

The Christian Community

# Perspectives

March—May 2010

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by Gabriele Münter

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# Perspectives

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## **‘I must go over the ground again’**

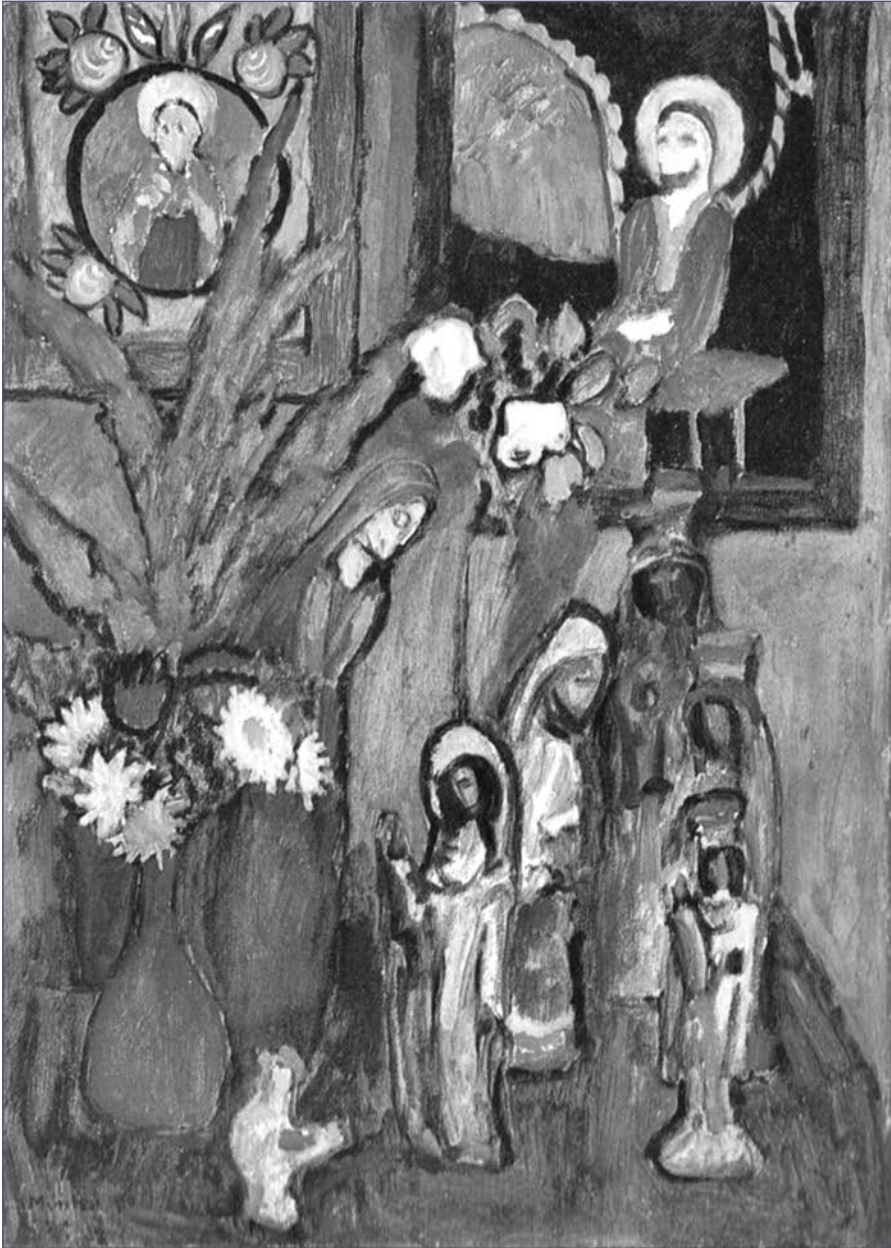
*A voice, perhaps not my own, answers within me. You will be going over the ground, it says, until that hour when agony’s clawed face softens into the smilingness of a young spring day... when it shall be the simplest thing to take in your hands the hands of companions ... in whose recaptured gentleness no sign of death’s astonishment or time’s separation shall be imaginable.*

Edmund Blunden, *Undertones of War*

These words of a veteran of the First World War bear witness to the process of grieving, and open a shaft of insight onto what it means to be Christian. We go over the ground of grieving and loss every year as we pass through the ‘week of weeks,’ the Holy Week. We go over the same ground every time we participate in the Act of Consecration of Man, which has at its heart the celebration of new life from brokenness and death. The more deeply we allow ourselves to feel the reality of this death and grief, the more real the Resurrection, Ascension and the outpouring of the Spirit can be.

