg Tricker's living and working with St. Francis and his mission.

He has approached his subject from different angles, using different media, with complementing perspectives which enhance rather than confuse. Through his signature simple style we can clearly follow the story and reach its essential message that permeates all at the same time. This style is simple, reminiscent of early Picasso paintings. Perspective, spatial orientation and foreshortening don't work. Hands and faces are too long, bodies are stiff and awkward. Yet it doesn't matter and it is never off-putting. This simplicity is naïve, beautiful, innocent and childlike. It holds an angelic, dreamlike quality which perfectly suits the mood of the life of St. Francis. St. Francis himself was on a lifelong quest for simplicity and poverty, which he saw as the key to becoming truly human.

The longer I live with the prints, the more strongly does Greg Tricker's solid working method become obvious. His sense for colours that harmonise, his vibrant and energetic technique, whether it is in painting, printing or sculpting betray a passion for his subject that gives strength and solidity to his images. They demand to be taken seriously. St. Francis' life was likewise strong and firm as a rock, humble and dedicated to service while determined and unchangeable.

These images do not tire. They relax the mind through the eye, which can rest peacefully on form and colour. As I take them in more deeply their meaning is revealed, not to the head, but to the heart. They can be a tool for contemplation, an aid to open the flower of the heart. The spirit is lifted to become as light as a white dove.



AROUND THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

The Christian Community in Italy

ANNA ANNOVAZZI

I was ordained in 1994 as the first Italian priest of The Christian Community. As The Christian Community at that time had not yet been founded in Italy, I started my work in Great Britain where I remained for about 10 years. In 1995 Heinz Lüscher was ordained in Switzerland. He was by then fluent in Italian and he started working in Switzerland. Together with him and, to begin with, also David Schwarz, I took part in the first family summer camps in Italy.

In 1997 we began to celebrate Confirmations almost every year in various places: Milan, Rome, Bologna, Trent. The Confirmation was always a great event in the year to which the young people, their parents, their godparents and the members and friends of The Christian Community came together with growing enthusiasm. Now the first confirmands, who are now between 23 and 35 years old, have started to bring their own children into The Christian Community for christenings and the Sunday services.

More recently, the Act of Consecration of Man was celebrated in a more or less constant rhythm (two to six times yearly) in Turino, Milano, Rovereto (Trent), Bologna, Rome and in Sicily. The wish that priests might come to live and work in Italy grew constantly stronger.

During the summer camp in 2003 in Noto (Sicily) the representatives of the different regions contemplated the possibility of creating a centre where a priest could be active continuously. Bologna seemed to be the most

suitable place for this. It was not only the geographical situation, but the fact that there was a group of people who were willing to engage in many practical activities: the search for suitable rooms and their maintenance, the running of an office and so on.

Towards the end of 2003 Heinz Lüscher and myself, who were involved in all these activities, were finally sent to Italy. That was the beginning of the great adventure. To leave the congregation in Bristol, Great Britain and the English-speaking world was not easy. After a break of 15 years I returned, aged 64, into the world of the Mediterranean, into a city which I did not know, where we had to begin again from scratch. But the great openness of the people of Bologna, their honest and direct way of dealing with life, and in particular their generosity and warm hospitality made this new beginning very exciting.

Our first project was to celebrate Christmas together. We rented a lonely hut far outside of Bologna on a bleak hilltop. Somebody said it looked like a stable for a crib. And indeed there was the smell of the pinewood, with which the walls of the room that became our chapel was clad. The people came together as the shepherds did a long time ago without car-



Bologna

ing either about the deep snow or the freezing temperatures.

The little hut could accommodate about 20 people, but there were many more at the services and for the contemplations on the Gospels. They came from Bologna and the neighbouring cities, from Florence, Trent and Milan, which are about to two hours away, and even from Rome. Some people experienced the Act of Consecration of Man for the first time. Moved and inspired, they listened to the words of the Christmas service for the children and their hearts were deeply touched. For four days there were lectures and conversations, and there was wonderful food (the people of Bologna are famous for that!) Another meeting took place on the day of Epiphany.

