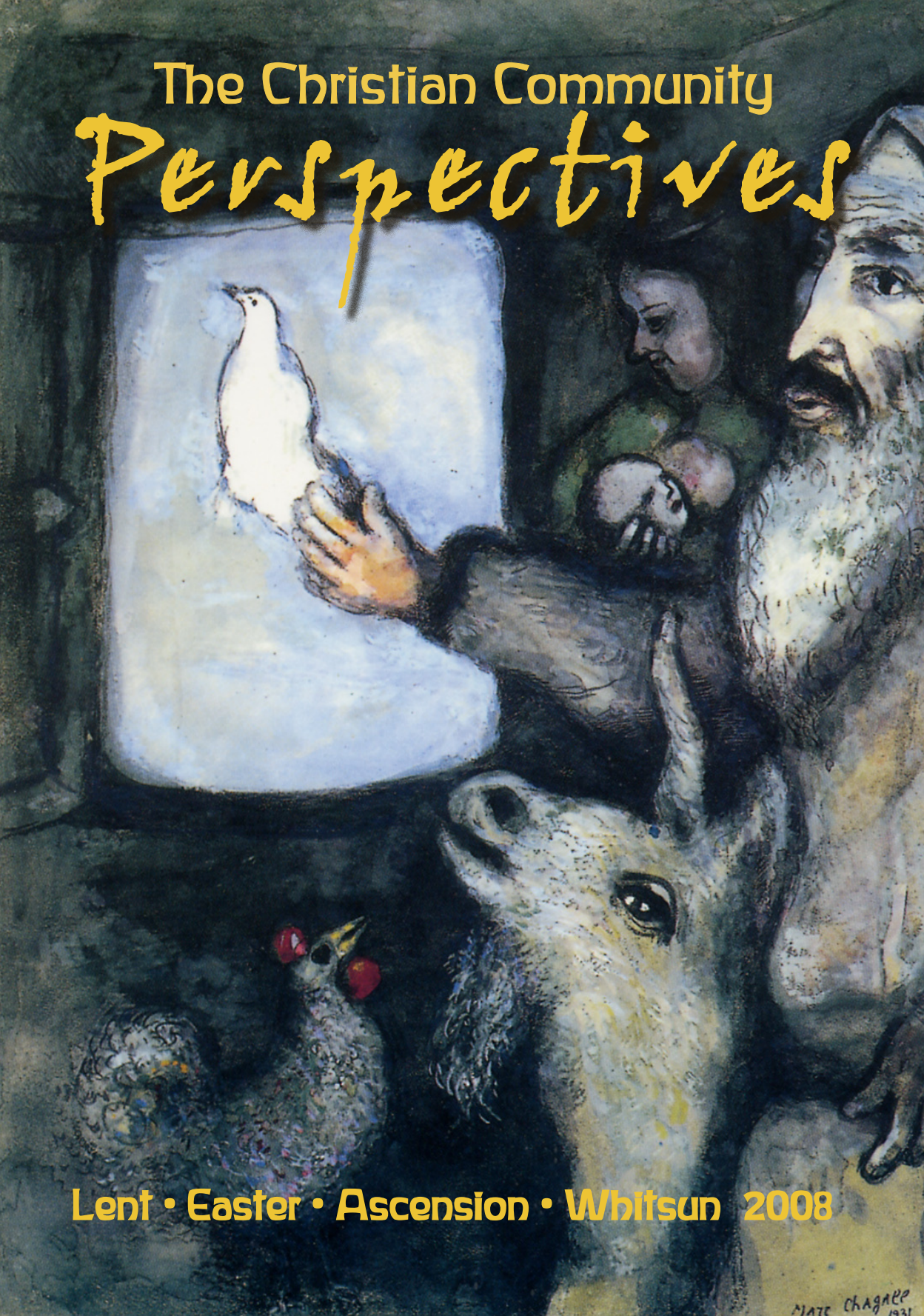


The Christian Community *Perspectives*



Lent • Easter • Ascension • Whitsun 2008

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Marc Chagall, 1931
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Tapestry after a watercolour

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The Act of Consecration of Man is the original or archetypal sacrament. Uniquely in the organism of the seven sacraments, it changes through the year with its seasonal prayers and those prayers we often speak of as ‘inserted’. In fact it might be better to speak of them as ‘unfolded’—they are always there in the organism of the Act of Consecration of Man, only waiting for the right moment to appear. In this issue of *Perspectives* we turn to two other sacraments, which have the closest relationship with the Act of Consecration of Man: Confirmation, which unfolds before the beginning of the Act of Consecration, and the Ordination, which unfolds between each of its four great parts. Although these two sacraments are aimed at particular groups—young people and those becoming priests—they have a bearing on the life of every Christian. In Confirmation we experience what it means truly to enter the sphere of Christ; in Ordination we experience an affirmation of what it means to be Christian Community.

TOM RAVETZ

The Mystery of the Raising of Lazarus

Douglas Thackray

The mystery of the raising of Lazarus in the eleventh chapter of the Gospel of Saint John continues to exert its influence on our imagination despite the many difficulties it presents to our understanding. It is as though the text draws us in with intimations of promises that behind the external scenes lie happenings of a greater significance than we have hitherto grasped. We, like the disciples before us, may be baffled by Christ's explanation of the reasons for Lazarus' illness which goes from 'he is ill', then 'he is asleep' and finally 'he has died'. We have this crescendo on the one hand leading to the final statement: 'This illness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it.'

The glory of God in his Son is made visible in the miracles and signs. Sometimes Christ asks a question whose answer leads to the coming about of a miracle, as was the case at Caesarea Philippi and the Transfiguration. Christ asks Peter: 'Who do you say that I am?' to which Simon Peter answers: 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' whereupon Christ says that God has inspired his words. Christians have always recognized this as a high moment in Jesus' life, for it was imperative for him to be recognized in order that his public ministry could begin. This is followed immediately by the Transfiguration where Christ is revealed as a figure of light.

The raising of Lazarus is the event that closes the public ministry; after it, there is a complete change of mood and content which takes us into Holy Week. What precedes it is Christ's question to Martha whether she believes that he is the Resurrection and the Life, to which she replies: 'Yes Lord I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, He who is coming into the world.' Once again we can assume that, as was the case at Caesarea Philippi, God's inspiration was at work at that moment.

What is the significance of these questions and answers, if not as part of the events which they stimulate? We could look at a wider context, including the actions of Martha, Mary and the disciple whom Jesus loved during Holy Week, and see that the raising of Lazarus led to the awakening of their consciousness in respect of the roles they were to play.

In Martha and Mary, we perceive two distinct qualities: Martha is the practical one who at this moment shows herself to have extraordinary faith

in Christ's power to awaken her brother Lazarus from the dead; a faith which in fact enables the miracle to be performed. In her testimony, she reveals Christ in his essence, as the one who was sent to resurrect mankind. Her sister Mary has the ability to read Christ's need to be prepared for death and takes the practical initiative of anointing him. Their brother Lazarus—the disciple whom Jesus loved—is raised from the grave in order to become a witness to Christ's deed on the Cross. During Holy Week Jesus retreated each evening from Jerusalem to Lazarus' House at Bethany. This was not so much for his own comfort but for the protection of this group, for the evidence given in the narrative shows us that as the events of Easter approach the greater were the adversary forces, not only against Christ but also against those nearest to him. Christ warns the disciples of the danger through Peter; 'Simon, Simon behold, Satan demanded to have you so that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again strengthen your brethren.' (Luke 22, 31) This hatred of the good is best expressed in Caiaphas' fury against Christ after the raising of Lazarus. From the throne in the temple of Solomon, from the seat of the highest authority in Israel, he makes his pronouncement to the assembled Sanhedrin when he speaks out of a possessed, clairvoyant inspiration: 'You know nothing at all. You do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish' (John 11,29): We can take this as an irrevocable death sentence on Jesus and also as an order to be executed by those present.

This statement was provoked by the raising of Lazarus which was a challenge to their authority and a demonstration of Christ's power which stirred up the people.

When Christ speaks the words: 'Lazarus come forth!' he preempts his own death and resurrection because he too will come forth on Easter Sunday on his own authority thus fulfilling his words: 'I am the Resurrection and the Life.' His words penetrate as light into the underworld where for the first time his voice was heard bringing hope to the souls of the dead.

We began by suggesting that the mystery of the raising of Lazarus had a wider significance which we now perceive in its relation to Christ's own death and resurrection. We feel the depth of the connection that Lazarus, Martha and Mary had with Christ, this connection which was embodied in deeds of action and faith as each took on their earthly tasks during Holy Week. Each of us has a connection to Christ, which calls us forth to be part of his revelation on earth today, in whatever circumstances our destiny brings us.

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retired priest of
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Community.*

Confirmation and the Holy Spirit

Louise Madsen

...They ought to be baptized...and the hand laid upon them for the receiving of the Holy Spirit ... then at length are they fully sanctified ...and enabled to be children of God.

Cyprian, Epist.,

LXXII.

At the time of Christ

The Bible, which describes the evolving relationship of man to the divine, contains the unfolding story of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of human beings. The prophets give us an insight into the working of the Spirit in events about which we read later in the story. Isaiah tells us:

*There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear (reverend obedience)
of the Lord.*

ISAIAH 11

And again, Joel says:

*And it shall come to pass afterward,
That I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
...in those days I will pour out my spirit.*

JOEL 2:28/29)

When we read the events in the New Testament, we realise they are the fulfilment of the prophecies.

Mary is found to be with child and Joseph, in his perplexity at Mary's state, is assured by an angel that their child has come to them through the working of the Holy Spirit. Previously, the Spirit inspired the prophets; now it is at work in the bringing about the birth of the Christ child. Later, in another mighty leap forward in its sphere of activity, we are given the image of the Spirit descending in the form of a dove upon Jesus at his baptism in the Jordan. And, in yet another new step, there comes the image of the flames in the powerful descent of the Spirit upon each one of the circle of disciples.

