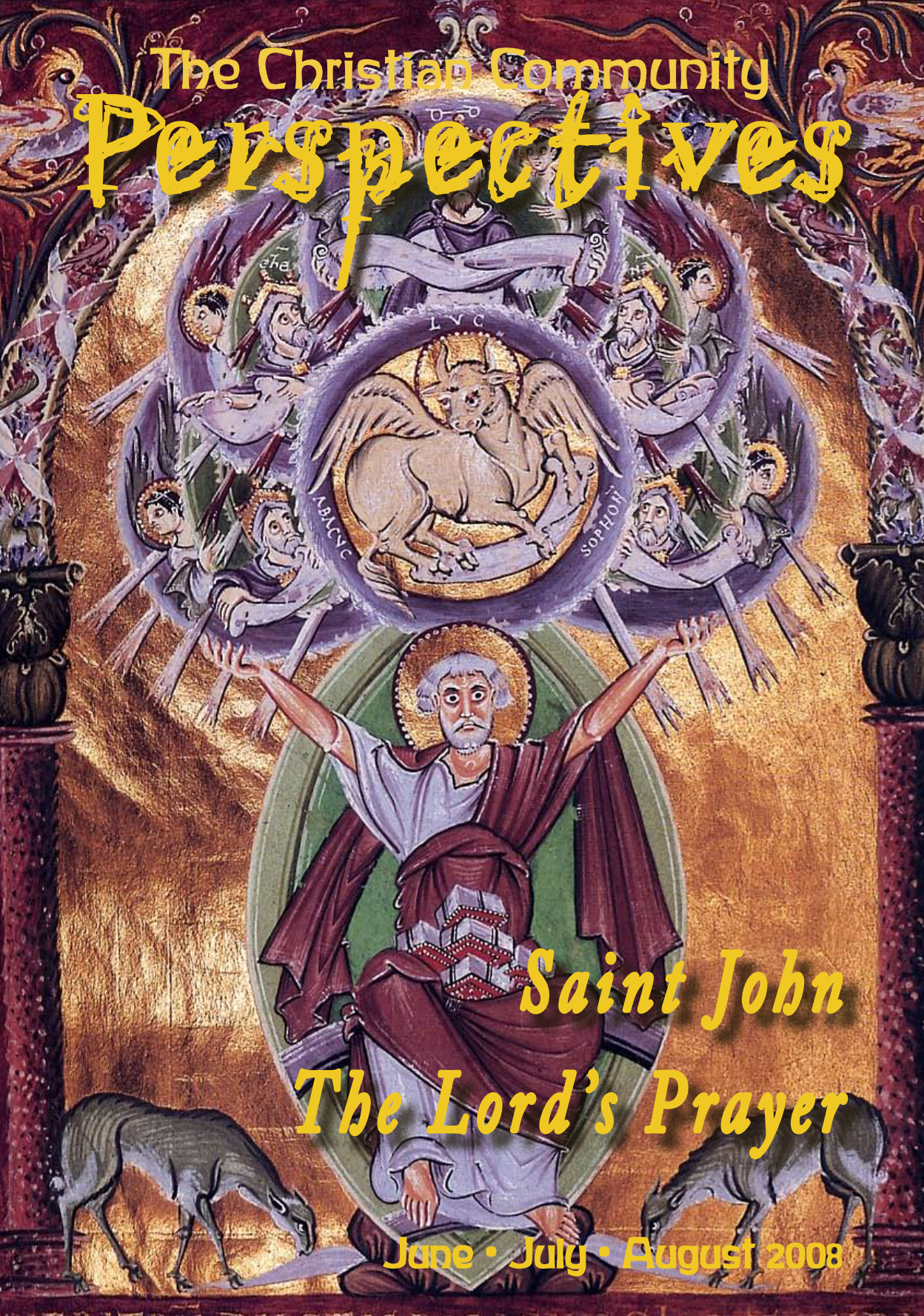
The Christian Community

Perspectives



Saint John

The Lord's Prayer

June • July • August 2008

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Perspectives

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'Letting go and letting come' — that is the phrase that encapsulates the philosophy of life contained in Otto Scharmer's fascinating book, Theory U. Only when we let go of habitual ways of thinking and feeling can we become open for the future that wants to come into being through us. This is what we practise in prayer, when we allow our concerns to be lifted into the realm of the divine, and to welcome God's kingdom as the future that we long to bring into being. It is heartening that an author writing for leaders of business, government and action groups describes what can happen through prayer so clearly. It is a hallmark of our time that we see different areas of life becoming connected that were once far apart.

Tom Ravetz

St. John's 'word of fire'

Michael Kientzler

John the Baptist had accompanied mankind to the lowest point on earth, the place which is an image of hardened materialism, the Dead Sea,—the place where the living water of the Jordan River enters the realm of death. There could be seen what happens to living beings like fish, so much at one with the element of living water, when they enter the salt lake—immediate death. Not only is the Dead Sea the lowest place on earth (almost 400 metres below sea-level), but it is the place where the most earthly of all substances, the salt appears in an amazing concentration. Salt is that substance which accompanies and makes possible all our body-based, nerve related activities of consciousness, perception and thinking. We get 'salty' when we think but also if our senses are stimulated. The salt-processes are related to those death-processes which start with our first breath and enable human consciousness and which are counterbalanced by those upbuilding life-forces that originate in our metabolic system. Relating this to the images of Genesis I, one might say that eating from the fruits of the 'tree of knowledge', which could also be called 'the tree of death', was the beginning of these death related processes of consciousness.

The inflow of water into the Dead Sea and its evaporation always held each other in check, so that the Dead Sea maintained its level for a long time. In the 20th century this has changed; the living water is extracted from the Jordan before it reaches the place where it can flow directly into heaven by evaporating, and the salt lake is dying. The archetypal image of life forces and the forces of death (consciousness) held in balance does not appear anymore. But about 2000 years ago it was still there.

If we look at its geography or indeed physiology we can perceive this place as the pole of death and consciousness in the Holy Land, like the central nervous system in us. This is where the image appears of human life having reached its lowest point, where the path of the 'tree of knowledge', which in reality is the tree of death, came to its climax in the personality of Saint John in maximal self knowledge. He is the ultimate witness of this human path who then becomes the witness, preparer and helper of the incarnation of the Creator Word as the 'friend of the bridegroom', who hears his voice and is full of joy; he who is the first to perceive and recognize the Christ in Jesus.

This was the place of John's proclamation where he fulfilled his mission as it was predicted by the angel Gabriel to his father Zacharias before he was conceived. John the Baptist is the exemplary archetype of the pre-birthly existence of Man and his individual mission on earth, being sent by God.

The sacrament of baptism in its renewed form speaks of the soul of the child being *'sent down from the community of spirit to that of earth'*. In this one sentence we can find the core of all pedagogy; it underlies all our biographical crises and their healing, as one can only be sent with a message or a mission

Later he is the one of whom Jesus Christ says, *'And if you are willing to accept it: he is Elijah, whose return men are expecting. He who has ears, let him hear.'* (Math. 11, 14-15); reincarnation made concrete by Jesus in relationship to John the Baptist. But even St.John doubts what he has perceived at the baptism of Jesus (Lk.7, 20) *'Are you the One that is to come, or must we wait for another?'*

All of this makes John the 'other' representative of mankind, the one from the past and 'from below' we might say, whereas Jesus Christ is the one from the future, the 'Son of Man'; as St Paul expressed in his image of the Old Adam and New Adam.

John the Baptist, who stood at the lowest point on the earth's surface, and also at the lowest point of spiritual evolution of Man, was apparently not a soft-spoken man. His voice is described in the original Greek with a word normally used for the bellowing of cattle. He spoke with a mighty voice to awaken human beings to a complete change and even reversal of consciousness. It is the awakening call of the Holy Spirit that speaks through him. What is meant with this 'change of heart and mind', as it can also be translated?

The people of Israel, especially the representatives of religion, had lost their spirit-orientation to a very large extent. The High Priestly palace which was excavated recently shows the splendour and refinement of a royal palace. On the ground floor were shops for religious and devotional items which generated the income needed to support this lifestyle. Religion had degenerated to a commercial and over-ritualized rigid form without contents.

This was the epitome of the distance from the spirit which humanity had reached at that point in history. Human attention was greatly directed towards matter and the earthly, even in the 'Chosen People'. Paganism around it was at least as decadent with its temple prostitution and superstition.

To reverse one's mind or one's consciousness would mean a reversal of attention: from matter to spirit, from the earthly

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to the divine, from myself to the other. It is the ability in addition to be able to see everything in the light of the spirit because matter is 'frozen' spirit 'the end of the paths of God' as the 18th century German Theosophist J. C. Oettinger put it. This process of 'metanoeite' is described in our time by people who have gone through a 'near-death-experience' for example, something similar to what John induced the people to go through whom he baptized by total immersion in the water of the Jordan. With them his appeal became reality in their lives, and they then became the first disciples of Jesus Christ.

It is the simple people, not 'academics' or religious authorities who mostly come to him and take his message seriously and concretely: 'What then shall we do?' is the question of the crowd, the despised tax collectors, the soldiers. We would probably expect a radical answer, especially to the tax collectors, who were collaborators with the Romans and even more to the soldiers, but this does not come. They are not told to give up their job and join the Essenes or become hermits in the desert, but 'keep strictly to what you have been authorized to do; do not go beyond that.' And the soldiers are not told to become conscientious objectors, but 'avoid looting and every kind of excessive violence, and be content with your wages.' This doesn't seem too much to ask.