Nobody was under the illusion that the founding of The Christian Community in Italy would be easy. But we became more and more aware that we had taken on a huge responsibility towards the spiritual world. We started immediately with the search for a suitable room which would be big enough for 50 to 60 people. This enterprise proved to be even more difficult than we imagined. Day after day we were conducting endless negotiations, in Arctic temperatures, in icy cold industrial buildings, large meeting rooms and flats. As soon as we mentioned that we were representing a religious movement the owners became suspicious: 'are you a Catholic movement?'—'No.'—'Are you Protestant, Lutheran, Calvinistic, Anglican?'—'No.'—'Orthodox?'—'No, we are an independent movement for the renewal of religious life.'—As soon as we started to give details the wall between us and the potential landlords became insurmountable. The largest obstacle was the fact that we did not recognise the Pope as the highest authority of our church. The responses were always the same. If the owner was Catholic he had to go and ask the local priest first. And if he was not Catholic he had to ask the mayor first, as he didn't want to spoil his business connections. Some expressed themselves even more clearly: 'We do not want to get involved with Mormons, Jehovah's Wit-

nesses or similar folk.' Even more problematic was the fact that a woman—on these missions always accompanied by other women—was a priest of this community.

Eventually a good star led us to a young, unprejudiced man, who was simply looking for a tenant for his flat so that he could go off on holiday to the Cote d'Azur. He owned a flat which could contain a chapel that would accommodate up to 40 chairs, the vestry and a veranda for festive meetings and events, the kitchen and even a bedroom where the priest could stay overnight.

The decision was made within a few days and the price was acceptable. The single problem was that we did not have any money, even for the first year only. But we kept thinking: we are doing this work to serve Christ. If fear and doubt do not lead us astray, the spiritual world will help us and we will get the support of those who have similar ideals: to contribute to a religious renewal in Italy. In this spirit we signed the contract.

This was in February 2004. On the 1st April we were to be able to move in. Before that there was just enough time for me to undergo a small operation which could not be put off any more. While I was still in hospital and recovering in the care of a kind family in Bologna, the spearhead of the little congregation in Bologna became active. An altar and a pulpit were made, and the candlesticks and frames for the altar pictures were carved. As soon as they were able, the pioneers were at work, often till two o'clock in the morning, in order to construct the three steps leading up to the altar on site, to fix the violet background for the altar and hang the curtains in the chapel.

The enthusiasm spread even abroad so that many presents arrived. A lady in Germany made the Easter chasuble, and later one for Advent. Congregations in Great Britain, Switzerland and Germany made available the vestments we still needed. A beautiful golden cup came with help of Johannes Lenz of Stuttgart. The generosity of many people and groups freed us from the worry about our rent.

On the ninth of May 2004 Hans Lüscher celebrated the Confirmation which coincided with the inauguration of our rooms in Bologna. This was a historic moment as the Act of Consecration of Man was celebrated in Italy the first time at a permanent location of The Christian Community, on a 'permanent' altar from which the light of the new sacraments can now flow regularly into the world and transform the ether realm.

On St John's Day 2004, The Christian Community was officially founded in Italy. And with this event, so long awaited, came also the first celebration of the Act of Consecration of Man by Orlando Meggiolaro, who had been ordained in Hamburg in May. His training had been filled with the hope for future work in Italy and a network of people had supported him financially.

Life in the big cities of northern Italy becomes very arduous in summer as the temperatures rise to 40 degrees with a humidity of 95%. Those who can afford to, leave the city as soon as the school holidays begin. Our congregation felt the effect of summer as, after these very well attended events, the attendance at the services diminished dramatically.

At Michaelmas our activities restarted with a renewed strength. The four Advent Sundays were celebrated for the first time in Italy. We had a golden star on the floor. Parents and children lighted the candles which were already placed along the edges of the star and listened to the stories told by the priests. During the Holy Nights the Act of Consecration was celebrated every day, and I experienced a larger stream of people attending than in many established congregations.