TOM RAVETZ





*Stilleben mit Figürchen, Gabriele Münter*

# *May-day Ascension*

*Dead churches in spring came  
looking for me, cowslip-ringed,  
yew-shadowed Saxon stone-piles,  
blown by a wolf-breath wind,  
soaked inside by lily-scent  
and saved from the grave by donations.*

*Coat on in the sun I circled,  
then invaded the innards, the dead  
historical viscera, stained-glass-lit,  
a pelican pulpit pricking its breast,  
a tree-beamed ceiling damp and cobwebbed.*

*The past prolonged, the future left  
wanting for a way in: a baby obliged to prise open  
cervix and vagina, causing apocalyptic pangs:  
the fear of divinity being revealed.*

*Pierced feet upon clouds, brow up by the sun:  
bye-bye, He says; the Comforter will be by  
soon, will come;  
welcome Her in.*

*(What the Seraphim and co showed me,  
what was foreshadowed or had lamp-light  
thrown upon it up ahead: time to come,  
being to be, life to lead, life be led  
the way he would lead it, tread the path,  
the hard road, narrow dirt track, and  
no turning round or returning, no column-of-salt  
creating, go on.)*

IAIN CRANFORD HUNTER

# Ascension John 16: 24-33

Cynthia Hindes

Our heart is the very centre of our being. We can imagine our heart as the centre of a series of concentric circles, with all our dear ones in closer circles, our acquaintances further out. Our heart is the centre of our universe. Others circle our periphery.

Likewise we ourselves occupy the circles around other people's hearts. For of course they too have many circles around them. The human world is a labyrinth of interlocking circles, all connected by the famous six degrees of separation.<sup>1</sup> Today we celebrate Christ's Ascension. It is the day when He expanded His Being, His Heart, into the greatest and the broadest possible series of circles. The circles of His universe include all human beings, even those who have never heard of Him. Christ's connection to us actually involves zero degrees of separation, for he has expanded His being in ever widening circles to catch every human heart. The circles of His heart's love run through the very centre of each human heart. And that is where we will find Him: in the deepest, centremost core of our own being, in the innermost core of every human being we encounter.

We have scattered ourselves in division, in loneliness. We ourselves may have placed Christ on one of the circles further out of our own heart, as one of our 'acquaintances'. But He has connected us directly to His heart. He carries us in His love. So when He urges us to 'pray from the heart' (John 16:24), perhaps he is showing us the way to find Him. Perhaps when we enter our own deepest core and find Him there, find the One whose being is Love, we will recognize our true identity.

As we offer this Eucharistic meal, the words of the poet can inspire:

*The time will come  
when, with elation,  
you will greet yourself arriving  
at your own door, ....  
You will love again the stranger who was your self.  
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart  
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you  
all your life, whom you have ignored...  
Christ is urging us to join our hearts with His,  
so that we too can love the world as He does.<sup>2</sup>*

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1. Six degrees of separation (also referred to as the 'Human Web') refers to the idea that, if a person is one step away from each person they know and two steps away from each person who is known by one of the people they know, then everyone is at most six steps away from any other person on Earth. It was popularized by a play written by John Guare. (Wikipedia)
2. Derek Walcott, 'Love After Love', in *Collected Poems 1948–1984*, New York, Farrar Straus Giroux, 1986.