It is a little different though what is said to the crowd, to all of us, so to speak: 'Let him who has two garments share with him who has none, and let him who has food act similarly'.

However simple this might seem, it is very difficult to put into practice. We are called to extend what we do with our immediate family and closest friends, to a realm beyond. Egoism can't be overcome; we can only widen it and include other people in it by sharing what we have. It is actually the seed of the Pentecostal community of the early Christians, which did not survive very long—the sharing of goods, of houses and property. This is the form of community which comes directly out of the working of the Holy Spirit, the new form of relationship, as strong as the bonds of blood of the past: the brotherhood of mankind. It is the opposite of the all-ruling dogma of modern economics, which sees egotism as the driving force of the economic realm. As this article is being written, the cracks in this system are becoming dramatically apparent.

This is where St. John's word reaches the most into the present, even if his more specific advice to state functionaries is still valid too.

What can the ever-relevant appeal to change, to transform, to turn our intentions, priorities, and directions around mean to us today?

First of all the necessity to change applies to the individual then, now and in the future. Stagnation leads to a paralysis of the soul, which is the beginning of what St.Paul calls the second death, the death of the soul. Only those who never cease to strive can be redeemed, as the chorus of angels proclaims at the end of Goethe's Faust. The goal of this striving is the transformation of the self.

John himself is like the personified historical conscience of mankind standing at the turning point of time saying the truth, even if it costs his life. His diagnosis of the state of humanity is in harmony with the divine will. He was able to purify his thinking, offer his subjective thoughts in order then to receive his will from God. In the icons of the Orthodox churches, he is often depicted with wings, like the figure of Elijah before him 'See I send my angel before you'. He had achieved an angelic consciousness, where knowing and doing are one.

This being, greater than all men born by a woman and the least in the Kingdom of heaven, who stands in between humanity and the angelic realm of the hierarchies is also persecuted and killed. His head on the silver platter is turned into a black magic counter image of the monstrance, the silver crescent of the moon holding the transubstantiated host, surrounded by the rays of the sun. In the gruesome image of John's head on a salver, we see a kind of prophecy of the transformation that had to come about: our head related thinking, the moon quality of pure reflection has to be sacrificed and transformed into a thinking that is imbued with the creative power of the sun which we might call thinking with the heart. The old had come to an end, the new still has to be created.

To follow John on this path of tuning into the cosmic-moral harmony, the sum of the law of the Old Testament, which is the love of God, the love of our fellow men and of ourselves, is to offer up what we are most closely connected with as our personal thoughts - even our moral concepts and ideals; to offer them not to an earthly power, whether it be a church or a religious or philosophical or political concept or leader, or to our nation, but to the divine itself. Renouncing our opinions, which are so personal to us, is as difficult as higher mathematics. Both our thinking and will are imbued and penetrated too much by our egos, an outcome of 'the sickness of sin'. To offer our thoughts to the divine and to receive our will from God are the first healing steps of the sickness of sin with its over exposed lower ego. Inner peace is a gift of the Son of Man, is divine grace. To be prepared to receive it, we have to perform these steps by ourselves. John the Baptist is the guardian on the path that we can tread in the renewed Confession, the Sacramental Consultation.

Doxology: Walking in the Power of Eternal Majesty

Erk Ludwig

There are things in the physical world that exist and whose existence we can count on for a long time. A stone, for instance, exists, it 'is,' and it remains what it is for ages.

Fire is not of this nature. It 'is' not, rather it comes into being at all times, it is always born anew, is always becoming. There are old rocks or old trees, but there is no old fire.

The same can be said about the sun. It does not simply exist, it 'is' not. Part of its very essence is that it is continually becoming. Seeing the sun rising in the morning out of the sea, ancient cultures spoke of its new birth. They experienced its ongoing becoming, its becoming out of its own activity, giving light, giving warmth.

How can we describe the activity of the sun? Modern science has its answer which we will not go into. Let it suffice to say that science can say much about the bodily nature of man without ever touching the soul-spiritual being of the one living in this physical body. The same applies to the sun. There is not only the view that grasps only the physical; there is also spiritual insight, and such insight, such viewing, is expressed for instance in what Novalis says about nature, about the earth, about the sun.

About the light: 'Should the light be just the sign of a new covenant —or the genius of the covenant altogether?' Or: 'Light is the vehicle of the communion of the universe; likewise, isn't true thoughtfulness the same in the spiritual sphere?'

According to words like these, the visible light is the outer manifestation of spiritual being, the outer sheath of a 'communion of the universe.' Who unites in this communion?

What Novalis says about nature he says at other places about the earth and about the sun: 'It is the result of an incomprehensible accord of infinitely different beings, the wondrous bond of the spirit world, the point of uniting and touching of innumerable worlds.'

This is the sun in reality: A uniting, a working together of beings of the highest hierarchies, a symphonic event. But the working of the hierarchies

could not be united for the continual event that the sun is without the power that works and lives between and among them. What is the power that unites the working of the hierarchies? The only adequate name is Love, divine cosmic Love, *Agape*. It is the power of the cosmic Word, of the Logos that makes the working, the sounding together of the hierarchies, their harmonious 'accord' possible.

The Logos who as cosmic Love unites the spiritual beings is the reality of the becoming, the ever new sun.

The gospel of Luke describes in its 11th chapter how Christ entrusted the Lord's Prayer to mankind. The gospel indicates that there were again and again periods of time during which Christ Jesus did not appear as the speaking, the teaching one, but during which he was silent, and this silence had an inner content: Praying and meditating he filled himself with the being of the Father. At times he paused, and on the occasion of one such pause one of his disciples took the initiative to ask: 'Lord, teach us to pray.' In response, and out of his own praying, Christ gives the Lord's Prayer. We become witnesses of the birth of the Lord's Prayer, not yet in its complete form that we know from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's gospel.

The Lord's Prayer is a gift of Christ himself.

Yet one part of the prayer is not included, neither in the gospel of Luke nor in the gospel of Matthew. What is missing is the doxology, the concluding part: 'For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.'

Indeed, these concluding words were not given by Christ, in the strict sense they are not part of the original prayer. The early Christians felt inspired to add them to what they had received in the sense of the spiritual law: Do not receive a gift without offering a gift in return.

In return for the gift of the prayer they offered the words of the doxology—a hymn of thanking, praising, glorifying.

Where does it come from? What is its origin, its source?

One would like to say that the origin is the hearts of the Christians, filled with praise and thanksgiving, and this would be the complete answer. Yet in their search for an older source, some theologians found a similar hymn in the Old Testament. The situation is this:

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A thousand years before Christ, King David ruled in Jerusalem. In his life we can see messianic characteristics. This is how David has always been seen and experienced. Yet his life was not without errors and mistakes. At the end of his life, the old king wants to build the temple in Jerusalem. But the voice of the Divine keeps

him at bay: You waged wars, blood is on your hands. And David has to leave the building of the temple to his son Solomon. In resignation David sits on the rock where he wanted the temple to be built and sees how the people bring gifts of offering for the construction of the temple: Gold, silver and other materials. Seeing in the people the will to offer for the sake of the great goal, the temple, the house of the Lord, seeing that the building begins in the god-filled hearts of the people, there breaks forth from his soul a hymn of thanking, praising, glorifying:

from the Cartoons by Raphael: *Christ's charge to Peter – 'Feed my sheep!*

'Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee and praise thy glorious name.' (1 Chronicles 29:11-13)

David sees the will to offer in the people, he sees the gifts of offering —and with these he sees the realization of the temple to come. Jubilating, he responds to the becoming of the temple with a hymn of thanking, praising and glorifying.

The doxology is such a hymn. Is there the becoming of a temple that we can behold when we speak the words of the doxology?

Every single word of the Lord's Prayer is worth contemplating. For a moment I would like to ponder a word that seems to be of minor significance: 'our' or 'us' ('give us this day …'). Its significance increases immediately if we replace it by is singular form 'my' or 'me.' One would not want to suggest doing so, not even tentatively, because the prayer would take on a nearly unbearable tone, the tone of extreme egotism.

Instead, we can try to find out how much content we are able to give to this word. Who is included in this 'our' or 'us'? This depends on each

individual. Before speaking the prayer, I can, as part of a review of the day, remember the people I have met this day. Am I able to really include them all in the 'our'? And as I go beyond the day I realize more and more: Potentially, all of mankind is included in this word. This realization can awaken me to the possibility of growth in my soul, yet there comes the point when I have to admit: The power of my I is not sufficient to embrace all of mankind.

But there is One whose divine, loving I embraces all humanity in and with and through which he lives and is present.

Humanity is the temple that is becoming. Praying the Lord's Prayer we help to build it.

The early Christians called their communities *ekklesia*. The word comes from the verb *ekkaleo* meaning 'to call out': *Ekklesia* describes how they felt, what they experienced: They were called out:

- Out of the old blood relationships. John the Baptist proclaimed in strong words that being a descendent of Abraham is no longer a guarantee of finding the way toward the Divine. 'Even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees'—and he was speaking of genealogical or family trees.
- Out of religious traditions that had ceased to be wellsprings of the union of God and man.
- Out of being embedded in the context of nature. Ever more did the human condition become the way it is today. Who can find the spirit in nature? One cannot find it, at least not in a direct way. Today we have to find the spirit independent of nature, in a purely spiritual way—only then can we find the spirit in nature anew.