With the celebrations of the Holy Week and Easter the first cycle of the Christian festivals was complete and for this occasion we had guests: Rev. Julian Sleight and Dagmar Brockstedt of the Foundation of The Christian Community International brought a whiff of international air. Julian, himself born in Florence and former Lenker of South Africa, spoke in charming Italian with a Florentine accent



Anna Annovazzi with her confirmands

about 'the descent of Christ into the underworld' and on Easter Day about 'the situation of The Christian Community in South Africa'. I wonder if he ever had time to savour the beautiful food cooked by our Bolognese cooks, as he was constantly besieged with all sorts of questions. And when we Italians speak we do it at a breathtaking speed and all at once.

Dagmar Brockstedt spoke about the International Foundation and kindled in us in a positive way a new consciousness for the challenge of the finances within the world-wide Christian Community.

About a dozen young people take part regularly in the services and the occasional lectures, and two of them are also our regular musicians.

We strive to maintain a good relationship with the Waldorf School in Bologna. Of the 24 Waldorf schools in Italy, it is the only one which can house its activities in a building built in accordance with the content which is taught inside it. The pioneers of the Waldorf School are partly the same people as the pioneers of

The Christian Community in Bologna. Because of this double involvement, the past year was a real test for this group of people. A lot of strength comes from the services, but more strength is needed to come from outside. There are some promises on the horizon. The religious tradition in our country makes it difficult for many people to join the religious movement with all the responsibilities as a member. The task of the priests in this area is very delicate and responsible.

A boy who refused to take part in the traditional catechism lessons and is now in our group of confirmands, responded to his mother's question regarding the content of our lessons: 'It is a revelation. You feel that what the priest says is true, especially what concerns sin.' A girl who had been quite rebellious to begin with, and wanted to know what the Confirmation was all about before the lessons started, told me after the first lesson: 'I don't like what you have taught us today, for example that Christ had to die because of our fault. I don't believe that.' As this was also my experience in my childhood I could tell her sincerely: 'I do agree. Christ didn't die through our fault but because of his boundless love for us human beings.' Two months later the girl wrote in her biography. 'I am ever so grateful to my friend for showing me this new way of thinking.'

We have started our work with a small group of 12 supporting members and now there are more than 50 adults and more than 30 children and young people in the area of Bologna who are in touch with the sacraments. People also come from further away, even from German, English or Dutch communities. On Christmas Day there was a Finnish couple taking part. Occasionally the space was too small to accommodate everybody and people had to stand in the corridor outside.

This year the Confirmation was celebrated in two different cities for the first time. In Bologna there is space for about five confirmands and their families. If any other members of the community want to attend, they have to stand in the passage from where they can only hear

the service taking place. Another 12 children from the area of Milan, and four children from the Italian speaking part of Switzerland were confirmed in a room specially rented for this occasion.

Heinz Lüscher, who lives in Umbria, and who joins us for the festivals, is looking after the old communities in Turino, Rome and the new one in Palermo, which are too far away to be able to take part in our activities in Bologna, but who continue to support us financially. The priests from Bologna, in particular Orlando Meggiolaro, have taken on to care for the congregations of Rovereto (Trent) and Milano.

It is becoming ever more clear that the choice to start our work in Bologna was a good one. But it is also clear that the space we are in is already too small and there would be more work for priests, in Bologna and in the nearby cities.

Beginnings of The Christian Community in Italy

DAVID SCHWARZ

A long time before the founding of The Christian Community in 1922 Rudolf Steiner presented new aspects of Christianity. He spoke on this theme in many European cities. The lectures he held in the Italian region between 1904 and 1912 were the preliminary step for religious renewal in Italy. He made aware of the impulses and revelations which mankind needs to experience and to get hold of for its development towards the future..

Another moment in the preparation for the founding of The Christian Community in Italy was the indication that Rudolf Steiner gave to future priests in autumn 1921. He told them that, while attending an Italian mass he experienced a shining aura around the host when it was elevated in the transubstantiation.

In 1925, 2½ years after the founding of The Christian Community in Dornach, Emil Bock undertook his first journey to Italy. He was still under the impression of Rudolf Steiner's funeral service. Bock reports on this in his travel

journals. In 1928, 1935 and 1938 he went on further journeys to Italy mainly to investigate the early Christians. He describes in detail the various catacombs, also the places where Peter and Paul suffered their martyrdom. When you read his journals you get the impression that his investigations were meant to give the priests of The Christian Community a new connection to the Apostles and the early church, and to place the new perspectives that Rudolf Steiner had opened up on a secure footing.