In its work preparing the birth of Jesus we see the Spirit working out of the heavenly world, so to say, from 'outside', into human souls, to each

according to its own faculties: the angel is sent to Joseph (in Matthew's account) in a dream; to Zechariah while he is carrying out his priestly office at the altar; to Mary (in Luke's account), while she is pondering the scriptures; in each case telling them of their future offspring who will be filled by the Holy Spirit.

Now, in the *Baptism of Jesus* the Spirit works into human destiny in a radically new way: a central and fundamental shift in its spheres of activity and influence takes place: John recognises the One to be baptized by beholding 'the one on whom you see the Spirit descend and *remain*...' And he continues, 'I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.' (John 1:33). The Christ Jesus, in whom the Spirit now dwells in an earthly body, is he who, after the resurrection, will baptize with fire and the Holy Spirit.

It is hard for us today to grasp how the consciousness of the disciples was affected when they received the baptism with fire. Even at the time it was difficult for those who witnessed it to understand. In their awakened understanding and new light of thinking, enhanced power was conferred on them by the Spirit, to take up the work of their Guide and Leader with astonishing authority. Surely, such an event was as great as any of those performed while Christ was with them in the flesh. Having for aeons of time overshadowed, inspired, and guided humanity towards this moment of fulfilment, the Spirit had now entered into and united with the inner nature of *individual* human beings. Henceforth, all who turned to Christ and were baptised in his name (and even those who were not—beforehand, *Acts 10:44*) were eligible to receive the Spirit:

...when the apostles... heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:14 ff.

Through human agency, by the laying on of hands, the Spirit dwelling in man could be transmitted to others by those in whom the Spirit was already present.

Today

These mighty events that took place at the turning point of time inaugurated a new age. As such, they did not fade into history as something merely to be commemorated. They *lived on*, finding ever new forms of expression. Perhaps we have not yet learnt

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where to look: 'He has risen, He is *not* here!' says the angel in the tomb; we are to learn *how* to see, in the light of the Spirit. As living, dynamic deeds of the divine powers enacted on earth, these events have begun to work and be effective *within* the realm of human existence. Each of them, in its nature, is a *sacramental deed*. Indeed, Jesus Christ himself is a sacrament, the first or original sacrament: his baptism in which the Spirit entered into Jesus of Nazareth was a sacramental act. Like the sacramental acts of today, the events of the in-breaking of the new age signified the beginning, the initiation, of a *process*—whose further progress is dependent on the will and activity of us human beings.

These deeds of spirit expanded into two spheres of activity which could be experienced through treading the Christian path. The one sphere took in the cycle of the natural year. The other took in the soul's journey from birth to death. In both these spheres the events of Christ's life have transformed into festive events in our lives.

The Christian *festivals* have grown into the *course of the year*. At first only the resurrection was celebrated; the other festivals followed as Christians lived ever more concretely into those events of His life which they felt should be celebrated in their own lives. The foundation of The Christian Community marks a further expansion of the festival year into the course of the year: at St. John's Tide and Michaelmas, these new festival periods, our understanding turns in a special way to the light of Spirit in our thinking and our seeing.

Into the *course of life* and the unfolding of human destiny there grew the sevenfold organism of the *sacraments*. They span life between birth and death. By including them in our pattern of existence, we may experience what blessing, what strength and sense of wholeness can enter in those moments in which divine 'intervention' is called for.

The Holy Spirit and the Christian life of soul

Life on earth is a balancing act: sink too far into material existence and our whole being eventually falls apart; stay too much off the ground and we do not take hold of the earth, and our destiny cannot unfold. The dynamic and active balance of above and below, of spirit-soul and bodily existence is described by Jesus in the Gospel of Saint John:

...unless one is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God...., unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I say to you, 'You must [also] be born from above.'

John 3

The relationships between the sacraments and the festivals is a theme in itself; here we shall look at just one: The sacrament of Confirmation. It takes place during the forty days of Easter, the festival of the Resurrection. This sacrament has a particular association with the Holy Spirit.

Confirming a young person is the second stage in what can be seen as a threefold initiation into Christian life in the community of Christ: Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. Each needs to be understood in relation to the other two. In earlier times they were often performed on adults in rapid succession; in time, with the introduction of infant baptism, they found their relationship to particular moments in life: baptism came to be celebrated soon after birth, and Confirmation found its setting at the transition between childhood and adolescence.

In the early church Confirmation was the second part—a kind of continuation—of baptism. Here is an early description of it:

After baptism the hand is laid on; by blessing, calling and inviting the Holy Spirit, then the most Holy Spirit willingly descends from the Father upon the bodies that are cleansed and blessed. (de Baptismo, 5)

The flesh is sealed that the soul may be guarded and defended, and the body is overshadowed by the imposition of hands that the soul may be enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

De resurr. carn., cap. VIII, Bp. Taylor, p.638 (Tertullian)

It was sometimes asked why *both* sacraments were needed. It came to be seen that the gift of the Spirit serves to strengthen the candidate in their Christian faith, and that the Spirit's function is to 'fortify' us. Because of the growing emphasis on strengthening, the name 'Confirmation' came to be generally used.

In Confirmation we receive strength to do all that which was for us undertaken in Baptism: for the Apostles themselves were timorous in the faith until they were confirmed at Pentecost, but after the reception of the Holy Spirit they waxed valiant in the faith and in all their spiritual combats.

Bishop J. Taylor, *Chrisis Teleiotike*, VI,1

In the services of The Christian Community we see the Spirit working in the initiatory stages of the path into Christian life in an organic way. Initially, the child is received from the cosmic community of spirit into the community of the Christ Jesus on earth. Bodily it derives from the sphere of the Father God, in soul from that of the Son and for the Spirit it shall live out of the Spirit's divine aims: as the soul takes hold of its hopes and intentions in the unfolding of a human destiny, the Spirit 'realises' itself.

At the time of the changing of its teeth, the child throws off some of its inheritance; it has mastered the skills of standing upright, walking, speaking and it is ready to engage more fully with the wider world with interest

and an enquiring mind. The child goes to school, and is now ready to stand with others before the altar in the Children's Service. Here the child is told of the Spirit of God that lives and works in all people, in their thinking and in their willing, and in all the kingdoms of nature; and that this Spirit, in Christ, entered into bodily existence. Through his death, he became alive in spirit in the hearts of those who accepted him into their lives. The priest prays that our heart may turn to him that he may work in us, in our thinking, feeling and willing. In the prayer spoken by the children their reverence and love, their feeling and thinking is directed towards the Spirit of God so that he can be with them. In the words spoken by each child, 'I will seek Him', this activity of will towards the Spirit is further intensified. In this service, the child's closeness to the Spirit of God means that the Spirit may be *with* the child.

Our thinking, feeling and willing are the spheres of our soul life that become engaged when the Spirit is called upon. The interaction between the Spirit and the human being takes place here, and the extent of the transforming power of the Spirit, indicated to the children, comes to full expression in the Confirmation.

As the inner state of development of the young person changes at the transition from childhood to youth, he or she is ready to embark on a relationship to the divine, supported by their own will and consciousness, appropriate to their age. The changes connected with puberty may be viewed as being the pangs of a new birth—not, of course, of a physical one, but of an inner one: the moment when another part of one's being frees itself from its enfolding sheaths, comes into its own and begins to live its own life. This is the birth of the soul. In Baptism, as the spiritual counterpart to physical birth, a child is received into the community of the Christ. In Confirmation, as the counterpart to the birth of the soul, the young person is brought into a closer relationship to the divine in him or her.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I say to you, 'You must be born anew (from above)'. The wind blows where it wills...., you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

If the physical birth of the baby is a bodily birth out of the spirit realm, Confirmation marks the moment of birth in spirit out of the realm of soul.

In their Confirmation, the attention of the young people is for a moment directed back to the endeavours of those around them for the Spirit to be able to work in their faculties of soul: to shine in their thinking, to strengthen their feeling and be effective in their willing. In the prayers that follow, we are made aware of how much the gifts of the Spirit are 'allocated'

to these three dimensions of the soul, that each of them find that relationship to the divine which brings it health and inner nourishment. Light of Spirit in our thinking allows us to find the invisible, greater dimension, the meaning and the sense in all that is accessible to the senses. Strength of spirit in our feeling can discipline and mature our emotions and open up the way for truer and deeper feelings to flourish. Being effective in our willing, the Spirit guides us in our actions; that our willing be directed and guided to higher purposes.

In the final preparation for participating in the Eucharist, the Act of Consecration of Man, the Confirming priest addresses each Confirmand individually, at the same time *laying his hands* on their head. All that has gone before and all that is to come is gathered up and focused in words that carry in them an echo of what happened at the Baptism in the Jordan: the Spirit of the Christ, by which the children have been accompanied until now, is to become the Christ-Spirit *within* them, in their life and in their soul, to be their *inner* guide, light and strength.

In the second part of the Confirmation, the Act of Consecration, the confirmands participate as those in whom Christ can now dwell. They hear the divine word of the gospel that purifies and cleanses; as new participants in an adult approach to the world above they join in the offering by which the substance of the community of the Christ is brought into being. Here again the three spheres of the soul: willing, feeling and thinking, are called upon and now turn in offering to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. The receiving of the consecrated bread and wine, the physical bearers of Christ's body and blood, is the means of bringing their being fully into a sacramental relationship with him. All this is set in their souls as potential. For a moment it has lit up in them as spiritual reality.

As they enter into life, destiny and grace as well as their own soul disposition will determine in what manner and to what degree the higher forces of the soul will awaken in them. One

*may see few immediate effects of the Confirmation in the outer biography... in the Confirmation new possibilities for self responsibility have been awakened, but...for any sacrament to become evident in life, it needs to be met by the active working of the human soul... As we begin to mature, we become ever more able to choose to link our will with a conscious intention.**

By exerting our will we mark out the future; what we do and bring about in our thinking or our actions becomes reality in our life and in the world. Inasmuch into the present. And in what lies ahead, invisible and coming towards us, lies the activity of the Holy Spirit.