They were called out of blood ties, traditions, nature, which is to say: They were called out of the 'old world.' As a source of inspiration, the 'old world' had ended. The 'new world' had begun to arise. And these early Christians experienced themselves as living in this new world.


detail from previous picture

When they came together for the breaking of the bread, for the eucharist, they said that they were gathered for the celebration of an *Agape.* This is how they called the holy event of the transubstantiation of bread and wine: *agape*—healing, redeeming, transforming, creating Divine

Love. They called the holy celebration *agape* because they experienced: Wherever and whenever this holy event is celebrated, there is the place where the transformation, the re-enlivening of the world takes place, where the new world is being born.

detail from *the Miraculous Draft of Fishes*

John the Baptist had proclaimed that the kingdom of the heavens is near. This kingdomis made up of the beings of the spiritual hierarchies out of whose working together the sun 'becomes' at all times. And the central being in this kingdom who lives and works between and among the hierarchies in such a way that he makes their working together possible is the being of the Logos, of the cosmic Love, of *Agape*.

This cosmic Love, this *Agape* has appeared in Christ on the earth, Christ has founded his sun-like, sun-bright realm in the earth, rejuvenating, re-enlivening the earth.

And the Christians experienced: As we celebrate the eucharist, the *agape*, we live in the realm of him who is the Spirit-Sun.

Of this realm, of the Spirit-Sun does the hymn of thanking, praising and glorifying speak which the early Christians added to the Lord's Prayer and which we call the doxology.

Only a few days ago a friend told me this anecdote:

On the occasion of one of his visits to the first Waldorf School in Stuttgart, Rudolf Steiner came into a lesson where the children brought up the question concerning the meaning of the doxology: 'For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.' Rudolf Steiner answered not in words, but in the form of a drawing: First he drew a complete, well-defined, bordered circle. Then he drew arrow-like lines from the center to the borderline of the circle. At the end he drew, with the whole length of the piece of chalk, powerful forms around the circle. And when he asked the children what this drawing was they answered: The Sun.

From a talk given in Botucatu, Brazil; 20 July 2007

Give us this day our daily bread

Eva Knausenberger

Eating disorders are increasing at an alarming rate. There are as many obese, anorexic and bulimic patients filling clinics and therapeutic centres as there are drug-abusers. It would seem that 'Our daily bread' is not being used to nourish the human being but instead to maltreat and punish the body.

In the Act of Consecration, the bread reveals healing, healing that brings salvation, to free us from the 'sickness of sin.'

The Father God is represented in all earthly substances. The substances of our body originate in His realm and reveal His presence, as Ground of the World.

What do we do with such knowledge? What is this 'sickness of sin' that afflicts us all? What entered into human life when the snake entered paradise?

Fear entered into the human soul in paradise—fear of not being 'like God', fear of the boundless gifts surrounding us, fear of not knowing, not being important, not having enough. It is the kind of existential fear that Christ meant when he said, 'In the world you are afraid. Behold I have overcome the world.' And this fear stands as the antagonist to Christ's peace when it remains with us. It is what drives us to strive and work to increase our gain. Fear is an unseen and for the most part unrecognised presence in our lives.

Increasingly, fear has become the portal through which evil enters into our thinking, feeling and willing. Fear is our Achilles' heel; it self-seeds and spreads its net beyond individual human beings into the realm of mankind's soul and spiritual life. In its wake rises the increase of violence against both the ground and substance of our humanity and our human environment.

In this light we can the importance of our relationship to the Archangel Michael as 'the vanquisher of fear'. In vanquishing fear, he liberates us from the fetters of constricted existence.And in this light too, we can look at the part food plays in our lives.

As human beings, we need nourishment on many levels. Not only do we need daily bread but also nourishment for the soul and spirit. This is clearly described in Mathew 4,1-11 'He was led by the spirit into the desert, and the devil came and tempted Him.' After 40 days of fasting Christ Jesus experienced hunger. Even He had to concede that 'Man does not live by bread *alone*'. Rather, the human being needs the Word of God in addition to bread. We need that 'bread' which reveals to us how we may be healed from the grip of existential fear.

Eating disorders reveal a lack of love on many levels in our society. Absence of self-healing or self-nourishing power is accompanied by an increasingly invasive fear at a level unprecedented in history. The rise in eating disorders throughout mankind is the sign of an impeded will to heal, combined with the loss of knowledge that food is a form of blessing. This allows the seed of fear to grow and bear fruit.

In the case of eating disorders, violence is being directed against the self. In ex-

treme cases, physical death threatens. Unless soul-spiritual nourishment becomes available, the body will cease to house the human entity. Today we are in need of the 'healing bread of life' like we have never needed it before. The true meaning of the Eucharist, the meal that Christ shares with us at his table, goes far beyond the personal need of those who partake of it. The leaven of self-giving love, enacted at the Last Supper and made present whenever the Act of Consecration of Man is celebrated, is the perfect antidote to the forces of violence and fear. The more conscious we are of the maladies that afflict humanity, the more we can help in their healing through our participation in Christ's meal.

Christianity and Judaism Part 1
The names of the chosen people and its hidden tasks

Paul Corman

In January 1933, the eve of National Socialism, a dialogue took place in Germany between Christian and Jewish theologians. Martin Buber spoke the following words:

[Ext]I live not far from the city of Worms, to which I am connected through tradition of my ancestors. Occasionally I visit. When I do, I always go first straight to the cathedral. It is harmony made visible, all the parts forming a perfect whole. I walk around the cathedral, appreciating its appearance with complete joy. Then I cross over to the Jewish cemetery. It is full of leaning, weathered, shapeless, disoriented headstones. I put myself among them and look towards the magnificent harmony of the dome, and I feel like looking from Israel up to the Christian Church.

Down here there is no form. There are only slabs, and ashes underneath them. There are only the physical remains of human beings. These are our remains. These are my remains. They are not physical remains in the physical space of our planet, but they are the physical remains of my own experience, down to the depths of history, down to the Sinai. — I was standing there and was connected to the ashes and through the ashes to our ancestors. These are the memories of our involvement with God which is part of all Jews.

The perfection of the Christian cathedral cannot deter me; nothing can deter me from these good times of Israel. I was standing there and have experienced it all again. All the death, all the ashes, all the dispersion, all the silent sorrow is mine; but the covenant has not been broken. I lie here on the ground, fallen as are the stones, but the covenant is still standing.

What a dynamic we see here: a Christian cathedral and a Jewish cemetery, and between the two a human being. What is his experience; how does he move between the two? It is not Martin Bu-

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ber alone who is in this situation. Everyone who wonders why there is unceasing conflict between the Jewish people and the rest of humanity, in particular the Christian part of humanity, is in this situation. At times the relationship is more intense, then less so, only to become more painful again, just like the pangs of birth. What is it that wants to come to birth in a labour that lasts more than two thousand years?

The Jewish people had the task of preparing the body that was to be the 'vehicle of the Christ'. With the fulfilment of this task, the Jewish people could have sunk back into oblivion as did other people after fulfilling their world-historic task, like the Celts, the Etruscans or the Incas. The Jews were not forgotten after completing their mission. Why not? What is the meaning of the Jewish people today, or in the future?

What is the meaning of the word: Jew?

In the Old Testament the word cannot be found. Only in the Apocryphal writings of the Old Testament, in the second Book of the Maccabees is there a mention of the Jewish people, or Judah ism, about 160 BC. The word 'Jew' appears only in the later books (Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Daniel), also relatively late in the development of the history of the Jews, after the Babylonian captivity, about 450 BC. Before that one finds the expression 'the house of Judah h' and 'the children of Judah '. Besides that the Jewish people is known by the names of 'the *Israelites*' and 'the *Hebrews*'. Let us explore these three names.

The Old Testament mentions Abraham as 'the first of the Hebrews' (Gen. 14:13). The root of the word Hebrew is 'AWR', which means 'to step over' 'to come from beyond' points to the crossing of a border. Already before Abraham's name is mentioned the first time, before he is called 'the Hebrew' when he came to the land Canaan, it says that he *crossed* the border and traversed the country (Gen. 12:6) Later, at the name change from Jakob to Israel (there will be more on this in a moment), the root AWR appears five times in the short narrative (Gen. 32:22–24). This is obviously important. 'Hebrew' means therefore 'the one who comes from yonder', 'the one who crosses the border', somebody who is, or has the potential to become, a citizen of two worlds.

Jacob is given the name *Israel* (Gen. 32:25–30). A man comes to him by night. They wrestle until dawn. Then the man wants to leave, but Jacob, who must have perceived that this was no ordinary man, does not let him go, until the man has given him his blessing. We are given a clue that this being is the one who was then the spirit of the Jewish people, the archangel Michael, when Jacob afterwards refers to him as P'niel, the countenance of God. He says to Jacob: 'You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, because you have fought with God and men, and you have remained victorious.' He blesses him and vanishes from view.

'Israelite' means 'fighter for God', 'wrestler of God'; it can also be understood as 'one who recognizes God', or 'one who wrestles to recognize God'.