After the Second World War, when middle Europe was rising from the ashes, in Italy as elsewhere there was more interest for anthroposophical ideas, social and practical impulses. The first Waldorf School was founded in Milan, followed by new schools in Lugano, Rome, Oriago, for a while in Turin, Triest, Bologna, Como and Rovereto. Anthroposophical medicine was introduced and biodynamic farming gained ground.

There was for a time a school of eurythmy in Florence, and many artists who were inspired by anthroposophy came together to seek something like a renewal of the treasures of art of past centuries.

From all these circles came more and more direct requests for religious renewal, in particular for a new baptism outside of the confessional churches. Through personal connections and recommendations various priests of The Christian Community from Germany or Switzerland were asked to celebrate a christening for an Italian family, first of all in German, possibly with translation, and then also in families who didn't understand German at all.

After her ordination in 1950, Mrs Ida Weiss from Zurich, who was proficient in Italian, took on this task. She travelled regularly to the South and looks after the 'family' for years. Italy becomes the diaspora of Switzerland. In Chiavari, Italy, and Ascona, Ticino, there are holiday courses with Rudolf Frieling, Rudolf Meyer, Ida Wyss, Friedrich Schneeberger, Markus Lutz and Peter Händler.

From this point the impulse to move from preliminary steps to preparatory steps of a

foundation of The Christian Community in Italy gradually grew.

In 1970 Friedrich Schneeberger was ordained. German friends in Ascona offer him lodging with a large room to be used as a chapel. This became a daughter congregation of Bern. With the founding of the Waldorf School in Lugano came the request for religion lessons. It became urgent to translate all the service texts into proper Italian. For years Schneeberger made a huge effort, next to his task in the congregation of Bern, to recreate anew in Italian, word by word, sentence by sentence, what has been received in German. Already in his eighties he worked through them all again with the help of an Italian professor who worked on translations of Rudolf Steiner's mantric verses. Prof. Dr. Isnardi had a deep respect for what Rudolf Steiner could bring to humanity from the spiritual world. He contemplated it and explored how the Italian corresponds to it. The sentence which says that The Christian Community recognises Christ in freedom as its helping guide, 'la comunità cristiana che riconosce in libertà Cristo come sua guida ausiliatrice' filled him with enthusiasm and convinced him of the importance of our movement for the Italian region.

In 1985 the Italian version was ready to be evaluated by the Oberlenkung and at the Synod in Nuremberg Friedrich Schneeberger celebrated the act of consecration of man the first time in Italian.

In 1954 I arrived, after a season's work as a cook in a hotel in Ascona, with my wife and our little daughter in La Motta, a curative children's home in Brissago. Her christening by Willy Nüesch, who travelled specially from Zurich, marked the beginning of our work which lasted, with small interruptions for study, up to 1970. Although in the home we mainly spoke German, we needed to know Italian to speak with the employees, delivery men and the people from the village. My tasks widened into curative education and the holding of the Sunday services.

Dr. Ita Wegmann's impulse for the founding of La Motta was to erect a 'bulwark against the

South'; it became our personal interest to make it a bridgehead towards the south. I made contact with the Milan Steiner School. After an interlude in Zurich I resumed my studies for the priesthood, which I had interrupted much earlier. In 1975 I was ordained in Berlin and after two in years at Lake Constance I was sent in 1977 to help Friedrich Schneeberger in Bern. His task to work in the Italian region rejuvenated him so much that he was able to continue to working into his eighties with a lot of zeal and warmth and he prepared me to be his successor. This connected me again to my task to build bridges to the Italy in a new dimension.

This began in 1982 with christenings in Trieste and Lugano. In autumn 1983, after baptisms in upper Italy, I christened a larger group of children from the Rudolf Steiner school in Rome and held the children's service there. At that time it was impossible to think of forming a congregation in Italy. But as the children would need to be christened into a congregation which would, ideally, be carried by parents and godparents, I was advised by the Oberlenkung to create for the sacraments a 'temporary' congregation within my own congregation.