# *Maundy Thursday and Communion with Christ*

**Malcolm Allsop**

The blessing of the bread and wine and the sharing of them with the disciples as Christ's body and blood are the culmination of Maundy Thursday in Holy Week. When we try to imagine the soul-mood of Christ in these final hours and days of his ministry, a line from the Act of Consecration can be helpful. It follows on from the words of institution, just before the substances are raised for a second time. It is the prayer to the Father God that his 'spirit of grace' might work down onto our earth existence, as our offering works outwards, upwards towards the spirit-world. This prayer seems to encapsulate Christ's most central plea for the completion of his earthly working: that his offering of his own life might pave the way for all subsequent offerings made in his name and that it would be recognised and fructified by the consecrating touch of the Holy Spirit. Transubstantiation is the key to Easter; it opens the door for us to Christ's overcoming the death of matter. It is on the one hand, as stated above, the culmination of events leading up to Good Friday, but at the same time it belongs to the process which leads through Easter into the future. The bread and the wine, which had been brought onto the human stage by Melchisedek [FN: see Genesis 14:18 ff, Psalm 110:4, and Hebrews chapters 5, 6 and 7], find here the fulfilment of their intended task.

Christ's uniting fully with earthly substance enables us to unite with Him. Had the Last Supper not taken place we could at best have 'spirit communion' with his being, but not into the core of our of our physical life on earth. It is just this bringing together of spirit and matter which stands at the heart of Christ's deed. What He initiated is the key to a new stage of human development.

If we look more closely at the working of these central events of Holy Week in our lives today, it can bring us further to consider our relationship to the cycle of the year. For many people life always was, and still is, steered by time as dictated by the movements of the planets—the sun, the moon and the earth in particular; to live with, rather than against, the rhythms of day and night and of the seasons, can only be healthy. Already in pre-Christian times a religious quality developed in this cycle, with festivals growing around the high-points of the natural year. In the calendar

of the Celts, for example, it is interesting to see how, to this cycle of the year (which had a strong religious element) something further was added, that of the human biography. The four major festivals at Midsummer and at Midwinter, and the Spring and Autumn equinoxes were ascribed to the four life-phases of the man (youth, maturity, wisdom and death), with the four festivals which lie between (Imbolg in February, Beltane in May, Lammastide in August and Samhain in November) being ascribed to life-phases of the woman (virgin, bride, mother, wisdom/old age). This additional quality pointed to a growing recognition of aspects of human life and their mirroring in the cycle of the year.

As a civilization or people develops over time, dates are also added to their calendar which commemorate and celebrate events important for that particular culture: the birth or death dates of significant personalities, anniversaries of decisive events and so on. To an extent we can and do that with the life of Jesus—we commemorate his birth and death, as we might do those of other significant teachers and spiritual guides.

Christ's earthly biography, however, with the events of the Last Supper and the transubstantiation contained within it, brings a unique potential to the course of the year. To the rhythm of the year we can add the biography of Christ; we can introduce a spiritual-physical biography, not as dates of remembrance but as a living melody to the outer rhythm of the year, through its living in us, through our sharing in the transubstantiation and communion. By thus living Christ's biography—from the Baptism to the Resurrection and beyond, we contribute to a Christianising, a transforming of humanity within time.

There is another further step. It will be apparent that our living with the cycle of the year, the seasons, is already enhanced when a biographical element is included (as in the example of the Celtic tradition). Each year is truly new; something is added through our endeavour, our consciousness, which little by little brings us further, adding a linear quality to the cyclic nature of time. There is development, not only repetition.

Christ's biography highlights something uniquely human, which He placed as an archetype into human life on earth. Between any inbreathing and outbreathing, any growth and contraction, there is a moment of motionlessness. We see this in the cycle of the year, where the growth from Spring to Summer reaches its climax, pausing briefly before it contracts towards Autumn. Similarly such a moment can be observed in Midwinter before the growth forces of Spring make themselves felt. We see a

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similar moment in the swing of a pendulum, and in our breathing, particularly in one who is very ill; it can be a crucial moment whether the patient takes a new breath, whether the will is still there, or not.