Jacob had twelve sons. The fourth was called by his mother Lea 'Judah ', for she said: I want to thank the Lord (Gen. 29:35). *Judah* can mean: 'To thank, to praise God', but also 'to confess to the name of God'. After the division of the kingdom

of Solomon,the House of Judah, together with the House of Benjamin, the youngest brother, formed the southern kingdom of Judah, or Judea. When the Israelites—the ten tribes that made up the northern kingdom—were carried off into exile and dispersed by the Assyrians, the religious concept 'Jew' was added to the ethnographic and political concept 'Judea.'

Judah, the Jew, means to praise God, to thank God and to confess God.

The three names of the people of Israel point to three hidden qualitie, that were cultivated beside the more outward task of developing the physical body of Christ through the stream of inheritance. The 'inward task' of the Jew it was, so to speak, to learn to live at the frontier, to fight, to recognize, and to praise and confess God's name.

The figure of Abraham is adorned with many legends. His birth was announced by a significant star constellation. King Nimrod recognized the meaning of the constellation and sought to destroy all new-born boys in the country. Abraham's mother saved her son with great cunning, and hid him in a cave in the desert. As a young man he recognizes God, who can see everything, but is invisible himself. One day he takes an axe and destroys all graven images in his father's workshop, as his father was an idol-maker. All of this is told by the legends of the Jews.

From this point, the story continues in the Book of Genesis (chapter 12):

And the Lord said to Abram: Go forth out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and out of thy father's house, and come into the land which I shall show thee. … And he took Sara his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all that he owned. And Abraham—and here appears the word AWR, Hebrew, for the first time—passed into the land and passed through the country and he built there an altar and called to the Lord.

We see how the three qualities of Hebrew (border crosser), Israelite (fighter) and Jew (confessor) are already present in Abraham's being.

Abraham received a new name from God, because he was to become the father of many. Ab-ram, father of the people, becomes Ab-rah-am, father of a large people. Abraham received many promises from God regarding a son and his offspring. We shall look at one of these promises in more detail.

As Abraham did not have a son at that time, according to the law, his servant would have been his heir.

And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, 'This man shall not be your heir; your own son shall be your heir.' And he brought him outside and said, 'Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' And he believed the LORD; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness. Gen. 15:4-6

This is the Revised Standard Version. The Hebrew bears more meanings, and could be translated rather differently. The word 'number', also means 'read', 'mission', 'document', 'listing' and 'to order numerically'. (The English word 'cypher', secret numeric symbol, has the same Hebrew root.) Thus God speaks to Abraham: 'Look towards heaven and count, order the stars, read the stars according to their number, if you can. That is how your offspring will be.' It is not only about quantity.

And then follows: 'he believed Jahweh', which is to say: he took it as truth, w'He E'min, the word 'amen'—'yea, so be it'. Abraham affirms God, and God credits this to him as righteousness—again, words that, according to their root, can be translated in a different way. To credit, *hashaw*, means also to think, to intend, and also to reserve for a specific purpose. The word righteousness *ts'da-ka* also means right, rightful. One could translate: 'If you can, read the order of the stars. Thus your offspring will be. Abraham said yes to God, and God dedicated him to the right purpose.'

Spiritual science reports the fundamental physical transformation that happened to Abraham right into the fibres of his brain. The old clairvoyance, with which man experienced the spirit inwardly, and which saw the life of the senses as Maya, had to change. The human being had to learn to face God in freedom. He had to find God anew, had to learn to recognize him and his creation. But this recognition was not to take place immediately. It had to happen as a sacrifice for the healing of the sickness of sin caused by the first act of recognition in paradise.

Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. Only one son was connected to this sacrifice, the stream of sacrifice that has to go through death and resurrection continuously. This stream of sacrifice was initially continued by the Jewish people. Its transformation by Abraham and continuation by Isaac was necessary in a twofold way for the formation of the physical bodies of this people with respect of the body of Christ and the bodies of those who were meant to recognize him as Christ Jesus.

The story of the Old Testament is the narrative of the formation of this physical body which was observed strictly for 2000 years. Therefore severe penalties were imposed for mixing with non-Hebrew people. The entire law is a remarkable defence against foreign influence. During the first 1000 years, this was mainly on the level of sensory experience. Then came the impulse of Sinai. The law of Moses and the new ritual with the Ark of the Covenant required a more conscious approach to the task of penetrating the physical body and living the qualities already mentioned: fighter, confessor, recognizer. The law was a more outward, the ritual a more inward consolidation. All this was to give direction and support to the Jewish people for the next thousand years, until the turning point of time and the coming of the Messiah, the Christ.

With Jesus of Nazareth indeed one task of the Jews was fulfilled. The other task, to develop a physical body which made possible the recognition of Christ, was only accomplished by a few. It was hardly possible that the Jews of that time could recognize Him. There were many spiritual streams within Judaism, and each had its own ideas about the Messiah and the exact time he was to appear. Most of these streams failed to recognize Him. They were too stuck, trapped by adherence to the letter of the law. Just because they thought they knew exactly when and how He was to come, in the end they overlooked Christ.

What would have happened, if all the Jews had recognized Him? There could have been no Christianity. His mission for the whole of humanity would have become impossible. The Jews would have experienced the fulfilment of their prophecies,

would have founded their state, but the evolution of mankind would have failed.

Therefore, it was impossible from the outset that He would be recognized by a majority of the Jews. As it was necessary that Judas betrayed Him, so it was necessary that the Jews did not recognize Him. It was an enormous, profound moment of destiny that connected Christ with mankind, when on Good Friday the Jews shouted: 'Crucify him, crucify him.' What a sacrifice!

The unaccomplished task recognizing Christ is our challenge today. It has become a task for the whole of mankind, as have the three inner, hidden characteristics: living at the border between two worlds, fighting in recognition of God and praising God. Everyone who wants to find Christ must take up the challenge to live in two worlds, to wrestle for truth, and to stand up for his beliefs.

The people of Israel received a new task. It had to challenge the growing Christianity. The Jews ask the Christians: how far do you manage to live in two worlds; how close are you to the truth; how strong is your commitment? And another question: Can you remain open to the true being of Christ? This is no easy task for the Jews.

It is obvious that the Jews did not succeed in preventing the Christians from fettering the image of Christ with laws, dogmas and rigid concepts. The task of resistance is never an easy one, and yet very important for the maintaining of life. The Jews are closely connected to a living Christianity.

The Threefold Form of the Sacraments

Michael Debus

In Scholastic theology, the sacraments are seen as having a threefold structure. The first time this was set out officially was in 1202, by Pope Innocent III. According to this, three things are to be differentiated 'most carefully' (subtiliter):

The ritual act (sacramentum tantum)
The sacramental reality (res et sacramentum)
The grace of the sacrament (res tantum)

We shall consider each of these separately in the following articles.

1.The ritual act (sacramentum tantum)

In Scholasticism, theologians examined the question of the conditions that have to be met in order that a sacrament can be fulfilled 'rightly'. In High Scholasticism, the recently discovered writings of Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) played an important role. He was 'the philosopher' and had the authority of a teacher of the Church. As time went on, the two Aristotelian principles of Form and Matter (forma et materia) became important for the theology of the sacraments.

Rudolf Steiner referred to these two principles in order to elucidate the philosophical basis of anthroposophy. The reality that human beings create in the act of knowing comes about through their perceiving the world; through their thinking they then grasp what they have perceived.

According to Rudolf Steiner, perception would—in Aristotelian language—correspond to materia, and thinking to forma. Rudolf Steiner expands upon this:

For Aristotle it is clear that as regards all those things of which our world of experience consists, what is important in the act of knowing is that we grasp the form, for it is the form that imparts the essence to things, not matter.

He recounts an example brought by a Viennese philosophy lecturer:

Imagine a wolf that for some time has eaten only lambs; eventually the wolf actually consists of nothing but the substance of the lambs—and yet that wolf will never become a lamb!' If one follows that thought rightly it shows the difference between matter and form. Is the wolf a wolf by virtue of matter? No! As creature, he is what he is by virtue of his form—the 'wolf-form' can be found not only in this particular wolf but in all wolves. So we find the form by fashioning a concept which expresses something universal, in contrast to that which the senses experience which is always the particular, the single thing.

The way in which Rudolf Steiner applies these two principles to the act of knowledge and relates them to perception and thinking is also the way in which they were applied to the sacraments in Scholasticism. The first person to do this in a strict Aristotelian (hyle-morphistic) sense was Hugo von St. Cher. [1]

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In accordance with the Augustinian ordering of sacramental symbolism into Word and Element, he relates the Element to matter and the Word to form. The perhaps initially surprising linking of word and form becomes comprehensible when one considers that the significance of the element, for instance the water in Baptism, of course only becomes apparent through the word, the 'formula'. Yet there still remained the question of the priest's actions, as well as those sacraments, such as e.g. Confession and Marriage, where no material substances at all are required, and which only involve human actions. For this reason a further differentiation was necessary; it was first formulated by Duns Scotus.[2] He no longer applies the concept materia only to the material element—which he calls materia remota ('distant' matter)—but also to the human act, which he names materia proxima ('near' matter). This made it possible to answer the question of Form and Matter for all sacraments and to determine what is essential in this regard for the sacrament to come into being. The outcome was formulated at the Council of Union in Florence in 1439. We will quote three examples from it.