It was possible to arrange this as we had a youth and holiday house in Walkringen, near Berne. From 1984 we organised regularly Italian family weeks around St John's Tide. After Christmas in 1986 we added new year/epiphany celebrations and in 1989 even a preparation week for confirmands from Turin. Through this activity we grew together into a family of joyful Christians, for whom this beautiful part of subalpine Switzerland became a second home.

During all that time the German daughter congregation in Ascona grew towards Italy. We visited the school in Ascona, had Confirmations, Christmas services and ever and again christenings.

From 1991 we have been organising conferences in Italy for members and friends. The first was with Julian Sleigh, the Lenker of

South Africa (now retired), who was born in Florence.

With the ordinations of Anna Annovazzi and Heinz Lüscher we came another step closer to our aim to found The Christian Community in Italy. First of all we moved the summer camps from Switzerland to Italy. Heinz Lüscher went to live in the Ticino, and covered Italy with his journeys from Turin to Palermo, while Anna Annovazzi was sent to Bristol, England, whilst preparations continued for the foundation of a full Italian congregation.

I have followed the foundation and development of the movement for religious renewal in Italy through the three priests who are active there (the two we have already mentioned were joined by a third, newly ordained Orlando Meggiolaro) with great interest.

I would still like to mention that for 12 years there has been a small quarterly journal, in which our programme and articles in translation are published. The editor is Adriana Ricci, Via Caregò 27, I-21020 Crosio della Valle.

Park Attwood Clinic



Anthroposophical Medical Treatment for the Individual

Experience medical treatment in the context of a healing, social environment and in the beautiful Worcester countryside.

Orthodox and anthroposophical medicine are combined to provide the best possible residential and out-patient treatment for a wide range of conditions.

Art, sculpture, eurythmy and massage are integral to residential treatment and available as out-patient therapies.

Individual financial discussions and funding advice are offered.

Park Attwood Clinic
Trimpley, Bewdley, Worcs DY12 1RE
 Tel: 01299 861444 Fax: 01299 861375
 Email: info@parkattwood.org
 Internet: www.parkattwood.org

Readable new study of the Virgin Birth from an
acclaimed anthroposophical scholar

MYTH OF THE NATIVITY

The Virgin Birth Re-examined

ANDREW WELBURN

Lamech 'was afraid of him and fled and ... said: I have begotten a strange son; he is not like a human being, but like the children of the angels.'

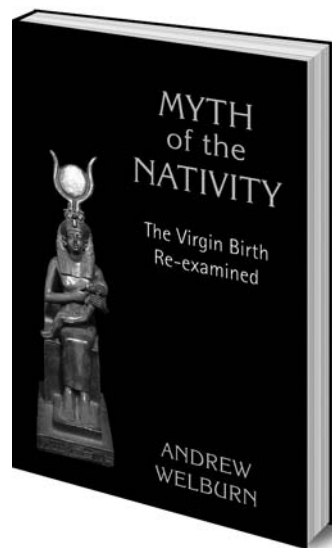
(1 Enoch from the Dead Sea Scrolls)

The conception and birth of Jesus is one of the most mysterious and challenging stories in the Gospels, surrounded by many signs and miracles. Is it possible to understand the Virgin Birth in a light that is both true to its origins and meaningful in our times?

In this carefully argued study, Andrew Welburn says that we must reimagine the events of the Virgin Birth through the eyes of the Gospel writers. He explores many parallel stories and prototype characters, drawn from Jewish, Persian, Egyptian and Roman sources, which could have been known by them. Stories of unusual children with mysterious parenthood have, in fact, long inspired human beliefs and story-telling – an awareness often lost to modern orthodox Christianity.

Welburn concludes that the Virgin Birth is part of a greater story, a synthesis of many traditions, and stands for, above all, a promise of spiritual rebirth.

This book is for anyone interested in the origins, and future, of the Christian faith.



0-86315-543-X hardback
192 pages £20.00
Published 23 February 2006

Andrew Welburn is a Fellow of New College, Oxford. He is author of *The Beginnings of Christianity*; *The Mysteries: Rudolf Steiner's Writings on Spiritual Initiation*; and *Rudolf Steiner's Philosophy* (all Floris Books).