* E. Roberts, *Perspectives* Vol.71 No.4

The Spiritual Power of the Priest

Ulrich Meier

The old pictures live on: the priest has been given power by God and so can decide what has to happen amongst those whom he leads. In many religions, this image of the priest or religious leader persists, even today. Such an image of the priest presupposes that there are others in the religious community whose obedient recognition underpins the superior authority of the priest. If this does not work—if the priest is too weak, or the adherents too strong—it often happens that not only the image of the priest, but the whole religion is rejected. It can seem strange that even in Christianity such an understanding of the priesthood could have come about, even though in the New Testament a completely different spirit is at work as the spiritual power of priesthood.

Christ is the first to transform the power of the ruler of the world into the weakness of the crucified one, Who is seen in this unprecedented way as God among human beings. He does not want to command, but to heal. He does not wish to rule, but to proclaim the closeness of the kingdom of God, which can be found within every individual. His continued presence since Ascension is characterized by the reticent form of the one who is invisible. Christ teaches and acts out of the power of the Father, but His deeds are everything other than powerful. In the early church He was seen as the high priest, the only mediator, whilst the faithful were all seen as priests at the altar, even if they had no office in the church.

During the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday of the first Holy Week—in the moment when the sacrament was inaugurated as the communal celebration of the presence of God—Jesus speaks about rank amongst the community of the disciples:

Ulrich Meier is a priest in Hamburg, and director of the Hamburg Seminary.

The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. ... But I am among you as one who serves.'

Luke 22:25–27

In the Gospel of St. John, Peter learns that the humble service of washing his feet that Christ performs for him connects him with Christ: 'If I do not wash you, you will have no part in me.' (John 13: 8) This is no gesture of power, which gives Peter the authority to work in Christ's name; rather, it is a promise that the sacrament will work through the serving attitude of the priest. From the priest's point of view, every sacrament has the quality of a washing of the feet of those who are seeking God in the sacrament. The sending out of the Apostles, which is another source for understanding the priestly service in the New Testament, also shows a multitude of elements, which strengthen those sent out in their giving up means of domination.

During the Reformation, the place of the faith as the essential priestly power was restored by Luther's idea of the priesthood of all believers. Even today, the idea of an ordained priesthood as opposed to the idea of the general priesthood is one of the main hindrances in the ecumenical efforts between the Orthodox and Catholic churches on the one hand, and the Reformed churches on the other.

How does The Christian Community understand priesthood? Emil Bock made it clear that the ordained priesthood of our community is not intended to undo the achievement of the Reformation, which was to establish 'the complete replacement of the principle of authority and power by the principle of individual conviction, held in freedom.' We do see that the sacrament of Ordination legitimizes someone to work in a priestly way at the altar. In contrast to the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, we do not see this legitimation to mean that the priest shares in an institutional power transmitted by the church.

The centre of the priestly-spiritual work in our sacraments and congregations is the resurrected Christ. Without His presence we could not experience priesthood. Through Him the Spirit Whom we receive is at work. This centre is surrounded by the individual efforts of the members of congregation to create a vessel for the presence of the Resurrected One. Our devotion to God flows together with the gift of His presence every time the sacraments are celebrated, creating the acts of consecration. We could this all-embracing aspect of the priestly the priesthood of the Christian congregation. This priestly working radiates out into the world, to those people, towns, and countries with which we are connected.

The individual priesthood—that is to say, the part which every human being makes alive in him or herself, whether or not she or he is together

with the congregation, is the next layer of priestliness. It is connected to our personal path in life, which each one of us needs to seek and to find in quite different areas of life, to make it possible for Christ to work. The challenge of spiritualizing our personal thinking, feeling and willing is means that we work on strengthening our faith. Because our faith brings us into movement towards Christ, the part of our becoming to which we ourselves cannot give birth is bestowed on us out of the power of the living God. This power unites us as a community, quite independently of the task that each individual has in his or her biography, or in the congregation.

One of the many possibilities of working in the spirit of this priesthood can be seen in the specialised priesthood which is inaugurated by the Ordination and which relates to the service at the altar. The main spiritual preconditions for taking up this priestly service lie in the two Christian fields of life already described; they need then to be complemented with a further element of training in faith. The new task for this professional priesthood is to be found in the social life. It is connected with the sacrifice of one's own pursuit of a profession, and the recognition of the community of priests as the organ which will now decide how and where I shall exercise my priestly profession. Candidates for Ordination prepare themselves inwardly to recognize that their commitment to work in congregations is binding, and to recognize too that they submit their will in celebrating the sacraments to the community which describes how this is to be done.

From what has been described, the outlines of a picture of the spiritual power of the new priesthood start to emerge: the priests put their individual priesthood—which is no different from that of the other members of the congregation—in the service of the altar, out of their free decision. Their words and deeds receive their spiritual power out of the priests' ability to bind themselves: with Christ, with living out of the sacraments in the congregations and with the priests' circle. Their strength in the community will be shown by their support of each one in his or her sovereign leadership of his or herself, and by showing themselves to be servants. In the old liturgy, the priest—mediating between God and human beings—spoke the words 'dominus vobiscum'—the Lord be with you. In the Act of Consecration of Man, we hear 'Christ in you'.

Saint Paul and me

Peter Howe

Think for yourself. Listen to your heart. Be honest with yourself. Open yourself to the voice of God within you, the voice of conscience, the Holy Spirit moving in the depths of your being. Act out of this. Live lovingly, compassionately, warmly, with conviction, but also with modesty and humour. Make communities amongst you and between you.

Is this the message of St. Paul?

There is a barrier between Paul and me, because he has become a hate figure amongst gay people. In fact, he has become a hate figure in the modern world in general, a symbol of oppression for those who hate what they feel Christian institutions have done to the world, and equally a figurehead for those who seem to want to use Christianity as a weapon with which to subdue the world. He is presented as anti-women, homophobic, fanatical and prescriptive. His words are used as the main Biblical proof to say that homosexuality is evil and gay people depraved. This is not a theoretical, academic debate—these are words that mess up a lot of people's lives, including young lives.

I tried going on a search of internet websites to research religious homophobia, but quickly found that I was actually too afraid to continue. The extent of the hatred and loathing, the desire to punish and torture (electric shock treatment, psychological 'correction') that would be turned on me if they knew me, is deeply distressing. These are Christian and Church websites. I am afraid, and I am confused that a religion that teaches love and compassion 'knows' that I am evil and 'perverted'—without pausing to ask what the quality of any relationship I may have could be. (Prefer my words! What about—because I express care and faithfulness and physical tenderness towards another man.)

I am lucky because The Christian Community came into my life. The huge majority are not so lucky, though there are, of course, countless gay people who are openly and bravely active in the churches.

Peter Tatchell has been a gay activist for 30 years and is most famous for attempting a 'citizen's arrest' on Robert

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Mugabe for his torture and murder of gay people. Tatchell is something of a hero amongst gay people. It is important to note that his controversial tactic of 'outing' public figures was only done to those whom Tatchell believed were actively discriminating against gay people, or colluding in such discrimination by their silence.

In an article at the millennium, '2000 Years Of Church Homophobia,' Tatchell wrote,

For lesbians and gay men, ... the Christian Millennium is not a moment for celebration. It is a time to mourn two millennia of religious intolerance, which has inflicted terrible pain on homosexual people. Over the last 2,000 years, church-inspired homophobia has led to hundreds of millions of queers¹ world wide being rejected by their families, driven to depression and suicide, discriminated against by anti-gay laws, and condemned to death for sodomy. Christian leaders have never expressed any remorse for the church's persecution of lesbian and gay people. When Pope John Paul II apologised in 1999 for centuries of Vatican-backed injustice and oppression—such as anti-Semitism and colonialism—he made no mention of Catholic support for murderous anti-homosexual witch-hunts. ... The murder of queers in the name of 'God' is comparable to the Nazi extermination of Jews. Both Christianity and Nazism demonised, scapegoated and murdered minorities. Nazi anti-Semitism parallels Christian homophobia. The Bible is to gays what Mein Kampf is to Jews. It is the theory and practice of Homo Holocaust.

And the chief author of this anti-gay manifesto is Saint Paul. But is this what Paul really meant? I discovered his words in a new light in *The Message*, a recent translation, or rather rendering, of the entire Bible by an American pastor and language scholar, Eugene H. Peterson. Some will say that it puts words into Paul's mouth; I would counter that it lets his words be heard in a way that contemporary human beings can hear.

So what does Paul actually say?

I would like to look at some of the controversial passages from Paul—those used as proofs in the argument about sexuality—in order to suggest that his underlying message, which runs throughout his large body of work, is overlooked for the sake of a few disputed phrases.

For instance, Romans 1:20–32. This is the passage always hauled out to prove that homosexuality and lesbianism is not only wrong and against God's law but is synonymous with a depravity. I would like to quote a longish passage because usually words are taken out of their important context:

People knew God perfectly well, but when they didn't treat him like God, refusing to worship him, they trivialized themselves into silliness and confusion so that there was neither sense nor direction left in their lives. They pretended to know it all, but were illiterate regarding life. They traded the glory of God who holds the whole world in his hands for cheap figurines you can buy at any roadside stand.

So God said, in effect, 'If that's what you want, that's what you get.' It wasn't long before they were living in a pigpen, smeared with filth, filthy inside and out. And all this because they traded the true God for a fake god, and worshiped the god they made instead of the God who made them—the God we bless, the God who blesses us. Oh, yes!