With respect to Baptism, the following applies: Matter: 'True and natural water—whether warm or cold is irrelevant.' Form: 'I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' For the Eucharist, the following applies: Matter: 'Wheat-bread and grape-wine with which a small amount of water must be mixed before the consecration.' Form: 'The words with which Our Saviour fulfilled this sacrament, for the priest fulfils this sacrament in that he speaks in the person of Christ As regards Confession, the following applies: Matter: 'The partic-

ipation of the confessing soul: his heartfelt remorse; the sinner's spoken confession; penance for his sins (prayer, fasting, almsgiving).' Form: 'I absolve you etc.' These, then, are the definitions of the minimum requirements. So long as Form and Matter are in order, the sacrament has been performed correctly. Everything else may be subject to variation.

For The Christian Community, it would be unthinkable to single something out from the totality of the ritual as being particularly 'essential' and to take the view that this portion was quite especially important in the fulfilment of the sacrament. Nevertheless, the concepts of Form and Matter can profitably be applied to the understanding of sacraments, if, in the first instance, we approach the question from the same angle as does Rudolf Steiner. We saw above that in the process of knowing there exists a twofold division between the given (the pure perception) and what is to be created (the concept). In the rituals too, there is an element which is given and one which is to be created. The given consists of the substances, the acts and the words ('text'), everything about which the celebrant's personal views are not crucial. These are the 'Matter' of the sacrament. (According to Catholic theology, substance and act would also be matter, but the words would be form.) But in order that the rite may become a reality, it must be 'performed'. That is the creative participation of the human being, the Form of the rite, which corresponds to the role played by thinking in the act of knowing. Everything that Rudolf Steiner had to say about the process of knowing can be said in a corresponding way about the sacraments, and it can lead to a deeper understanding, not least of the significance of our human participation in the fulfilling of the sacraments, which in our age applies to priests and to the congregation).

Rudolf Steiner gave profound indications as to what the human being must contribute if the ritual is to be a reality. He turns first to the pre-Christian mysteries, because the initiates in antiquity had to anticipate the future—that was the purpose of their initiation, that was how they were able to guide spiritual development forward. In his book Christianity as Mystical Fact (1902), he repeatedly speaks of how the sensibilities and feelings of the pupils of the mysteries must undergo a change in order that a higher world may become a reality. And then everything depends upon the mood :

> *The important point for the mystic is first of all the frame of mind in which he approaches that which he experiences as the highest, the most exalted, as that which gives the answers to the riddles of existence…a divine Being approaches you, say! It is either nothing or everything. It is nothing if you meet it in the frame of mind in which you approach everyday matters. It is everything if you have prepared yourself for it and are attuned to it.*

The theme of transformation and renewal of the relevant sensibilities, feelings and moods permeates the whole of anthroposophy. Only in this way does human consciousness prepare itself for the higher worlds. Everything that is communicated by anthroposophy from the supersensible world is only of significance for the higher development of the human being if it is transformed into feelings and ways

of thinking which are not based upon the world of the senses. 'Meditation provides us with the technique, as it were, for our esoteric life. This consists in letting thoughts as it were work upon us, and through them awaken feelings and moods which have not been derived from the physical plane'. And so we understand when it is said that a celebrant also must have developed a certain disposition and certain feelings in preparation if the ritual act is to be a reality. 'This state of mind and these feelings you must bring to the ritual act; only then does what takes place become what it should be'. The same applies, similarly, to the individual person in the congregation, for whom, too, the reality of the ritual is linked to his inner activity, his 'state of mind', his 'feelings'. The fact that for modern human beings such feelings and states of mind no longer come about 'of themselves', means that a Church appropriate for our time is required also to address the human being's need for knowledge, so as to develop a basis upon which a new life of thoughts and feelings can be built. This is the sphere of the ritual which is not given, but which—like the thoughts in the process of knowing—must be actively brought forth and 'added'. In the Aristotelian conception, as employed here by Rudolf Steiner, this is the 'Form' of the ritual, and only through the form does that which takes place in rituals and rites 'become what it should be'.

This means that we here have an entirely new situation for the rituals. In the first period of Christianity, in the epoch that extends into modern times—in anthroposophical terminology it is the fourth post-atlantean epoch—the Word still had a different standing from that of today. The same applies to thinking, the 'management' of which gradually passed from the Spirits of Form to the Spirits of Personality, with the result that it could no longer be 'given' from outside if it was to be in tune with the Zeitgeist; rather, it must now be 'produced' within by human beings themselves. Correspondingly, the same holds good for the Word, especially the ritual word. In the past, it still worked 'by itself', almost magically, and thus it could be the actual shaping factor, i.e. Form: 'When the word supplements the element, the sacrament comes into being.' (Augustine: Accedit verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum.) In our times, the Spirits of Personality must be active in the word; thereby language becomes more 'personal'. By itself alone it no longer works in a shaping, formative way and therefore it now belongs to the category matter. Now, we have no need—unlike the Catholic Church in Florence in 1439—to investigate the sacraments one by one with a view to determining where Form and Matter is to be found in each case, for what has already been described above applies equally to all the sacraments in The Christian Community. If we adopt Rudolf Steiner's usage of the Aristotelian concepts form and matter, then in all the sacraments of The Christian Community the outer substance (insofar as any is required for a particular sacrament), the act and the word ('text') are matter. But what has to be supplied by the human being now—viz. feelings and inner attitudes arising from insight—is quite new: this is form. In this way, sacraments can be characterized as rituals, as rites, with the concepts Form and Matter; as we have seen, this is true also of the sacraments of The Christian Community. This is what Innocent III called sacramentum tantum.

The 'thing' (Augustine: res) of the sacrament is, however, something different. As ritual, symbolic act, the outer sacrament points to the res and calls it into being. In scholasticism it was called 'grace'. What is meant? Imagine a girl is baptized—let us call her Claire. The act of baptism (sacramentum tantum) is performed. What is the effect? Is it temporary, passing? Is it permanent and objective? How can one tell? Later on, will a teacher be able to distinguish between the children who are baptized and those who are not? Can one know from Claire's behaviour that she has been baptized? And if not: has the baptism then actually had any effect at all?

Translated by Jon Madsen

1 Hugo von St. Cher, ca. 1190-1263, important theologian; in 1226 he became a Dominican in Paris, and in 1244 was appointed Cardinal.
2 Johannes Duns Scotus, Doctor Subtilis, (ca. 1270-1308), is regarded as the most acute thinker of Scholasticism. Born in Scotland, he became a Franciscan and studied at Oxford. After a time teaching in Paris, he returned to England. In 1308 he was called to Cologne and died that same year.
3 p.24, 1972 English Edition

Further Thoughts on Evil

Megan Collins

A recent issue of this magazine was entitled '…wars and the rumour of wars…', reminding us of the 'Little Apocalypse' that we contemplate each year at Advent. There, a number of contributors offered quite distinct perspectives on our warring world. The pieces also hinted at the inner challenges we each face if we dare to look at how these outer conflicts might be reflected within our own being. I would like to push some of the arguments a bit further and ask how some manifestations of evil might be seen as residing within me, being as real there as anywhere else. But to do this I'd like to discuss some other recent arguments 'out there' in the wider world, and see how bringing these to bear on myself or my fellow-humans might bring us further insight.

The New York Review of Books of Feb. 14, 2008 includes a piece by Tony Judt entitled 'The "Problem of Evil" in Postwar Europe'. Judt is director of the Remarque Institute at New York University, whose brief since its inception in 1995 has been to support and promote the study and discussion of Europe and 'to encourage and facilitate communication between Americans and Europeans.' His article was adapted from a lecture given in Germany when he received the 2007 Hannah Arendt prize.

Judt addresses very interestingly the problem of evil via a discussion of the 'reception' of the event of the Holocaust in various parts of the world. He points out that for quite some years—not only when the horrors of Auschwitz and the other camps were unfolding—the rest of the world didn't really want to know about it.

Speaking of the silence and forgetting that prevailed for a time, Judt invokes Hannah Arendt's analysis of the ba-

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nalisation of evil: 'If we wish to grasp the true significance of evil […] then we must remember that what is truly awful about the destruction of the Jews is not that it mattered so much but that it mattered so little.'

Tony Judt himself grew up Jewish in England and observes that when he went to Cambridge in 1966 to study modern history there was—in the presentation of Vichy France—almost no mention of Jews or anti-Semitism. Even though members of his own family had been killed in the camps, at the time of his initial university studies 'the silence seemed quite normal.'

But the representation of the Holocaust has become problematic again in our time in the opposite way: it has become a kind of universal referent that we encounter everywhere. Judt describes how the Holocaust now suffers from the 'banality of overuse', which 'numb[s] our audience and render[s] them immune to the evil we are describing.'

> *… If history is to do its proper job […] it is best left alone. When we ransack the past for political profit—selecting the bits that serve our purposes and recruiting history to teach opportunistic moral lessons—we get bad morality and bad history.*

I would like to link Judt's discussion here with the reception at Columbia University in New York of the president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, in September 2007. Even a brief chronicle of this event will demonstrate the truth of some of Judt's observations, and show why we should truly be concerned by what has become of the event of the Holocaust in our wider contemporary consciousness and 'languaging' of the world.