Praise for Rudolf Steiner's Philosophy:

'Armchair philosophers will enjoy reading this with nothing stronger than a mild herb tea to keep them awake.'

— Martyn Rawson, *Steiner Education*



MARCH–MAY 2006

**Floris
Books**

www.florisbooks.co.uk

If you have difficulty obtaining this book from your local bookshop, you can order it direct from:

BookSource, 32 Finlas St, Glasgow G22 5DU, UK
Tel: 0870-240 2182 Fax: 0141-557 0189



Our chapel on the Hillside

Situated on a hillside behind behind the Rudolf Steiner school of Florianópolis, our chapel, an extended fisherman's hut, leaves the newcomer at first sight somewhat bewildered, as nothing in its outer appearance denotes it as a place of worship, as the sign at the bottom of the hill indicates. In that sense it is a bit like a mystery centre of old or like the mystic who in the Buddhist tradition is indistinguishable from the man in the market place. All the greater is the surprise when he opens the door to enter a space which cannot but fill him with a sense of wonder, as he faces the altar with the seven candles, and the Christ picture above it, the painted wooden walls, and the light streaming in through the windows, all of which touches his heart by its simplicity and charm. It is an all in one chapel with the vestry, the library and even the washroom all in the same rather small space. Having come from Lima and then São Paulo, both communities of which have proper churches, we felt in the beginning that we too must go to a bigger and better place but in the meantime we have changed our minds and find that our chapel is just right for us and for Florianópolis. Backing onto woodland with a little river running through it, it is an island of peace which the birds enhance with their morning concert during mass.

In March of next year it will be three years since we came from São Paulo to live here and work for the congregation of Florianópolis, which up till then had been serviced by visiting priests. The island of Florianópolis is a place

of magic as tradition has it, fostering in those who come here false hopes and dreams as it is a place of unbelievable natural beauty. But these sooner or later come up against the limitations of our human condition and have to be modified, and we like many others have had to learn to prune our tree of false expectations of growth and recognize that this tree like many others of The Christian Community throughout the world is small but growing in the right measure with the supplement of perseverance and faith and the hope that it will gain firm roots in this sandy ground.

Our congregation numbers between 15 and 20 on a normal Sunday but its numbers swell on special occasions like this summer when we had two priests visiting us and the Act of Consecration was celebrated with three priests at the altar.

The congregational life follows very much the same pattern as in other congregations. The Act of Consecration is celebrated every Sunday and on Wednesdays, and the bible study group meets once a week to work with the subject of the Apocalypse. We have had two funerals, two weddings and several baptisms. Religious lessons are not very popular but there always is a strong confirmation group. Highlights have been the children's camps twice a year, which so far have been very popular thanks to the co-operation of Julio and Eliana who prepare and help to run these camps with great dedication.

From time to time our theatre group prepares a puppet theatre presented to the children of the community and the surroundings and for Christmas we plan to take a special play to the local Childrens' hospital.

Douglas Thackray also visits the congregation in Rio de Janeiro four or five times a year and has been asked to give lectures and orientation to a group of people in Belo Horizonte who are interested in the Christian Community.

Despite getting older and having become grandparents to 5 grandchildren in Europe we are in good health and Federico, our adopted son from Peru, celebrated his 21st birthday in November.

SIBYLLE THACKRAY

SAINT PAUL

Life, Epistles and Teaching

Long-awaited new paperback editions

EMIL BOCK

Describing the environment into which Saul was born, his education, his conversion before Damascus and his subsequent journeys, Bock's study gives a spiritual dimension to Paul's background, providing a deeper understanding of this great Christian figure and his teaching.

0-86315-536-7 • paperback • 368 pages • £14.99

Published November 2005

THE THREE YEARS

The Life of Christ Between Baptism and Ascension

EMIL BOCK

Bock rediscovers the works and miracles of Christ without minimizing the difficulties for the modern mind. He brings together historical records and the geographical background of the Gospels, all the while keeping sight of their spiritual wisdom.