Worse followed. Refusing to know God, they soon didn't know how to be human either—women didn't know how to be women, men didn't know how to be men. Sexually confused, they abused and defiled one another, women with women, men with men—all lust, no love. And then they paid for it, oh, how they paid for it—emptied of God and love, godless and loveless wretches.

Since they didn't bother to acknowledge God, God quit bothering them and let them run loose. And then all hell broke loose: rampant evil, grabbing and grasping, vicious backstabbing. They made life hell on earth with their envy, wanton killing, bickering and cheating. Look at them: mean-spirited, venomous, fork-tongued God-bashers. Bullies, swaggerers, insufferable windbags! They keep inventing new ways of wrecking lives. They ditch their parents when they get in the way. Stupid, slimy, cruel, cold-blooded. And it's not as if they don't know better. They know perfectly well they're spitting in God's face. And they don't care—worse, they hand out prizes to those who do the worst things best!

Those people are on a dark spiral downward. But if you think that leaves you on the high ground where you can point your finger at others, think again. Every time you criticize someone, you condemn yourself. It takes one to know one. Judgemental criticism of others is a well-known way of escaping detection in your own crimes and misdemeanours. But God isn't so easily diverted. He sees right through all such smoke screens and holds you to what you've done.

You didn't think, did you, that just by pointing your finger at others you would distract God from seeing all your misdoings and from coming down on you hard? Or did you think that because

he's such a nice God, he'd let you off the hook? Better think this one through from the beginning. God is kind, but he's not soft. In kindness he takes us firmly the hand and leads us into a radical life-change.

In this wonderful rant, Paul is essentially railing against people abusing and hurting other people. But gay people? Is that what it's about? How can you single that out—if it is not already uppermost in your mind? The real object of his invective is unkindness and abuse, the ill-treatment of one person by another, the ill-treatment of the self, and then self-righteousness and judgement of others.

It is true he does include homosexuality in this catalogue of degeneracy. Yet reading it in context I do not feel attacked, because Paul's agenda is not to make other people conform to his belief, but to open them to the true voice of the spirit within them. Today, this spirit speaks differently, we listen differently, and Paul writing now would surely bring the same message clothed in the language and the mores of our time.

Another stumbling block is Paul's remarks about women and marriage in 1 Corinthians 11:1–15.

...All actual authority stems from Christ.

In a marriage relationship, there is authority from Christ to husband, and from husband to wife. The authority of Christ is the authority of God. Any man who speaks with God or about God in a way that shows a lack of respect for the authority of Christ, dishonours Christ. In the same way, a wife who speaks with God in a way that shows a lack of respect for the authority of her husband, dishonors her husband. Worse, she dishonours herself—an ugly sight, like a woman with her head shaved. This is basically the origin of these customs we have of women wearing head coverings in worship, while men take their hats off. By these symbolic acts, men and women, who far too often butt heads with each other, submit their 'heads' to the Head: God.

Don't, by the way, read too much into the differences here between men and women. Neither man nor woman can go it alone or claim priority. Man was created first, as a beautiful shining reflection of God—that is true. But the head on a woman's body clearly outshines in beauty the head of her 'head,' her husband. The first woman came from man, true—but ever since then, every man comes from a woman! And since virtually everything comes from God anyway, let's quit going through these 'who's first' routines.

Can we allow Paul sometimes to be wrong? Paul speaks in part as a man of his time, and perhaps we can allow him sometimes to be wrong for *our* time. We can revere the beauty and wisdom of the Psalms, without admiring the disgusting atrocities committed by David and his armies. We can honour the writers of Leviticus without agreeing with them that a woman who is raped should then be killed. We have different values from those times, even from 100 years ago. Generally we think they are better values. Does Paul have to be either a saint who can say no wrong, or a homophobic male chauvinist who should have no voice? In either case we are using Paul for our own ends. Paul is not all right or all wrong: when he speaks as a man of his time, he is limited; when he is original, he is beautiful.

Paul loves women, men, relationship, kindness, the warmth and tenderness of human community. He wants to help people have a rich inner life and good relationships. He is forthright against hypocrisy and cruelty.

He is fallible and is the first to admit it; he looks at situations from many sides, he is passionate, over the top, but then says Who am I to say this? He tells people to think for themselves and immediately tells them what to do; he is flawed, human, he is 'not a saint'. Jesus Christ gave spiritual and moral leadership, but did not tell women what to do with their hair. Paul gets mixed up in the messy details of life; he is outspoken and sometimes he is wrong or too bound up in the mores of his time. It seems to me he is neither faultless nor a fanatic: he is one of us.

The essence of Paul's teaching is his teaching about the Holy Spirit—that Christ speaks to us through our innermost heart and this, not any system based on tradition or rules, is the foundation of our life.

Galations 2:19–21

...I tried keeping rules and working my head off to please God, and it didn't work. So I quit being a 'law man' so that I could be God's man. Christ's life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him. Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not 'mine,' but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going to go back on that.

Is it not clear to you that to go back to that old rule-keeping, peer-pleasing religion would be an abandonment of everything personal and free in my relationship with God? I refuse to do that, to repudiate

God's grace. If a living relationship with God could come by rule-keeping, then Christ died unnecessarily.

3:2–6

Let me put this question to you: How did your new life begin? Was it by working your heads off to please God? Or was it by responding to God's message to you? Are you going to continue this craziness? For only crazy people would think they could complete by their own efforts what was begun by God. If you weren't smart enough or strong enough to begin it, how do you suppose you could perfect it? Did you go through this whole painful learning process for nothing? It is not yet a total loss, but it certainly will be if you keep this up! Answer this question: Does the God who lavishly provides you with his own presence, his Holy Spirit, working things in your lives you could never do for yourselves, does he do these things because of your strenuous moral striving or because you trust him to do them in you?

It is a dangerous message, and not surprising that people seek to misinterpret or demonise the messenger. How do you found cohesive communities based on this practice? How do you know whose voice is the right one? How do you manage, with each individual developing their own personal belief system? How do you control it all?

It is not just a detail that The Christian Community has no dogma: it is not that something is lacking but that something is attempted that is fitting for our time—to leave a space within the fabric of the sacramental community for the inner freedom of the individual.

Paul warns against the dangers of misused freedom:

It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap sex;...paranoid loneliness...addictions...ugly parodies of community. ...[The list is long.] I could go on. (Galatians 5:19–20)

But then he pictures the fruits of rightly used freedom:

...things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way into life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.

...Since this is the kind of life we have chosen, the life of the Spirit, let us make sure that we do not just hold it as an idea in our heads or a sentiment in our hearts, but work out its implications in every de-

tail of our lives. That means we will not compare ourselves with each other as if one of us were better or another worse. We have far more interesting things to do with our lives. Each of us is an original.

Galatians 5:22–26

It is a scandal that his voice, which is the voice of a poet, a voice of kindness, has been hijacked by those who seek rules and dogmas by which to live and to justify a kind of community which is excluding and controlling. These attitudes turn Paul's own words into their opposite and show all the hallmarks of fear. Paul himself is an incredibly fearless personality.

There is a further vista:

Finding your inner voice and creating community are fashionable choices. Dealing with pain, humiliation and failure, ageing, illness and death are not. Doing so is a foundation of Paul's teaching and of living on earth. After all that Christian institutions have done to subdue the world and control individuals, and after all that Christians have done to help bring about the social and political freedoms and rights, the ethical values we now take for granted, perhaps our new task is the original one:

Phillipians 2:1–8.

If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if His love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care—then do me a favour: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.

Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of Himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of Himself that He had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, He set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, He stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, He lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.

*Queers: is the chosen word for many gay people to describe themselves. It is the reclaiming of a word used as a term of abuse. Many people still complain about the use of the nice English word 'gay' to describe homosexuals. I have yet to hear anyone complain about the use of the equally old English word 'queer'.

Janadesh 2007 — The Substance of the Future

Karl-Julius Reubke

'Incredible India' is the advertising slogan that all sorts of official and private organizations of India use to gain our attention. This catchphrase could not be more accurate. The young woman sobs as she turns away from the beggar who pushes his hand into the car rickshaw: 'This misery, this pollution, this noise—I haven't seen anything beautiful for days, anywhere.' and then, after I put my arm around her to comfort, she adds quietly: 'yet, these faces.' The impressions of the last few days in the company of those many poor people come to mind and give solace in the overwhelming, repulsive reality of daily life in India, taking place right in front of the international hotels and palaces.

These faces... Many of the foreign participants of the great march are fascinated by the speaking faces of the people who are fighting for the rights of the great majority of Indians.

How is it possible that suffering and need make these faces so expressive, human, courageous and radiantly beautiful. It is incredible.



Faces of the people who are fighting for the rights of the great majority of Indians.

However, is it not equally incredible that so many people set off to support the interests of 750 million Indians. They definitely represent the absolute majority of the total number of one billion Indians. Indeed, the policies of the Indian government are more geared towards the ideas of a small, western educated elite and the theories on fighting poverty through industrialisation and globalization instead the needs of the populace. The government is not particularly interested in how many inhabitants live in the country. The censuses are rather incomplete, as for many years—since 1931—entire groups have not been included in the official counts. These ethnic groups—nomadic tribes, snake charmers and street artists—are too numerous to be ignored. They are classified as 'Other Backward Castes' and their number is estimated at 120 million, 11% of the total of inhabitants of India. However, officially they are not included. If they were, the national aim of overcoming poverty would seem even more impossible to achieve, as these people also live on the land, as do the Adivasis (Scheduled Tribes, ST), the people without caste (Scheduled Castes, SC), the Dalits, as they call themselves, and many small scale farmers. All these people—more than a third of the total population—live on the land, and from the land, and have a constitutional right to own a piece of it. They all live below the poverty line. They are fighting for their survival. Incredible.