Christ's biography presents this to us in the realm of the soul, as we move into Passiontide and towards Good Friday. How do we cope with the forces and pressures of life that come towards us? The effects and limitations of earthly circumstance can take the wind from our soul-sails, on occasions leaving us unable to move or act, as is existentially portrayed in the challenges that Christ faces in the Holy Week. What forces can the soul use to overcome this apparent powerlessness?

There is a humorous yet helpful picture for this seeming helplessness in the figure of a German officer, Baron v. Munchhausen who lived in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He would regale anyone who would listen with fantastic accounts of his adventures and brushes with death, most famously the occasion on which, sinking into a quagmire, he at the last moment just managed to save himself by pulling himself out by his own ponytail! Calling upon our own inner activity — pulling ourselves up by our inner ponytail — means that we connect ourselves to a higher instance. In moments of powerlessness, overcome by outer circumstance, the soul has the possibility to create out of apparent nothingness, by turning to the spirit. This gesture is essentially one of offering, offering ourselves up in a time of need, to receive a new impulse, a new direction.

All at once the words from the Act of Consecration come to mind again that were mentioned at the outset, words that might have been living in Christ at the turning point in his earthly existence:

May Thy spirit's power work down from heaven as grace, as my offering strives upward to heaven.

In the tension between these two poles—the soul's powerlessness in the face of outer circumstance and the inner turning to the spirit—we find the Christ.\* In overcoming this tension, this impasse, as Christ's biography becomes increasingly our own soul-path, one further motif from the Act of Consecration, at the end of the Communion, becomes clear: with the Communion we take in the one earthly substance which instead of weakening the soul strengthens it through its spiritualised nature. With the Communion we unite with Christ in such a way that we take Him into time, into our life-cycle, changing that which we offer in time into deeds of healing, of a timeless nature — the offering made in time becomes medicine that endures into future cycles of time.

\*see Rudolf Steiner's lecture 'How do I find the Christ?', Zürich, 16 October 1918

# Written Down I

*It was late summer. A battle went on upon a green hill, before a red dusk. The fighters were grey like ashes or granite and they had no eyes, nor places for eyes. Neither side could get the better of the other.*

*Stretching high up in the sky behind them was a tremendous bird formed from the colours of dusk. It craned its neck calling out, but could not be heard. It grew bigger and its colours richer, then quickly faded away and vanished as the sun went and night fell.*

*The battle carried on relentlessly, carrying the fighters down the hill and into a howe. They were like hundreds of thousands of boulders crashing together again and again, like featureless puppets made from boulders and pebbles, and none were hurt and none got weak. Their movements were like the workings of a clock: regular and dead. It was exhausting to watch.*

*At dawn the sunlight covered the land and there were huge plants like tulips everywhere, but not on the hill. A fountain of blood gushed up from the ground high into the air, between the sun and the plants, casting its shadow over the latter. The sky in the west where the bird had been was emerald green. The armies in the howe were hidden below the burgeoning plants, and they could not even be heard anymore.*

*The flowers opened, and a bird of fire or colour launched from the pollen of each one, all at once, and they sang out beautifully to heaven in devotion and reverence as they ascended to it. They vanished in the warm, dark, starry sky.*

*A beautiful mist the colours of the rainbow stood over the land and the flowers blossomed in this, and were transformed in it: their kernel was let loose from the earth. Everything that did not reach for the rainbowy mist grew greyer and greyer, and smaller and smaller, and hardened into stone, and senselessly turned and attacked its grey neighbour, until none of them noticed anything but their greyness and their rootless rage. It was exhausting to watch.*

*There was a pause, long or short, and then in the night a tremendous flock of birds came, each bird like a coloured flame and the whole shining intensely like a new sun. The earth was stone and metal.*

IAIN CRANFORD HUNTER

# Signs of the Coming Age

Aaron Mirkin

Are we a Movement for religious renewal or an Establishment for religious renewal? Movement keeps things going. Establishment keeps things as they are. Which is the more important?

Without established forms and structures things fall apart. Without living, moving processes things get stuck. The one clearly needs the other. We could also call it the need for balance between Form and Process.