Judt points out that modern secular society has long been uncomfortable

> *with the idea of 'evil.' […] But in recent years the word has crept slowly back into moral and even political discourse. However, now that the concept of 'evil' has re-entered our public language we don't know what to do with it. We have become confused.*

I am in danger of telescoping Judt's arguments (not, I think, distorting them) but I'll move directly to the concern he raises around

> *the risk we run when we invest all our emotional and moral energies into just one problem, however serious. The question is not whether terrorism exists: of course it exists. […] The question is what other evils we shall neglect—or create—by focusing exclusively upon a single enemy and using it to justify a hundred lesser crimes of our own.*
>
> *The same point applies to our contemporary fascination with the problem of anti-Semitism and our insistence upon its unique importance. […] But anti-Semitism, like terrorism, is not the only evil in the world and must not be an excuse to ignore other crimes and other suffering.*

So what happened late last year when President Ahmadinejad was invited to speak at Columbia? In news reports at the time, it sounded as though the president of the university had begun by criticising and even condemning Mr. Ahmadinejad before he even spoke. This was quite outside my experience of the usual courtesies accorded to guest speakers in the university context. I wondered whether Columbia saw itself as representing the USA as a whole, and needing to 'stand against' this

man whom US policymakers have evidently decided is a representative of evil. But only recently did I look up (on the web) a transcript of what was said.

Here are some of the comments made by the President of Columbia, Lee Bollinger, as he welcomes their guest:

> *'It is a critical premise of freedom of speech that we do not honor the dishonorable when we open the public forum to their voices.' '[T]his event has nothing whatsoever to do with any 'rights' of the speaker but only with our rights to listen and speak. We do it for ourselves.'*

Speaking, he says,

> *'[i]n the great tradition of openness that has defined this nation for many decades now' he observes that it is important 'to have the intellectual and emotional courage to confront the mind of evil'.... Finally, and anticipating Mr. Ahmadinejad's responses to questions he will be asked, his host says: 'I do expect you to exhibit the fanatical mind-set that characterizes so much of what you say and do.'*

How does the President of Iran, via a translator, reply to this remarkable introduction?

Firstly, and understandably, he objects to Bollinger's attempt to 'provide vaccination of some sort' to the assembled students and faculty, and observes that 'there were many insults and claims that were incorrect, regretfully.'

But he doesn't dwell on being personally offended, and opens the discussion into a wider realm which links the study of science with the domain of spirit: 'Science is a divine gift and the heart is where it resides.' Ahmadinejad presents himself as a university teacher of science, and observes that the true practice of science cannot take place independently of purity of spirit. He objects that 'in today's world, bullying powers are misusing many scholars and scientists in different fields.' These same powers create 'non-existent enemies' and 'try to control all in the name of combating insecurity and terrorism.'

Ahmadinejad eventually takes questions from the audience (which have been presubmitted and chosen by a moderator).

'The first question is: Do you or your government seek the destruction of Israel as a Jewish state?'

Replies Ahmadinejad: 'We love all nations. We are friends with the Jewish people'... He then speaks of 'our proposal to the Palestinian plight'.

The moderator insists on 'a clearer answer' to his original question, 'And I think you could answer that question with a single word, either yes or no.' Ahmadinejad's reply is interesting: 'You asked the question, and then you want the answer the way you want to hear it….'

I bring this example to show that there is something deeply amiss in our world when an institution such as Columbia sees fit to demonise an international visitor so thoroughly even before allowing him to speak. Indeed, and perhaps unfortunately, Mr. Ahmadinejad seems to take a certain pleasure in provoking his foreign audiences, particularly Israel and the U.S.A. But in the December issue of *Perspectives* Hans-Werner Schroeder reminds us that after World War I

> *Muslim self-esteem suffered a heavy setback when the Ottoman Empire was defeated and split up among the leading European powers. The national pride and honour of the Arabs and other Islamic nations were deeply hurt.*

We in the West can hardly imagine just how deep this hurt was.

I wonder whether Ahmadinejad's anger—even when seemingly irrational and clearly meant to goad—is not also a symptom, representing many in his part of the world who might need to raise their voices against the variety of American intrusions into that world. This is not to excuse him; it is to ask: what does the phenomenon of his anger mean? And do we in the West have the luxury of merely reacting to that phenomenon with our own anger or do we have some responsibility to engage with what it represents? If so, where and how can we do this?

Judt concludes his analysis with a question:

'How […] can we ensure that the problem of evil remains the fundamental question for intellectual life, and not just in Europe?'

I find that I want to challenge this choice, that I don't accept the 'necessity' of keeping evil at the centre of our focus in this intellectual way. Why not? Well, maybe it closes down other possibilities. Judt speaks as though focusing on the problem of evil might be some kind of inoculation against it. But is this true? Are there not quite other ways now available to us for addressing this problem, which does quite rightly belong to the human sphere and has also historically proved to be so intractable? Maybe it is an intrinsic part of who we are, at least since the time described in Genesis when we became as gods, knowing good and evil (Ch.3:22).

So how might we address the 'problem of evil' differently? Here are some of the comments made by other contributors to the December issue of Perspectives.

Says Manfred van Doorn, speaking in the guise of Michael:

The only way that one can transcend the war between people is to transfer that war to the heart of each individual. The struggle with evil then becomes an internal conflict.

Radically, he insists that we must develop the 'courage to allow evil a place in [our] being'.

Michael Jones reports that '[h]istory lessons told me that war was the driving force of human development', but he found himself asking in reply: 'could the whole of civilisation take on another direction and war be no more?' The New Jerusalem is for him

already present as a reality of hope, which lets flow forces into the present which can help heal the Beast. For this to take place we have to listen to and understand more what lives in the human soul and learn to change inwardly in the way we react to what we think of as evil and would like to be rid of.

Michael Tapp brings some helpful observations while reviewing Mark Juergensmeyer's book *Terror in the Mind of God.* Juergensmeyer points out the dangers inherent in taking warfare between cultures (and especially opposing religious cultures) to the level of cosmic war.

Religious concepts of cosmic war […] are ultimately beyond historical control, even though they are identified with this-worldly struggles. … The satanic enemy cannot be transformed; it can only be destroyed!

The satanisation of one's enemies is clearly a very profound, and also at present a widespread problem. Michael Tapp shows us, however, that the typical

arguments (of either side) tend to locate the battle in the wrong place. Yes, 'there is a truth behind the fact of cosmic war'. But the way this war is normally presented is as 'a battle between two shadows', one 'good', the other 'evil'. Tapp helpfully reminds us that 'the reality is a trinity: Christ holding the balance between Lucifer and Ahriman.'

But the cosmic war, this 'battle for the human spirit', is also within each one of us. We don't often dare to hint at this, for it tends in the direction of implying that there might be a particle of evil within me—residing there quite happily. Maybe, even, there's a dose in you as well… But if we dare to visit this place—traditionally thought of as 'dark', even if Lucifer is one of its denizens—what can we do with what we find there?

I'd like to say that the Act of Consecration of Man gives us a 'way in' to this old realm that has been with us for so long. But because at the centre of the Act of Consecration of Man stands the gift of the Christ being, of what he brought, it also holds for us the way back 'out'. So it is a place where we can learn to work—with the help of the Christ—to hold the inner balance in ourselves.

But how do we, as individuals and as communities, learn to do this?

I write this in the time of Lent (or Passiontide), feeling the 'squeeze' of what is not yet, of what I am not yet ('Mournful awaiting is the part of thy consciousness.'). So I wait—actively I hope—for the time when an inner turning might occur, an inner shift to more reliable perceptions of what is.

I begin to feel (after ten years of regular attendance) that the Act of Consecration can form us gradually for the work of love. And I want to ask: if we are able to transmute evil inwardly, over time, can that transformation have a more or less direct effect on the outer world also? Can its complexion too take on something from what I am learning?

I want to say that we don't need to be fixated on evil, fix it with our intellectual attention. The dark will always be there, while we live human-ly. But can I transmute the bit of evil in me into something else? Then I needn't put it 'out there'—making a bogey of someone else—any longer.

At Easter, and again at St. Johnstide, we are invited to 'turn' inwardly. What is this turning really about?

On Easter day Mary Magdalene is at the tomb (John 20), weeping because the body

Editorial note

The editors are sad to announce that both Revd. Peter Allan and Revd. Michael Tapp have had to withdraw from the editorial group of Perspectives, for reasons of health and strength.

We would like to express our thanks to them both for their work and support in recent years. In particular their enthusiasm for the journal was a source of strength, as well as their great knowledge of theological and religious issues and a keen interest in social and world events.

Our warmest wishes go to Michael and Peter, whom we will surely continue to call on for ideas and advice.

of Jesus is no longer there. She weeps 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.' Then she turns her physical body around: 'she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.'

He speaks to her, and she mistakes him for the gardener. But then 'Jesus saith unto her, Mary.' What happens then? 'She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni'…

The other year a few of us in my Community had a 'eureka!' moment when we were preparing to sing a text based on this passage and suddenly noticed this second 'turning'. Somehow Mary turns herself inwardly in such a way that she can see or recognise the risen Christ, who was perhaps not otherwise overtly visible to all…

What then does St. John's add to this story? The theme is 'metanoia' ('beyond our usual thinking') and the invitation is to change our heart and mind. John the Baptist preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Luke 3). What is 'the baptism of repentance'? John invites us to 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.' Does this mean (or hint) that I can baptise myself with the gesture of repentance by finding an inner 'turning' of the kind Mary discovered, making straighter the path the Christ being might take into my soul, there to influence my forces of thinking, feeling, willing…?