During the last twenty years the conflict between the interests of the powerful and the needs of the poor has come to the at-

tention of world public opinion. Janadesh 2007 was a new climax in this process. Prepared in many events—also in Europe, groups of people sought to draw attention to the efforts of Indians to develop new ways of communal life and decision making—and intensively planned for three years, this daring project took place from 2nd to 29th October. The aim was not just to send 25000 people on a 350 km walk. All those who took part were very motivated for this superhuman effort, prepared to sacrifice their last ounce of strength. This was very evident when we met up with the miles' long queue after three days walk. Only when we were able to look at it all again from a more objective point of view, as perhaps a foreign correspondent does, after many days of walking together, the question came like a shock: Is it not contemptuous torture to ask these poor people to walk in searing heat and with only one meal a day over such a long distance: mothers with small children, frail old people teetering under the weight of their few belongings, limping, lame, feverish and coughing?

Look into their faces and speak with them. Nobody told them to do this. They are proud to be taking part. They do not even return home if they are advised to do so because of their health. There was an old woman who walked for three days without a whimper, her hand dangling on her arm, her wrist obviously broken, unable to sleep at night. After a doctor fixed the hand with a makeshift splint, she showed it proudly to Rajagopal, who suggested to her to return home to recover from the ordeal. She replied: 'Never, I want to die here. Here I receive one warm meal a day. It is not even dangerous

to walk here. Many years ago we walked through the Chambal valley. It was very dangerous, and we did not have food every day. You did not send me home then, and I would not have gone anyway. We have to fight!' She is talkative and proud that Rajagopal pays attention to her, even recognizes her—as he seems to do all of the 25,000 marchers. When he talks to one of them he is so interested that all required information is offered in an instant and this creates an astounding familiarity. The shared poverty, the shared goals, the shared journey form a bond.

They do not understand their demands intellectually. Not even clever people fully grasp them. But they do know their suffering and its causes inside out, the injustice in the allocation of land, the corruption, the interpretation of the laws in the interest of the rich. Each of them has a story to tell that makes clear better than any arguments what needs to happen in order that they can live with dignity.

The project was huge and much could not be planned: the nights in October this year were colder than is the norm, so that the exhausted wanderers suffered trying to sleep on the ground. Where do you buy 5000 blankets at once with money that has been donated for the purpose? It took three days to get the blankets to where they were needed. The searing heat at noon seemed to be worse than last year and made it impossible to walk on the tarmac barefoot, but many are without shoes. A Swami, a holy man, who does honour to his title, and who walked the whole distance, managed to collect donations of 4000 pairs of shoes. Last year's experience taught to the organisers to ensure that there was a plentiful supply of

water. Therefore 29 water tankers were hired to supply the 25 groups of about one thousand walkers each. Money was allocated for the water, but fortunately it was not needed, because all the petrol stations wanted to share in the success of the enterprise by giving it away free. Despite all this many walkers suffered badly from dehydration and needed medical attention. After ten days the leaders of the groups needed to send back home those who really lacked the strength. But many travelled here over thousands of kilometres and needed to be treated on the spot or sent back home by train.

The support of the public was amazing. The groups of school children and others who sang their greetings were only the outer, visible sign of this. More importantly, all the rice and other foods were provided by the public. Every day new donors were found. One day Rajagopal was given—in time honoured Indian fashion—his weight, not in gold, but in rupies for the Janadesh. Especially on the first days of the journey in Madhya Pradesh the kindness of the police and officials was—there is no other word—incredible. The police chiefs would not let anything stop them commending the walkers ceremoniously to the police chiefs of the neighbouring Rajasthan. The travellers really were the kings of the road and the police their eager servants.

Unfortunately this was not always the case, as there was no space for sentimental romanticism on this trek which was about existential demands in a hostile world. The nature of this conflict, which Rajagopal always referred to as ‘do or die,’ was always evident. The police protection that was provided in Uttar Pradesh, es-

pecially after we had passed the famous city of Agra, can only be described as unenthusiastic and negligent, and it led to a disaster. It happened in the morning of the 19th October, just when the procession was forming to continue the journey. As usual, the lorries had already left at this time—two per group of a thousand walkers and an additional one with generators and lighting to provide visibility for the night quarters—to prepare the kitchen at the site of the camp for the next night. The section of the National Highway No 2 between start and goal of the day’s journey was barred to traffic on two lanes, but on the other two cars and lorries were racing along in both directions with breakneck overtaking manoeuvres, until an articulated lorry’s brakes failed after such a manoeuvre, causing it veer through the central barrier onto the other side. Three marchers were killed instantly and another five were injured, some of them seriously. On this day everybody remained where they were until one o’clock in the afternoon, paralysed by shock and sadness. A circle of three to four-hundred sat around the accident victims who were covered with white cloth and green and white flags. There was an earnest, solemn mood that held up against the noise, the crowds of curious onlookers that started gathering and the pestering photographers. The tarpaulin that was erected on posts above the three victims made visible the dome that formed above the scene. In this space the new community came about between those who had died and those who were fighting on.

The determination, the sacrifice and the strain transformed into moral substance that became even more tangible that day

during the silent march with lowered flags.

Rajagopal, the founder of the movement Ekta Parishad, which organized the march, explained again and again where the strength comes from that ultimately will crown the endeavour with success: 'We ignore arbitrary rules. Why should we not walk on roads? The roads are there for people. Every human being has the right to walk on the road. We make use of the simplest human activities, we walk, we march. Those who watch us admire us. We do what they did not dare to do. And it is dead simple. They feel that they could do likewise. We have done this protest with 25,000, and now we know, we could also do it with 100,000, if the government does not give in. We are prepared for this sacrifice.'

In the interview, after the first, disappointing visit of the minister for agriculture, Rajagopal said: 'Up to now five people died'—by the end of the march there were eight—'how many more do you need, prime minister Manmohan Singh? How many do you ask for? We are prepared to die.' Here in Europe this might sound uncomfortable, exaggerated, sensational, but the marchers were deeply serious and full of will to live.

When the procession finally arrived on the 28th October in Delhi on Ramlila Maidan, a vast, shadeless, indescribably dusty square, everybody was greatly relieved. Despite having covered a distance of more than 17 km through smog and traffic from the outskirts of town to near the railway station, the walkers still sat attentively through four hours of speeches and songs—an endless sea of people in the haze. They looked forward to the next



The procession crossing a river

day, where they intended to walk the last bit to Parliament, to hear the response of the government.

This turned out in an unexpected way. Early on the 29th, the square was cordoned off by police and the demonstration was banned. The water tankers could not be refilled. Under a merciless sun the walkers were imprisoned in Delhi's pall of haze. This too is unbelievable. Only towards evening 'in prison', as one of their speakers put it, did the minister for agriculture announce that the government had committed itself in writing to fulfil all their demands.

Rajagopal said in his concluding address: 'We have now their written commitment, now we want to see results on the land. Until we see them, we will have to fight on. But we will always treasure this day, the 29th October, in our memory and celebrate it as a day of victory. It is a victory of Satyagraha, the insistence on truth and non-violence.' Incredible is their success, incredible their will to continue their quest.

Why did the government prevent the victory rally of the marchers? The reason was perhaps that the German Prime Minister, Angela Merkel, was visiting on

that day, and they did not want her to ask questions about the ‘fight against poverty’ of the rising economic superpower. Did the Indian prime minister, who loves to negotiate billion dollar nuclear power deals with other world leaders, fear being confronted with the moral authority of the marchers, the substance created from the free will of thousands of the poorest people that radiates hope for a better world?

The Janadesh Padyatra 2007 is a *command* to those who hold power in the country: ‘Do not experiment with intellectual ideas and models, but *join us on our journey*. We hope that many politicians and friends of a better world hear this in the same way as the about 200 guests who joined the Yatra in India, full of wonder, inspired and deeply moved.

The incredible is possible, not only in India, if we only start moving.

Rituals and their Origin

Michael Debus

God’s Covenant with Man

There are various ways of pursuing the question of the origin of rituals and rites. We shall make the *human being* our starting-point. To enter into relationship with another human being, we cannot merely feel our wish to do so; it is also necessary to take the other person’s needs into account. This then gives rise to various *forms* of encounter. In every encounter between people, the forms play a very significant—if not necessarily conscious—role. These forms vary in different periods of history, cultures and generations, but they are there, even where one thinks it possible to meet entirely informally (i.e. without any forms)—for even formlessness is a kind of form.

When it comes to relationships with higher beings, forms play a very particular role, something which is especially significant in the sphere of religion. Here, prayer is the form of communication used in the encounter with divine beings. It is a form, even when, as spontaneous or free prayer, it does not seem to require form.

The differentiation alone between the state of prayer and other states shows that praying has a form. Prayer is at its most formal in the rituals of divine service.

Now, this raises the question: Who creates the form of the ritual? One possible answer would perhaps be: the praying person himself, for in the form of his prayer he expresses what he wants to say, just as a person’s body-language accompanies and perhaps reinforces his spoken word.

An archetypal way of composing ritual is to be found in the Old Testament. Moses receives instructions from Yahweh about how the rituals and rites are to be composed, down to the last detail (Exodus 25,8 ff.). Ultimately, however, it is not Moses who is to perform the rituals; rather, he is to install his brother Aaron as the first representative of the newly inaugurated levitical priesthood (Exodus 28,1 ff.). The initiative for these rituals and rites proceeds from Yahweh. They are a part of the covenant that Yahweh establishes with

the people of Israel, the content of which is 'The Law'. It is on Mount Sinai that this covenant is established; it is expressed symbolically in the two stone tablets with the Ten Commandments: 'And the Lord said to Moses, "Write these words; in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote upon the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with the Lord... And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face' (Exodus 34, 27–33). This is the central covenant—or *testamentum*, in Latin—of the Jewish people.