In far distant times life on Earth was very definitely dominated by Movement and Process—both for the kingdoms of Nature and for the Human Being. The mineral world was not nearly as hard and formed as it is today and the same was true for the forms of all living beings on Earth. Even the way our bodies were formed outwardly could change dramatically in a short time. The rhythmic movement of sun and planets was still in flux, and the seasons were by no means yet fixed. In fact the very laws of Nature were not yet fixed. Instead, all Earthly life was penetrated and quickened by the weaving impulses of spirit beings, guiding the unfolding of the first creation.

Imagine what life would be like if the laws of gravity would be constantly changing or if some days were 25 hours long and others 23? Stable, earthly life as we know it today would be unthinkable and, above all, human freedom would be unthinkable. Coming to freedom required that first we had to come to ourselves; to come to stillness and separation from the spirit realms and the kingdoms of nature. That could only come about in a formed, 'finished' and predictable world. Process had gradually to give way to Form as an evolutionary necessity;—right into the world of social structures - as reflected, for example, in the laws of Moses and in the legal and administrative system of the Roman Empire. And there is no question that the momentum since then has been with Form right up to the present day. The wealth of cultural and social tradition and practice on Earth bears witness to this—or should one rather say—did bear witness to this up to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when suddenly something dramatic changed.

Suddenly the old traditions and practices seemed not to be wanted anymore; not to be appropriate anymore. As a result the whole of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen the radical demise of old so-

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cial and cultural forms world-wide through a great variety of means - war, natural disaster, cultural revolution... What is happening? Could it be that we have now had enough time to learn the rudiments of freedom—even if we're not quite there yet—and that the next steps towards a true freedom can now only be truly learned through a certain liberation from the forces of Form and Establishment? Perhaps. But let us look first at the response we see from mankind to the loss of the old forms. It seems to be twofold.

In the first case we see those who seem unable to bear the loss of Form and of the predictability of the old order and are now desperately seeking ways to create a new established order—a political and economic New World Order in the sense that George Bush Senior meant prior to the First Gulf war in Kuwait. This New World Order, however, ultimately leads towards a total, centralised regulation and control of life on Earth, and the loss of individual freedom. (One just needs to look into the realms of World trade, Health, Security, and Education for evidence of this.)

In the second case we see those who recognise the need to practice letting go of excessive Form and control and want to begin practising living with Movement and Process; learning to live with no outer security; with no-one to hold their hand and tell them if what they are doing is right or wrong. In other words those who want, on a certain level, to learn to die and become while they live. Yes, it is scary, and not without grave dangers too, for there is always a certain fear of anarchy and of society's becoming too loose and chaotic if the right inspiration to find ever-new forms is not sufficiently found.

Indeed we each have to determine our own response to the loss of the old forms. Nonetheless, on a larger scale, it seems clear that the general direction is wanting to change. First life on Earth moved from Process to Form under the lofty guidance of Spirit Beings. Now our challenge is to redress the balance in our present time by moving again towards Process, and by seeking harmony in the dynamic between Form and Process. In our time, however, this may not happen through lofty direction from 'above', and certainly also not through 'lofty' direction from one human being over another, but rather through the self-management of each one in responsible freedom. For above all else, human freedom may not be lost, especially for those who seek to introduce anew living Movement and Process into a society that has seemingly over-stepped the mark and is now seized with the obsession to master and control.

That is the one aspect of our time—the shift taking place in the social life. However, added to this there seems to be mounting evidence that the

kingdoms of Nature are shifting too; also wanting to redress the balance towards Process and Movement. As much as we need to stand accountable as mankind for our often wasteful lifestyle and thoughtless plunder of the Earth's resources, it nonetheless seems plausible in the light of the above picture that climate change and the increase in volcanic and tectonic activity of recent decades are not only a product of man's activity but also the first signs of the Earth's 'letting go' of old forms herself! - As though the whole Earth indeed were moving from a place of Form towards one of Process. Can we accept this as a possibility? This doesn't mean we shouldn't care about our impact on the environment—far from it—but at the same time we must ask if it is really reasonable to expect that the predictable 'status quo' and inherited Form in the realm of nature will and can always stay the way it has been in recent millenia.