As we live through these festivals, they can illumine for us this inward gesture of turning, again and yet again, back towards the divine. This is not a project of the intellect, but an engagement of my whole being in a possibility that was not there before the coming of Christ. And the Act of Consecration of Man is a place where the divine takes us gently by the hand and invites us forward into the genuinely new.

Review

The Biology of Transcendence—A Blueprint for the Human Spirit
Joseph Chilton Pearce
Park Street Press, 2004,
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Review by Kevin Street

Pity would be no more,
If we did not make somebody Poor:
And Mercy no more could be,
If all were as happy as we;

So writes William Blake and his harsh dismissal of charity has long bothered me. Having read *The Biology of Transcendence* by Joseph Chilton Pearce, I can now get a glimmering as to the truth behind Blake's assertion, and realize that even when we 'do good', it is so often to bring the victims into a mainstream of culture that by its very nature replicates the conditions that create poverty and suffering in the first place. On this basis, the great empowerment given to the trade union movement by the Methodist Church, and the noble charity carried out by The Salvation Army are but links in a chain that ultimately binds us to a cultural model that has done little to carry us forward to the next stage of our evolution.

Pearce lays down his challenge in the opening paragraph of his book:

Why, with a history so rich in noble ideals and lofty philosophies that

reach for the transcendent, do we exhibit such abominable behaviours? Our violence toward ourselves and the planet is an issue that overshadows and makes a mockery of our high aspir ations. (Page 1)

He proceeds to chart in his book a view of human development that embraces whole scale criticism of the Christian Church, an equally vehement endorsement of Jesus, detailed and technical explanations of cutting edge neuro-cardiology and brain development, and a plea for the return to the sanctity of childbirth and nurturing. In this process we are urged to rediscover the need to play, and to challenge practically everything that is accepted as the cultural 'norm.'

The first section of the book deals with brain development, and opens up the notion of the five part brain—the familiar triune brain of reptilian, old mammalian and human brains (known also as R, limbic and neo-cortex) are expanded to include the frontal lobes and the heart/brain interface. Pearce categorises this further by references to the forebrain (our highest and latest stage of brain evolution—and the most fragile) and the hindbrain ('R' or Reptilian), that part of our being connected most with basic survival, and associated violence.

It has not always been thus—historical research has revealed a past civilization that lived in peaceful harmony, had no weapons and an extremely well developed social infrastructure. They were able to move and manipulate great stones into structures, with each stone weighing 1,000 tons, requiring the power of 40,000 adults to move them. A great disaster—probably natural—overcame this race, who almost certainly used their forebrains in a way that has not yet been equalled. The result has been successive races building a culture on fear, relying on the hindbrain to build bigger and better barriers against all that could wipe 'us'—our tribe—out. It is shown that the nature of the brain determines the nature of the culture of which it is part, and that one reinforces the other.

The three main parts of the brain are basically designed to work in harmony, and to lead to evolutionary progression, but when that integration fails 'our mind is a house divided against itself, our behaviour a paradoxical civil war—and we become our own worst enemy.' (page 23) We can hear an echo of Shakespeare in all this—of Friar Lawrence's wisdom concerning the nature of plants, and the 'canker, death' destroying the plant if its essential qualities are not held in balance. As it took the love sacrifice of Romeo and Juliet to heal the warring family factions, so Pearce looks to his 'great model' to bring about healing on a cosmic scale—'The evolution of a species was rekindled by that cross.' (page 222)

This division is identified by Pearce as originating in the split between our brain with its intellect, and our heart with its intelligence. The two need to work in harmony—in another land, we need both the shepherds and the wise men to understand the true nature of Christ. Pearce spends considerable time tracing the impact of the intellect and its resultant 'enculturation' of the human race, as opposed to the impact intelligence has when it is allowed to bring about open-ended socialization.

Historically, our quest for transcendence has seen humans projecting a wish for something 'out there', but the true key is to look to ourselves—to look within and rediscover what can happen when heart and brain come into entrainment. The whole science of what is currently known as HeartMath forms a major part of Pearce's argument, and the latest research and facts concerning the key function of the heart in our emotional well being is detailed. It is now known that the heart operates on the brain, and when heart rate variability

is peaking at 0.5 hz, a remarkable physiological change comes over the human being. There is a reduction in the secretion of cortisol, and increases in the production of DHEA and oxytocine. Cortisol is the result of an over production of adrenaline, and effectively shuts down access to higher thinking skills (the neo-cortex), pushing back to the hindbrain for basic, often violent, survival. In excess, cortisol attacks joints and muscles, leading to aches and pains, and reduces calcium, with the increasing risk of osteoporosis. On the other hand, DHEA is associated with a revitalised immune and anti-aging regime, whilst oxytocine, the only hormone to be secreted directly from the heart, is associated with feelings of appreciation, well being and —yes—love.

This is where 'biology' and 'transcendence' are brought into juxta-position, for it is Pearce's challenging hypothesis that we have within us the means to achieve the promised Kingdom of God, with little extra intervention required. In his description of the Malayan Senoi people, Pearce claims—'the kingdom to which Jesus refers in his sermon is our "genetic home, our true and natural state, and that it existed among the Senoi because it was not usurped by culture.' (page 257)

There is a relatively simple way in which individuals can achieve a state of 'heart coherence', a way of releasing this 'inner kingdom', following a regime of measured breathing and creative visualisation—and so, it has to be argued, what are we waiting for?

We are, bluntly, waiting for our culture to rid itself of the powerful thought fields that were in themselves responsible for the crucifixion, and that have sought to subvert our evolution ever since. Chapter Four develops the complex notion of wave frequencies and neurons, drawing on the work of Mae Wan Ho, a reader in biology at the Open University, who observes:

> *The visible body just happens to be where the wave function of the organism is most dense. Invisible quantum waves are spreading out from each of us and permeating into all other organisms. At the same time, each of us has the waves of every other organism entangled within our own make-up. … We are participants in the creation drama that is constantly unfolding. We are constantly co-creating and re-creating ourselves and other organisms in the universe, making our dreams come true, and realizing our potentials and ideals.* (quoted by Pearce, page 75)

Our thoughts are a part of this, with their infinite power –'As Rudolf Steiner and poet–philosopher Goethe pointed out, the human mind, as a field effect is unbounded.' (page 76) In a more poetic vein are the words of Thomas Traherne:

> *All wisdom in a thought doth shine*
> *By thoughts alone are we made divine.*

However, there has to be a dynamic between the field 'out there', and the neural pathways of the brain—the analogy is drawn between the need for a radio receiver to translate radio waves into a sound we can hear. Pearce expands this to explain how a negative culture, fuelled by negative thoughts, becomes self perpetuating when it is opposed by negative thoughts projected onto it by people who have not effectively 'worked on themselves'. There needs to be a much more fundamental shift of thinking before the power of our existing culture is challenged, and we can transcend into the kingdom.

Underpinning this shift is the science and physiology of HeartMath, but Pearce lays out an exciting and detailed manifesto for other elements that will help us move towards our 'genetic home'.

Fundamental is the need to challenge practically everything that is connected to

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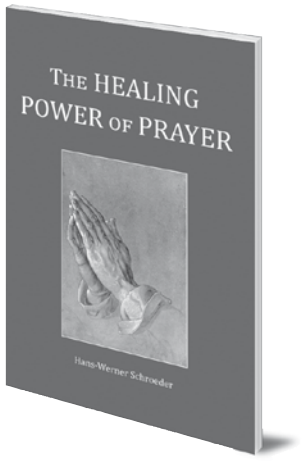

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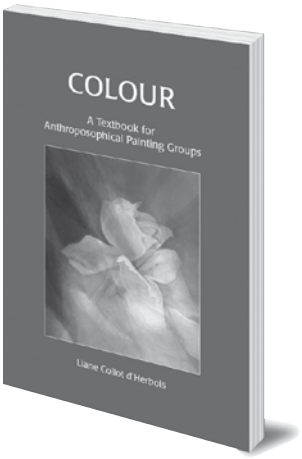

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Liane Collot d'Herbois was born in 1907 in Cornwall. She studied painting in Birmingham and London. After encountering Rudolf Steiner's ideas, which were an important stimulus for her artistic and therapeutic work, she went on with Dr Ita Wegman to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

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the way we regard childhood, upbringing and education. This is part of the challenge that has to be mounted against 'culture'. Plato's injunction 'Give me a new mother, and I'll give you a new world' is quoted, allied to a call for women to regain primacy in the world of conception, pregnancy and childcare, as resurrected Eves who provide a model of nurture and protection, not 'superman in a bra'. The male has a role in this—it is the additional task of the father to provide safety and security.