What does *covenant* mean here? Ultimately, it is a contract between the Divine and Mankind, 'legally binding' in the form 'if—then'. If human beings fulfil certain conditions, *then* God can be expected to act accordingly for the well-being of human beings. The fact that within the framework of a covenant God's actions are predictable for human beings gives them a degree of freedom that they would not otherwise have. That is the point: upon the way to the freedom granted humanity by the divine world, the covenant is a decisive stage. To be precise: the Old Covenant is the combination of three covenants. The first is made with Noah, the second with Abraham, the third with Moses. The covenant with *Noah* presents the calculability of nature, independent of hu-

man morality (Genesis 8,20 f.), that with *Abraham* (Genesis 17, 1 ff.) reveals to him the great number of his descendants; he is to be the patriarch of the chosen people. The covenant with *Moses* brings the Law and thereby the path to moral autonomy.

The fact that nature is calculable, predictable; that there are laws of nature: this gives Man such outer freedom that—owing to the unshakable reality of the laws of nature—he may even come to the personal conclusion that God does not exist. The freedom that is granted Abraham is the perspective on the future that his existence is given through his descendants. Man's doing has future within it. And lastly, the freedom which comes through the Mosaic Law lies in the burgeoning moral autonomy: whoever knows the Law begins to be aware of the possible consequences of his actions and thereby to develop a germ of inner freedom.

In the case of the covenant with Noah, Man's contribution is to make a sacrifice: Noah builds an altar and makes an offering. And Yahweh 'smelled the pleasing odour'—and makes the covenant. In the case of Abraham, it is the readiness to place procreation entirely in the service of Yahweh. The outer sign of this is the circumcision. And as regards Moses, it is the fulfilling of the Law as an education of the will. In the Old Testament, this threefold covenant with God is the prerequisite for the rites and rituals.

The same applies to the New Testament*. A fundamental impulse for the Christian Eucharist comes from the words of Christ: 'Do this in remembrance of me' (Luke 22, 19. 1. Corinthians 11,24 f.), and this will then at the same time be the expression of the New Covenant. Again the

initiative comes from the spiritual world, and the result is a new freedom—here the freedom from the Mosaic Law which now, through Christ, is totally transformed into individual moral responsibility.

The Christian Eucharist has its origin in the New Covenant of God with Man. It is a trustworthy pledge by God to be present when human beings celebrate the Meal 'in remembrance' of Him, as it was ordained by Him.

The cooperation between the Spirits of Form and the Spirits of Personality

Our study of the Old and the New Testament has enabled us to recognize the covenant of God with Man as the source of ritual and rite. This is also the case as regards the rituals of The Christian Community. When Rudolf Steiner says, 'The Christian Community was truly inaugurated on spiritual foundations by spiritual beings', this is a confirmation that, in accordance with the archetypal image, the initiative for this founding proceeded from the spiritual world. Like all initiatives, this one, too, required an echo, a response. The initiative of the founders of The Christian Community, then, can be seen as the response to the initiative of the spiritual world, and can be understood as a confirmation of the covenant.

However, a further perspective arises out of Anthroposophy. In the cosmogony depicted there, the creation of world and of Man is described as the work of the nine angelic hierarchies who fulfil the divine plan of creation. Rudolf Steiner gives his own terminology for the hierarchies, but also continues the use of the names that go back to Dionysius the Areopagite (Acts 17,34) from whom is derived the

Christian teaching about the hierarchies. In (cosmogonic) evolution there are different epochs (the days of creation), some greater than others, and within these epochs the hierarchical beings replace one another in turn to unfold their greatest activity. The actual creative beings are the upper hierarchies, as from the Spirits of Form (Exusiai). The Angels, Archangels and Spirits of Personality (Archai) are closer to Man and are not yet creatively active, that is to say: they do not yet share in the work of bringing forth the outer creation. Their working is more inward and is especially concerned with Man. That is why a particular turning-point in the sequence of the stages of evolution is always reached when, in the course of the working of the different hierarchies, there is a transition from the Spirits of Form to the Spirits of Personality.

Rudolf Steiner describes how such a transition took place in the relatively recent past. He names the 4th Century A.D. as the central moment when this occurred, but it already began centuries before that and it lasts into modern times. Until this transition, human thinking was 'administered' or 'managed' by the Spirits of Form. This means that thoughts seemed to human beings as though revealed to them, 'given'—like the external objects of creation. They did not primarily experience themselves as *thinking* creatures, as we do today; rather, they felt themselves to *perceiving* thoughts, as we feel about things in the sense-world that we perceive. Now, as the 'management' of thinking passes over to the Spirits of Personality, our present-day situation arises: Thinking is experienced more inwardly, more personally. Our experience is that

thinking demands inner activity, and that thoughts are not given from outside but must be produced by ourselves. And this also gives the modern human being a quite different relationship to reality. We see this mirrored in the philosophical debates in Scholasticism, and the impact is felt via Kant right down to current scientific theory. Since thinking is experienced as being a personal matter, it also appears subjective. But then the outcome can very easily be that the 'subjective reality' grasped by our thinking seems to us unreal because we can no longer find its real relationship to the objective world.

This question is central to the philosophical works of Rudolf Steiner (basically the writings that appeared before 1900). In the act of knowing there are two reality-factors: perception and the thinking that grasps what has been perceived. When thinking is no longer given as a revelation but must be produced by the activity of human beings, then that is also true of reality. Accordingly, Steiner says, 'That reality cannot be *found* through an act of knowledge—because it is only *created* as reality in the act of knowing—this is not noticed in most quarters'. But this does not mean that the reality thus grasped is unreal; it does mean, however, that we are creatively involved in its coming into being. Here we see, then, that the Spirits of Form have passed on the 'administration' of thinking to the Spirits of Personality, but they are still behind the act of perception, which is why this appears to us as 'directly given.' So in the process of *knowing* in our time, the Spirits of Form and the Spirits of Personality work together in perception and in thinking. In antiquity this was still different; then, the whole

process of knowledge was guided by the Spirits of Form.

From this point we can build a bridge to the question of the appropriate form for ritual in our age. First, we will need to find 'access' to the Spirits of Form. In a letter to Marie von Sivers, Rudolf Steiner writes, 'This should be our ideal: to create *forms* as expressions of the inner life. For to an age which cannot behold—and in beholding, create—forms, the Spirit must necessarily evaporate into a void, become an abstraction, and reality will stand as an aggregate of matter, devoid of spirit, over against this merely abstract spirit...and since, after all, one can only show spiritualized forms to larger numbers of people through the medium of religion, the striving towards the future should be in this direction: to give sensory-beautiful forms to religious spirit'. And yet, these forms, even though they are 'created', derive from the Spirits of Form and are therefore 'directly given', i.e. revealed. This applies to everything relating to the rituals and rites: the symbols, the gestures and the words. And then the ritual must also be 'performed' if it is to be a reality. And, similarly to the act of knowledge, this act of carrying out the ritual is also a different process than it was in earlier times. Previously, the Spirits of Form were also behind the celebration of the ritual, which was therefore 'given', without the celebrant having to make a personal contribution—apart from simply ensuring that he did everything in the right sequence. To a large extent, this principle still applies within the Catholic Church today: In order for the ritual to be valid, the priest must in the first instance adhere to the right forms of signs, gestures and word (since Scholas-

ticism known as *forma et materia*). But then in addition he must also fulfil the ritual rightly inwardly, i.e. with the right *intention*. Here one would now expect the priest's personal contribution, behind which stand the Spirits of Personality. But in fact the intention should *not* be personal; it should also be objectively 'given'—namely, to 'do what the Church does' (*intentio faciendi quod facit ecclesia*). The individual intention is of no consequence. We can see here an involvement of Spirits of Form who have failed to pass on their task and so have 'stayed behind'. They are at work wherever today's necessary engagement of the human personality is being prevented. And this example from the life of the Church can be counterpointed with one from a sphere that seems quite the opposite: in the sphere of scientific research. There, the exclusion of everything personal is also regarded as among the most essential qualities of the researcher.

Rudolf Steiner's concept of science is different—not less objective, yet inclusive of the full involvement of the particular personality of the researcher. This comes to very clear expression in a letter about his *Philosophy of Freedom*. He wants his book 'to be taken, in every single line, as *personal* experience...I do not *teach*: I am reporting what I have *lived through*, inwardly. I am recounting it as I have lived it. Everything in my book is meant personally. Including the form of the thoughts... quite unpredictably, in my individual way, I managed to traverse many an abyss, I worked my way through thickets in my own quite particular manner. Only when one arrives at the goal does one know that this is it. But perhaps the time of the teaching of such things as those that oc-

cupy me is finished altogether. Philosophy almost only interests me now as the experience of the individual.' The objective content and all that applies to all human beings in the *Philosophy of Freedom* here goes hand in hand with the entirely personal standpoint of the author. Nowadays, what is universally applicable must be supported by what is personal if it is to be a reality. The Spirits of Form must work together with the Spirits of Personality.

The same is true of a ritual appropriate for the present age. In its forms it has to be in accord with the spiritual world. The form of the words and the stages of the ritual must all conform to the strictest necessity. Here only human beings whose consciousness reaches into exalted realms of the spiritual world can act as intermediaries, and from there, like Moses from Yahweh on Mount Sinai, receive the ritual from the realm of the Spirits of Form. But if the ritual given as form is to be fulfilled, it still requires an intention fired and inspired by the Spirits of Personality, in a similar way to the description given by Rudolf Steiner of his *Philosophy of Freedom*. This intention must not be just arbitrary; but on the other hand it cannot be imposed from outside. A modern human being may reflect on the fundamental direction and intention of his or her life. If this is in accord with what the ritual needs for its fulfilment, he or she may discover the vocation to celebrate the rituals. Such celebrants will do this work out of *their own* deepest intention. To paraphrase Rudolf Steiner, one might say, 'Everything in the rites and rituals is meant personally.' And precisely for that reason, the ritual is there for everyone and is completely objective in a way that is appropriate for our

time. The task of nurturing this ritual is the task of The Christian Community, a task that has to be continually taken hold of anew. Its reality derives from the co-operation of the Spirits of Form with the Spirits of Personality.