0-86315-535-9 • paperback • 320 pages • £14.99

Published November 2005

THE APOCALYPSE OF SAINT JOHN

EMIL BOCK

Bock interprets St John's rich pictorial language, showing that John is dealing with the universal problems of spiritual development. This is a profound and encouraging examination of human needs in today's world.

0-86315-539-1 • paperback • 208 pages • £14.99

Published November 2005



MARCH-MAY 2006

**Floriss
Books**

www.florissbooks.co.uk

If you have difficulty obtaining this book from your local bookshop, you can order it direct from:

BookSource, 32 Finlas St, Glasgow G22 5DU, UK
Tel: 0870-240 2182 Fax: 0141-557 0189

Authors:

Pearl Goodwin is a priest of The Christian Community in Stourbridge

Carmel Iveson is a priest of The Christian Community in Buckfastleigh, Devon.

Hazel Straker lives and works in Camphill Coleg Elidyr, Wales.

Tom Ravetz is a priest of The Christian Community in Stourbridge.

Douglas Thackray is a priest of The Christian Community in Sao Paolo.

Michael Tapp is a retired Lenker of The Christian Community and lives in Stroud.

Too Many Books? Let Roger find them a new home. Buy—Sell—Find: Used, Rare, Out-Of-Print
'Encore!' Anthroposophical Books,
333 Sunnidale Road, Unit 31, Barrie, Ontario, L4N 6H5, Canada
encoreanthrobooks@sympatico.ca

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

Please take care filling in this form. We are able to process only cheques, postal orders, Visa or MasterCard. Unfortunately we cannot process American Express, Switch or any other cards!

Please send: (tick appropriate boxes):

- ☐ the next 4 issues of *Perspectives* ☐ this year's *Perspectives* (inc. back issues)
☐ Cheque enclosed* Charge my: ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa Amount: £ _____
☐ I am a subscriber: SubsCode (bottom right on address label): _____ Address *corrections* below

Price: UK & Europe: £14; USA: US\$24 Canada: Can\$28. Australia, NZ & RSA: special rates apply.

Please contact the addresses below/your local congregation. Gift Subs. to **new** subscribers 25% discount.
If you make a gift please attach a separate piece of paper with your own address and telephone number.

*UK cheques, please, payable to *Perspectives*; US\$ payable to 'The Christian Community San Francisco'
CAN\$ payable to 'Roger Coutts Umstead'. Credit Card orders will be charged at the shown rate in Sterling.

Title (Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms etc) Name

Address

County/Country *for credit card customers only:*

Card Number

____ / ____
Expiry Date

Name exactly as on card

Signature

Send to: USA: c/o *Perspectives*, The Christian Community, 906 Divisadero Street, San Francisco, CA 94115
Canada: c/o *Perspectives*, 333 Sunnidale Road, Unit 31, Barrie, Ontario, L4N 6H5, encoreanthrobooks@sympatico.ca
UK, Europe & Rest of World: Subscriptions, 22 Baylie Street, Stourbridge DY8 1AZ, UK

Tel: 00 44 (0)1384 377 190 email: subs.perspectives@cairnlee.clara.net

New Zealand and Australia: Contact: See inside front cover South Africa: Contact local congregation



Dynamic trainings based on an holistic approach out of Anthroposophy

Art Therapy Training
Biography Training
Health Studies
Rhythmical Massage Training
Training for Social
and Spiritual Renewal
Varied Short Courses

For more information contact Hibernia
Tel: 01453 751685

Centre for Science and Art
Lansdown, Stroud, GL5 1BB
info@hibernia.org.uk
website: www.hibernia.org.uk

THE CALYX



With Peaceful
surroundings
to...

...Relax
...Review
...Readjust
...Recuperate
...Rest.