Instead, following a cultural imperative that is driven by the hindbrain, which feels that we can only survive if we are regulated and controlled by rules, childhood is marked by judgement. The caregiver, to whom the toddler has built a strong attachment, becomes the stern critic, and as the child follows its natural impulse to interact with the world, is met with 'Don't touch!' Confusion and contradiction follows, as the heart shifts our neural, hormonal and electromagnetic systems from relational to defensive. Already, the little hindbrain is receiving an unhealthy boost to its development, as opposed to what follows when the heart is massaged by love and acceptance. It is the interaction between child and mother that has now been shown to have the most important effect on prefrontal lobe development. Most of the shaming that takes place is based not so much on what is necessary for the child's own good, but what, through enculturation, parents perceive their own social image to be, and how that might be tarnished if they don't conform with society's expectations. Using models that owe much to the conception of childhood espoused by the Waldorf system, Pearce pleads:

> *Make nurturing, care, love and a buoyant, happy child the entire success in parenting. Let parents be known 'by their fruits' that give later peace., not violence.* (page 147)

Nothing less will do in an age that can now scientifically verify the fact that

> *…our present knowledge of brain-heart interaction, conception, pregnancy, childbirth, and child development—could bring about the most immediate and dramatic revolution in our history.* (page 233)

However, because of the sheer size and power of our culture, and its monolithic drive to make us all conform to the model of defensive fear, Pearce believes that such change can only come about now through the tireless working of individuals on their own inner development, rather than challenging existing wrongs by instituting cultural mechanisms that will soon replicate the very beast they are trying to overthrow. The end of Animal Farm is recalled, where the bewildered and betrayed farm animals can no longer tell the difference between their former human oppressors and the new revolutionary leaders, the pigs.

One sure way is for us to rediscover the power of true play. Whilst this is necessary for healthy child development, long beyond the time limits imposed by a culture that it is now time for the child to 'grow up', and to start 'proper learning', Pearce's direct experiences led him to a startling conclusion:

> *I knew that play was the whole reason for and essence of life—and not just for children, but for all God's children, whatever their age.* (page 181)

Pearce describes another important way for human beings to work on freeing themselves from negative enculturation in their quest for true transcendence. This , is to hear with new ears the wisdom of Jesus. One of Pearce's most bitter chapters is 'The Great Accusation' (Chapter 8), in which he chronicles the descent of the heart wisdom of Jesus into the cultural leviathan he identifies as the established church, mediated to us in its early stages by a Paul on

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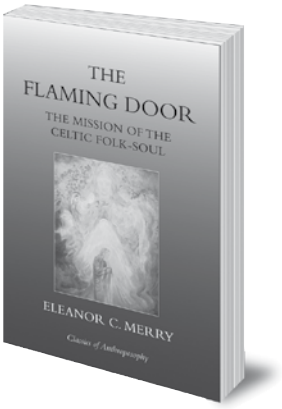
Eleanor C. Merry was a poet, artist, musician and anthroposophist with a strong Celtic impulse and a life-long interest in esoteric wisdom. Born in Eton, UK in 1873, she studied in Vienna and met Rudolf Steiner in 1922 after becoming interested in his teachings. She went on to organise Summer Schools at which Steiner gave important lectures, and she was secretary for the World Conference on Spiritual Science in London in 1928. She died in 1956.



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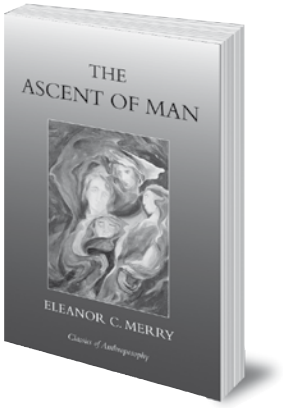

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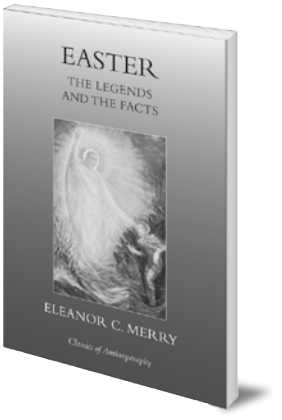

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whom Pearce heaps utter opprobrium. (As a counter to some of this, however, see Peter Howe's article in the last edition of Perspectives) He maintains that

> *religion …has been a disaster for humankind's relationship with God. …What if only the love of God and our indissoluble union with him, as manifested in Jesus, had been broadcast to all nations without the interference of a false mythology and the concepts of sin and guilt? …We don't need church under any brand name, with its accusation of sin and selling redemption, its huge bank accounts and real estate, lawyers and lobbyists, political games and public relations, radio and television stations.'* (pages 175/6)

There are immediate tilts here at American practice, and we might like to think ourselves immune from his barbs. The words of our Creed almost echo much of what Pearce believes to be the true nature of Jesus, who is …not the property of any institution or philosophy…not bound by religion's traditions' (page 204) However, before we neatly excuse ourselves and sidestep Pearce's invective, we should take time to examine all that we do, and take time to look long and hard at all that science now tells us about the heart/brain interface, and the development of the frontal lobes of the neo-cortex. Is a mirror being held up to us in any way when he writes :

> *Effective action is personal, not social or cultural. The minute our focus shifts to changing the behaviour of society or culture, or any other person, we are projecting out and away from ourselves the solution of the way and moving towards tyranny. Two or three gathered in Jesus' name, for instance, is probably about maximum. More than that and someone begins to take charge, the cultural demonic sneaks back in, and we are soon at each other's throats, business as usual.'* (page 205/6)

Pearce maintains to the very end that we are co-creators with God, and that our very evolution as a species 'was rekindled by that cross'. His demolition of 'culture' is uncomfortable, but his grasp of the true essence of heart wisdom and how this manifested in Jesus is undeniable. We can follow him through the facts of brain and heart science and realise that here is a way of looking at transcendence and spirituality that underpins much of our intuition as to what our quest is all about.

And—do we yet know it all? Has the book of revelation been closed by some arbitrary edict, or is there more that the Comforter has to share with those whose ears remain open? With such an open heart, we can join with Pearce in celebrating the potential of our future greatness expressed by Blake in the following :

> *How do you know but every bird*
> *that wings the airy way,*
> *is an immense world of delight*
> *closed to your senses five?*

There is a way to the 'immense world of delight', and we are now poised, more than ever before, to explore this vibrant and challenging path.

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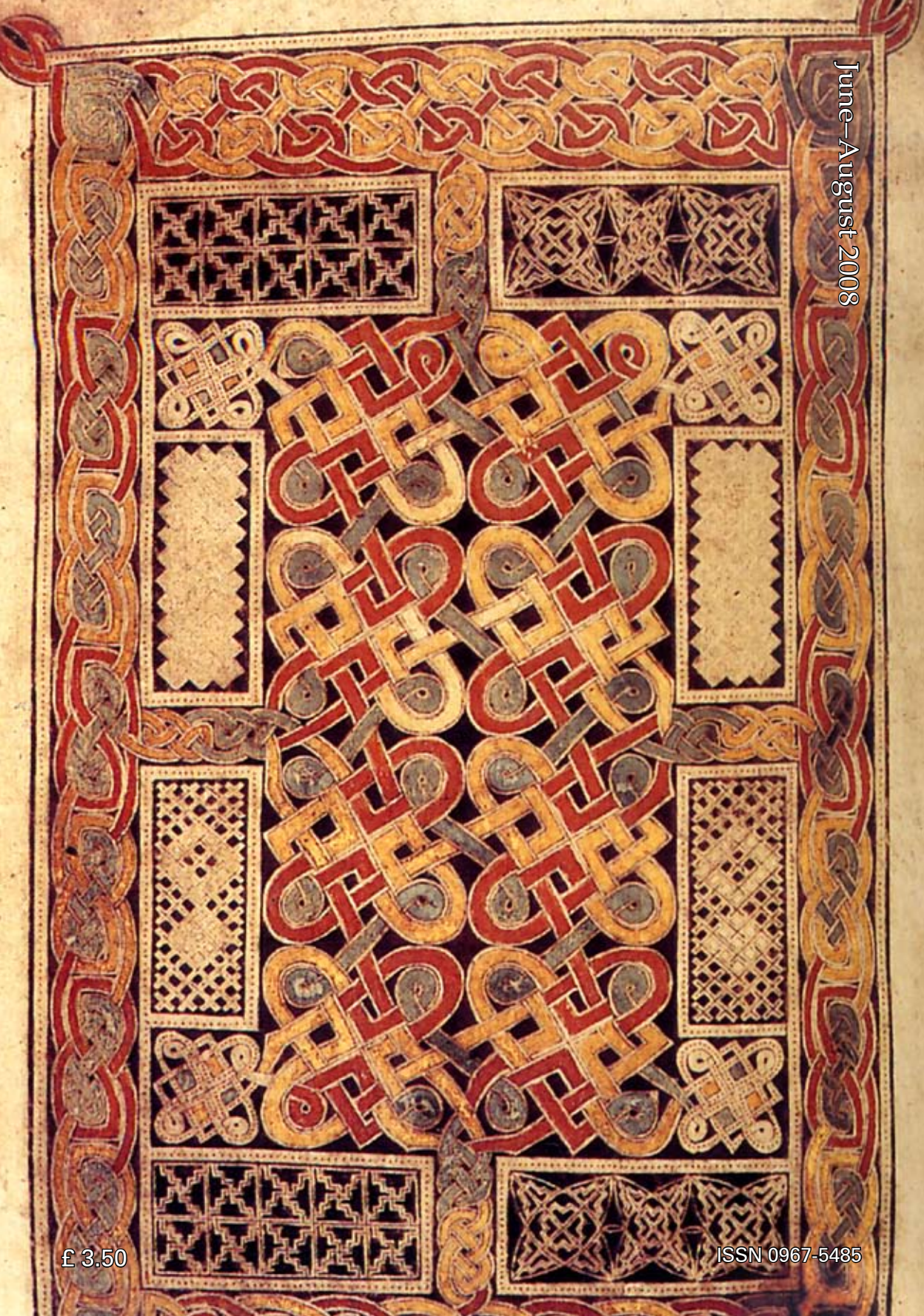

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