This is the second part of a series of excerpts from *Auferstehungskräfte im Schicksal—die Sakramente der Christengemeinschaft* by Michael Debus, translated by Jon Madsen.

**The expression 'new testament' (new covenant) can be found already in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 31:31). This is then referred to a number of times in the New Testament: in the accounts of the Last Supper by Luke (Luke 22:20) and by Paul (1 Corinthians 11:24 f.) and also in the Letter to the Hebrews (Chapters 8 and 9). The contrast between an Old Testament and a New Testament is of course valid only from a Christian viewpoint. The Hebrew Bible is the Bible for the Jews.*

For Sale

George Klockner, whilst he was still a congregational priest, had a vision. This was for the creation of a retreat centre to which people could come as a nurturing process in a life that may have treated them roughly. They could be recovering from a major illness, they might be emotionally sore for a myriad of reasons—but what they needed was solace, space 'to be', and nurturing at all levels.

As 'retirement' grew closer, George actively sought the means to bring this to reality, and so The Calyx was created. In an article in *Perspectives* in 1999, Delia Jones described the process in sensitive detail, and the image of a calyx as both a protecting gesture, and one enabling new strength and direction, was described by her. Sadly, George died shortly after the establishment of The Calyx, and the impulse has been carried by Vivienne Klockner since then. However, she is no longer able to continue, owing to family commitments, and so The Calyx—in its present form—will be wound up at the end of this year.

'In its present form' George's vision was greater than what has so far been described, as he could see the possibility of the activity of The Calyx being replicated in several centres, and so the charitable trust established to create The Calyx was deliberately drawn up to specify an activity, not a geographical place. And this, to put it bluntly, is what is now 'For Sale'—though not in a financial sense. The charity will also be wound up at the end of the

year, unless someone, or some group, seizes the initiative, and finds a way of continuing with the work in their own location.

That work has been summarised by Vivienne. Even without the counselling input from George, all those who have passed through The Calyx have come away feeling relaxed, refreshed and renewed. The length of stay varied from 3 to 26 days, and guests varied widely. Botton villagers, a retired nun, ex-colleagues of George—or simply people who had picked up 'The Good Retreat Guide', and wanted peace and quiet without a religious connotation. Undoubtedly, the ground floor Calyx suite helped in all of this, with its en-suite facilities and kitchenette, and the fact that Vivienne would provide meals. Those who know Redhurst will also appreciate the absolute quality of the environment.

There is a real opportunity now to continue with this work, but also the challenge to create a new form for The Calyx, that whilst reflecting its charitable aims, also provides the chance for individuals to approach the project with their own creativity, warmth and concern.

If you feel moved to find out more, please contact Vivienne directly to express an interest.

Kevin Street

Vivienne Klockner, 'Redhurst', Holton-cum-Beckering, Market Rasen, Lincs, LN8 5NG
Tel/Fax 01673 857927 klockner@talktalk.net

The Writing in the Earth

Selma Lagerlof

The adulteress had heard her sentence. She knew that she must die. Those who had surprised her in the act of adultery led her to the Temple where she was condemned by the priests and scribes and would be stoned according to the Law of Moses.

The adulteress was a wretched, pitiable figure. She stood before her accusers in torn clothing, with blue bruises on her face from knocks and blows, almost half dead even now. She made no attempt to defend herself, but was utterly still. She also showed no resistance as the men, some of whom had come with her to the holy place, pulled and dragged her to the place where she was to be taken after the judgement.

Although she looked very crushed, inside herself she trembled with rage and hate. She felt no remorse. Her husband had been brutal towards her, had beaten her and hurt her, had let her work herself half to death and had never given her a good word. She owed him no faithfulness. Some of the neighbourhood wives who knew what she had to bear wondered that she was so patient and meek and had never tried to repay anger with anger.

Suddenly she let out a shrill scream and threw herself back. She had come to herself, and had recognised where they led her. Already as a child she had heard whispers that in the temple of Jerusalem there was a place to which no one went of their own free will. It was a narrow, rectangular garden with black earth as floor and it was bounded by walls and mighty blocks of stone. There was no sacrificial altar there, no birdcages for doves, no table where the moneylenders did business and counted up their receipts; there was only a big mound of stones. Ordinary stones such as one finds in every field, grey-white and a man's head in size. She had never seen this place, but now, as a further door opened and she suddenly saw the hill of grey white stones before her, she knew where she had been brought.

In earlier life she had been seized by shudders each time when she had heard of this empty garden where women were to expiate their proven adultery. Worse than hell it had seemed to her, and now she was being brought here herself. But what did it help if she screamed and resisted? The men pulled her with powerful tugs through the door and they did not bother to hold her upright but let her fall to the ground. She crawled into a corner and lay there helpless and miserable, her terrified gaze directed upon the stone mound as if all known horror emanated from this.

But in spite of this terrible fear the woman's heart held other tumult. Furious hate and flaming anger welled up in her and stopped her from recognising her own guilt. If she could have spoken she would not have sued for mercy or prayed for forgiveness, no, she would have thrown their own greater guilt back at the raging men and would have called down heaven's wrath on them. All the same she had no strength to think of anything other than the stones. She did not know where the man who was suddenly standing in front of the stone mound had come from. Had he been sitting in the garden when she came, or was he one of the curious, some of whom had followed them out of the great Temple building?

Why did he place himself between her and the stones? What was he doing here? Was he perhaps the one who would begin?

He was a tall, slim man, dressed in a black robe and cloak. Hair fell in soft locks over his shoulders. The face was lovely, but scored by pain-filled lines around eyes and mouth.

She had certainly never seen him before. 'After all, I have not sinned against you. Why do you want to convict me?' she thought. The thought that he might have come to help her never entered her mind. In spite of that something happened within her when she saw him. The pressure around her heart began to soften and her agitated breathing became calmer.

The others from the district, her husband, her father and brother who had brought her here in order to kill her were interrupted in their zeal for a moment. Some men, who during the day prayed or hypocritically engaged in holy discourse deep in the Temple, had followed them into the garden. One of them gave an order to wait with carrying out the sentence. At the same time, the sinner heard quick whispers behind her. She understood something like: 'Let's test him, he *is* the prophet from Nazareth. We will take this opportunity and hear whether he dares to contradict the Law of Moses.'

The woman then saw how two of the scribes, two old men with white beards and fur-bedecked coats went to the black-clad stranger and bowed. 'Master', said one, 'this woman has been caught in the very act of adultery. In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such a one. What do you say?' Then the man they had called Master looked up and as he saw them all standing there, the two questioners, the father, the husband and the brother, the men from the city, scribes and Pharisees, he bent down and wrote with his finger in the earth, as if he did not consider it important to answer the question. But as the scribes pressed him, he straightened up and spoke to them: 'The one among you who is without sin, let him be the first to cast a stone at her.'

As the men heard this, they laughed loudly. What kind of reply was this? If there were such a rule, each transgressor would have to remain unpunished.

The adulteress sobbed softly. Against her better judgement she had expected some word from the stranger to rescue her. Now as she understood that all hope was gone she lowered her head and crouched down, waiting for the rain of stones to start at any minute while the men threw off their cloaks and hitched up their robes. The stranger stayed calmly in the same place and it looked as if he would take no part in the proceedings. He had bent again towards the earth and wrote.

The first who went near the mound of stones was the father of the adulteress. As head of the family he felt himself the most injured. As he bent down to lift up a stone, he saw something to one side on the ground. And there he read, perhaps not in letters, but clear and understandable, the story of a horrible murder that he had committed many years before and for which he had never been found out. At this sight he was so terribly shocked that he staggered out in witless haste without picking up his cloak.

Then the brother hurried to make good for what he took for his father's foolish weakness. Yet as he bent down to pick up the stone destined for his reprieved sister, he too saw the writing in the earth. He saw written, not in letters but in signs wholly legible and understandable, his deed of profaning a holy place that he had carried out in youthful bravado and which, if it became known, would rob him of his citizen's rights. He was gripped by mad fear. With his foot he tried to rub out the script, but it stayed clear and in full view. Then he staggered out from there, shoving aside all who were in his way.

The adulteress crawled a little way out of her corner. Her hair hung wildly over her face. She pulled it back and tried to bring order to her torn clothing.

Now it was her husband who came forward. His rage had only been inflamed to the highest degree by the weakness of his father and brother in law. He bent down to the

stones. His entire being was filled with thirst for revenge. He could think of nothing that would please him more than killing his wife himself. But the characters in front of him leapt up like flames. They told of a conspiracy against the Roman procurator in which he was embroiled. This would bring him to the cross were it to come out at the wrong time. He pulled himself up; as a cunning man he put on a sympathetic mien and stepped back, as if he then also did not want to pass judgement. Then he hurried out.

The scribes to whom the Master had spoken were amazed and shocked and hurried forward, not to seize the stones, but to see what was written on the earth that produced these remarkable effects. There one of the most influential of them saw written that he had moved the border stones between his and his neighbour's fields. The other was reminded of his embezzlement of a minor's monies. They both performed low bows in front of the master, composed their features into worthy expressions and in good order left the place. As these men who had set themselves up as judges went away, the adulteress straightened up a little. New courage took hold of her. She saw only dimly what had taken place but she understood that she might be saved, indeed perhaps was already saved. Her whole body quivered and she would have liked to dance. Yet she was still not out of danger, for now others from the crowd pressed forward to take the stones and fulfil the judgement. But one after the other, they fell back after a glance at the ground. Instead of grasping the stones, they shrugged and hurried away, deathly pale and shaking with fear.

When not one of them was left, the adulteress stood up straight. Her eyes shone and her cheeks, formerly pallid grey, became rosy. She still remained quiet, but not only with the joy of her rescue. She had also seen overthrow of her enemies and had been allowed to experience their humiliation and now she was beside herself with the sweet taste of revenge. She wanted to dance in this accursed place, dance in front of its stones with which she would legitimately have been put to death. Yet, she did not dance. But she laughed aloud in her madness and her body swayed as if she were dancing.