For details please contact : Mrs Vivienne Klockner
The Calyx Trust, "Redhurst", Holton-cum-Beckering,
Market Rasen, Lincs. LN8 5NG. Tel & Fax: 01673 857927
Reg. Charity N°: 1077375 Reg. Company N°: 3696667

Centres of The Christian Community

AUSTRALIA

Adelaide (08) 8339 2545
3 Anzac Bridge Road (P.O.B
216) Bridgewater, S.A. 5155
Melbourne (03) 9815 0082
319 Auburn Road,
Hawthorn 3122
Sydney tel/fax (02) 9810 6690
170 Beattie Street, Balmain,
NSW 2041

CANADA

Toronto (905) 709 4544
901 Rutherford Road,
Maple, ON L6A 1S2
Vancouver (604) 988 4038
5050 East Hastings Street,
Burnaby, BC V5B 1P6

NAMIBIA

Windhoek (061) 220 033
Umland Street 3, (Box 11359)
Windhoek

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland (09) 525 2305
10 Rawhiti Road, Onehunga
Hawkes Bay (06) 878 4463
617 Heretaunga Street East,
Hastings

SOUTH AFRICA

Camphill Village
(021) 572 5922
PO Box 1451 Dassenberg 7350

Cape Town

(021) 7620793
39 Timour Hall Road, 7800
Plumstead
Johannesburg (011) 886 2220
46 Dover Street,
Randburg 2194
(Box 1065, Ferndale 2160)
Natal (031) 7691 166
P.O. Box 233, 3650 Hillcrest

UNITED KINGDOM

Aberdeen (01224) 208 109
8 Spademill Road,
Aberdeen AB15 4XW
Bottom (01287) 661 312
Danby, Whitby, N. Yorkshire,
YO21 2NJ
Bristol (0117) 973 3760
6 Hillside, Cotham,
Bristol, BS6 6JP
Buckfastleigh (01364) 644 272
23 Chapel Street, Buck-
fastleigh, Devon, TQ11 0AQ
Canterbury (01227) 700 728
1 Kenfield Bungalows,
Petham, Canterbury, CT4 5RN
Edinburgh (0131) 229 4514
21 Napier Road,
Edinburgh, EH10 5AZ
Forest Row (01342) 323205
Hartfield Road, Forest Row,
E. Sussex, RH18 5DZ
Holywood (028) 9042 4254
3 Stewarts Place, Holywood,
Co. Down, BT18 9DX

Ilkeston

(0115) 932 8341
Malin House, St. Mary Street,
Ilkeston, Derbyshire, DE7 8AF
Kings Langley (01494) 638772
or (07949) 324349, The Priory,
Kings Langley, Herts. WD4 9HH
N. London (020) 8563 2758
34 Glenilla Road, London,
NW3 4AN

W. London (020) 8748 8388
51 Queen Caroline Street,
London W6 9QL

Malton/York (01653) 694 391
The Croft, Highfield Road, Old
Malton, N. Yorkshire YO17 9DB

Mourne Grange (028) 4176 0110
Newry Road, Kilkeel, Newry,
Co. Down, BT34 4EX

Oaklands Park (01594) 516 658
Newnham, Glos. GL14 1EF

Stourbridge (01384) 377 190
22 Baylie Street, Stourbridge
W. Midlands DY8 1AZ

Stroud (01453) 767 898
73 Cainscross Road, Stroud,
Glos. GL5 4HB

UNITED STATES

Boston (781) 648-1214
366 Washington Street,
Brookline, MA 02445

Chicago (773) 989 9558
2135 West Wilson
Chicago, IL 60625

Denver (303) 758 7553

2180 South Madison Street,
Denver, CO 80210

Detroit (248) 546 3611
1320 Camden at Wanda,
Ferndale, MI 48220

Los Angeles (818) 762 2251
11030 La Maida Street, North
Hollywood, CA 91601

New York (212) 874 5395
309 West 74th Street, New
York, NY 10023

Philadelphia (610) 647 6869
212 Old Lancaster Road,
Devon, PA 19333

Sacramento (916) 362 4330
3506 Eisenhower Drive,
Sacramento, CA 95826

San Francisco (415) 928 1715
906 Divisadero Street
San Francisco, CA 94115

Spring Valley (845) 426 3144
15 Margetts Road Monsey
NY 10952

Taconic-Berkshire Region
(413) 274-6932, 10 Green River
Lane, Hillsdale, NY 12529

OTHER CENTRES IN

Germany, Switzerland,
Austria, Czech Republic,
Netherlands, Belgium,
France, Denmark, Norway,
Sweden, Finland, Estonia,
Brazil, Argentina, Peru,
Japan