At this point the Master moved and looked at her. 'Where are the others, has no one condemned you?' he asked. 'No one, Sir' she answered. At the same time she thought that she could no longer hold back her joy, that she must dance. But the Master was still considering her. He saw the unbridled joy in her. He saw that she could find no remorse for her sins. And he saw that she was filled with hatred and gloating, and with the lusts of the flesh.

She was aware that he saw everything and at that, she lost her desire to dance. She grew afraid of this man who had saved her. She saw heavenly light streaming round him and she felt great fear. She believed that he would now condemn her. This would be a sterner verdict than before, because this man had the right to detest her sins. In the midst of her deep contrition she heard him say 'Then neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.'

As these words, full of mercy and love, were spoken over the woman, a great marvel happened in her soul. A little spark was kindled; a delicate ray of heavenly glory sneaked its way in. This slowly spread out amidst fear and doubt through many days and nights. Sometimes she wished that it would die because she did not feel herself worthy of such a guest. But it would not die. Rather, it wrote in her heart an inextinguishable script about the dreadfulness of sin and the beauty of forgiveness until the poor, misled child of mankind was lit through and through by its splendour.

Translated by Jennifer Stiasny from a German translation

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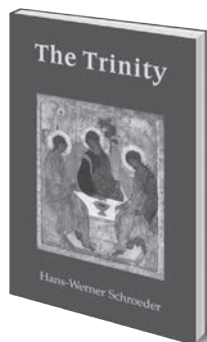
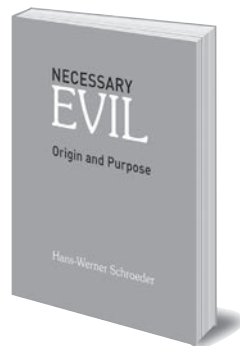
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Review

***The Magic Flute* Kenneth Branagh, 2006**

DVD 135min, English

Review by Kevin Street

A battle is raging, in a style of warfare mirroring World War I, and the Blues mount an ‘over the top’ attack on the Reds. A young captain of the Blues falls wounded, and is threatened with a coiling serpent of poison gas. It is then that three nursing sisters descend to rescue him from certain death, and he is charged to mount a rescue bid for a young girl—we are in the familiar world of *The Magic Flute*, but one visualized by Kenneth Branagh in this 2006 film.

The reason for the war continuing seems to be closely linked to the kidnapping of The Queen of the Night’s daughter, Pamina, by the supposedly evil Sarastro, and The Queen enters startlingly on the turret of a clanking tank, beseeching Captain Tamino to rescue her. The Queen is certainly the spiritual leader of the Blues, and we follow Tamino’s progress over the waste grounds of a shell-pocked landscape as he moves closer to the stronghold of Sarastro. He is accompanied on his quest by the leader of a poison gas detection squad, Papageno, who uses canaries to signal that the trenches are now safe. The talisman of the Magic Flute is given to Tamino during a lull in the fighting, as the Blue troops mingle with the Red troops during a Christmas ceasefire.

However, when Tamino finally penetrates the shelled chateau of Sarastro, he finds no evil monster but a deeply humanitarian leader of the Reds who is renowned for his healing and revered by all those with him. The whole site is a field hospital where the wounded of both sides are treated with compassion and love by Sarastro. His quest in kidnapping Pamina is to bring

Tamino—and the Magic Flute—into his service, as it is only by Tamino undergoing trials that peace, sorely sought by Sarastro, could be attained.

The deeply moving aria from Sarastro ‘Oh, Isis and Osiris, send the spirit of wisdom to the young couple’ is set in a war cemetery, with a backdrop of the names of the fallen—written in scripts from around the world, and depicting the wars of the last century. It is witnessed by a cross section of the world’s people. It is by no means certain that Tamino will succeed in his quest, but it is now the only hope.

Tamino is ultimately successful in completing the trials, and is reunited with Pamina. It is during this final scene that The Queen of the Night makes a final attempt to undermine and destroy. Sarastro moves to her in reconciliation, but is rejected as the Queen and her attendants hurtle into oblivion. Peace is now a reality.

For audiences familiar with the original, the setting will come as a shock, and it has been panned by critics. However, I have long felt the depth of the music to be at odds with the traditional staging, and the reworking of free masonry into the theme of healing seems no less ‘magical’ for our time. Indeed, I was moved by what can only be seen as a deeply spiritual imagery throughout. Each viewer will make their own judgement on this, but consider—a quest undertaken to bring peace to a troubled world that is not a forgone conclusion—the ‘magic’ talisman is given by the forces that it will ultimately undermine—the demonising of an enemy who turns out to be a follower of peace—there is more, but I would urge anyone who has a chance to see this version to suspend past expectations, and to subject themselves to a new magic. And yes—Papageno does finally get his Papagena, and the Three Boys are as enchanting as they possibly can be!

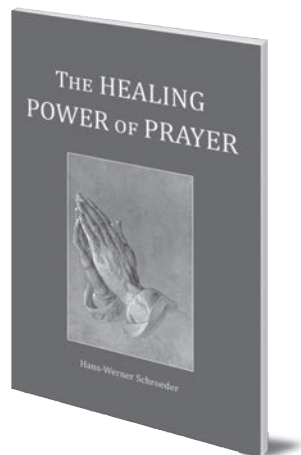
THE HEALING POWER OF PRAYER

HANS-WERNER SCHROEDER

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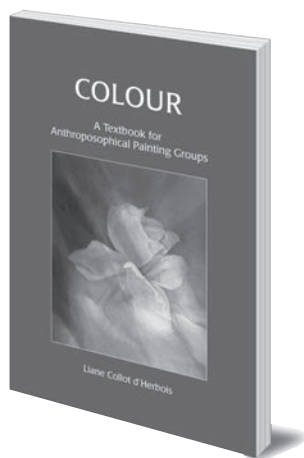
Hans-Werner Schroeder, born in 1931, is a priest of the Christian Community. He teaches at the seminary in Stuttgart and is the author of *The Cosmic Christ*, *The Trinity* and *Necessary Evil*.



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Liane Collot d'Herbois was born in 1907 in Cornwall. She studied painting in Birmingham and London. After encountering Rudolf Steiner's ideas, which were an important stimulus for her artistic and therapeutic work, she went on with Dr Ita Wegman to develop an approach to painting therapy. For many years she lived in Holland. She died in 1999.



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In the Gospel reading list in last issue, some dates in June have been missed out. Here again the second half of the page, complete.

With apologies.

Whitsuntide

Sunday, May 11 John 14:23–31

Wed., May 14 1 Corinth. 13:1–13

Sunday, May 18 John 3:1–21

Sunday, May 25 John 4:1–15

Sunday, June 1 John 4:16–35

Sunday, June 8 John 5:1–18

Sunday, June 15 John 5:16–29

Sunday, June 22 John 5:30–47

St. Johnstide

Tuesday, June 24 Mark 1:1–11

Sunday, June 29 Mark 1:1–11

Sunday, July 6 John 1:19–34

Sunday, July 13 Matt 11:1–15

Sunday, July 20 John 3:22–36

Sunday, July 27 Mark 8:27–38

Sunday, August 3 Matthew 7:1–14

Sunday, August 10 Luke 15:11–32

Sunday, August 17 Luke 9:1–17

Sunday, August 24 Luke 18:35–43

Sunday, August 31 Mark 7:31–37

Sunday, September 7 Luke 10:1–20

Sunday, September 14 Luke 17:5–24

Sunday, Sept. 21 Matthew 6:19–34

Sunday, September 28 Luke 7:11–17

Michaelmas

Monday, Sept. 29 Matthew 22:1–14

Sunday, October 5 Matthew 22:1–14

Sunday, October 12 Revelation 12:1–12

Sunday, October 19 Revelation 1:1–20

Sunday, October 26 Revelation 3:1–6

Sunday, Nov. 2 Revelation 7:9 to 8:4

Sunday, Nov. 9 Revelation 14:1–20

Sunday, Nov. 16 .. Revelation 19:11–16

Sunday, Nov. 23 Revelation 21:1–7

Advent

Sunday, November 30 Luke 21:25–36

Floris Books is looking for new senior editor

At heart, Floris Books is the publishing house of The Christian Community, and it is actually a charity with the aim of publishing religious books. However, to find a way of working economically and ensuring that there are channels to allow those books to be sold all over the English-speaking world and in many other countries, it helps to have a much broader range of books. This includes, in Floris's case, an extensive range of children's books for all ages (see www.florisbooks.co.uk for a full list of our books and subjects).

Floris is based in Edinburgh and is an integral part of the Scottish publishing scene. It has grown to an enterprise with a turnover of almost £600,000, publishing over 40 new books a year, with a backlist of about 400 titles. We sell over 100,000 books a year, so on average someone, somewhere is buying a Floris book every 5 minutes, 24 hours a day. We are a team of 4 full-time and 3 part-time people. Christian Maclean has been Publisher for over thirty years and is trying to ensure a strong basis for Floris's future after his retirement in a few years' time.

We are therefore looking for a senior commissioning editor who will build the list by finding and encouraging new authors in all subjects. Ideally this person would have a good background knowledge of anthroposophy and The Christian Community as well as experience in publishing. A challenge for the adult list is to understand what deeper questions people are asking and to find authors who can write in a way that speaks to these questioners. In fact, the greatest challenge for the commissioning editor is really this: to build a programme of popular (and profitable) books, balanced with those of inherent value of content which may not have the wide reach (and profitability) of the others. Of course we always hope to find a book that does both, but these are rare!

Interested individuals are welcome to contact Christian Maclean at Floris Books on christian@florisbooks.co.uk.



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