If life on Earth is really going this way in both the spheres of the social life and that of Nature then perhaps it is indeed time to start practicing living with Process in our lives. The next question then arises: 'How?'

Maybe an example can help. Imagine you are a teacher in a class of children. You prepare as thoroughly as possible the subject matter and the form and structure of the lesson you want to give. You enter the class and discover that yesterday the children have already heard the same story you planned to tell them today, there is no chalk to be found anywhere, and the children are restless after a long day—what now? If you still insist on telling the story and don't draw a picture on the board you might well have discipline problems and spend the whole lesson having to play policeman, in which case the whole lesson is effectively lost and becomes instead a bad experience for all.

...Or... you can let go of your fixed idea of how the lesson was supposed to be and allow yourself to feel the sudden helplessness—and lo and behold—you suddenly remember a song which has a similar theme to the story you wanted to tell and you teach it to the children, and while you teach it, you spontaneously—much to your surprise—find yourself coming up with movements to go with the song and before you know it the whole class is with you and you are inspired to get them to sit down afterwards and each write a new verse for the song and then sing it from the front. You have kept to the subject of your lesson and the lesson still had Form, but this time you have formed it out of the living Process and out of where the children are and not out of your own fixed ideas of how it should have been, and the children have been genuinely enriched—and so have you.

Is it too far-fetched to suggest that the challenge that the teacher faces is no different from the challenge we face in the world today? - in managing



our daily lives—In coping with traffic jams and other disappointments, in exercising creative leadership in the greatest variety of settings? ... As the somewhat infamous ‘Gonzo’-journalist, Hunter S. Thomson said: ‘When the going gets weird, the weird turn pro.’ One might also say: ‘When life becomes unpredictable, those who learn how to live with unpredictability lead the way.’ Rather like the creative teacher in the example above!

Another possibly helpful example could be to look at an element in the life and work of the German Action Artist, Joseph Beuys (1921–1986). Between 1982 and 1987 he caused seven thousand oak trees to be planted in and around Kassel, Germany, and next to each oak, a pillar of basalt rock. This is what he had to say about it:

*The element of Movement must be strongly emphasized. How one achieves that is another question. The true principle behind Action Art is the element of movement that, if possible should go into all possible directions. I also think of the moment of movement when trees are planted. For a tree is a creature of time, a life-time creature, a time machine, moving next to a stiff form in each second. The tree stands next to the stone. The latter is asleep, but the being next to him changes, unfolds and moves with the wind and is frail and vulnerable with regard to higher influences. Above all, the element of movement is important. The form in which the personification of Christ manifests itself in our day is the element of movement itself. The person who is moving; his purely spiritual form ... exists in the same way that a man exists when he is dead (after he has died ed.).’*

Excerpt from ‘Beuys on Christ’—*Dialogue with Friedhelm Mennekes*, 1984, Pg 57

The oak is like the living *process* juxtaposed with the finished *form* of the ‘sleeping’ basalt rock, and the person who is truly moving makes himself frail and vulnerable like the new growth shoots on the tree; uncertain, and yet open and full of potential.

Or in the words of Laotse:

*Weakness is strong, strength is nothing. When the human being is born, he is weak and soft. When he dies he is strong and hard. When a tree begins to grow it is soft and delicate, and when it becomes dry and hard it dies. Hardness and strength are the companions of death. Weakness and gentleness announce new life. Therefore, will that which has grown hard never be victorious.*

Form alone can never be victorious...

Living with uncertainty is exactly that—uncertain. There was no certainty that the Resurrection would take place when Christ died on the cross.

What meaning would letting go and dying have if the ultimate creative outcome and Resurrection were certain? Would the teacher in the example above have found the inspiration for the 'new' lesson if he hadn't first let go completely and, if even just for moments, hadn't allowed himself to experience the absolute uncertainty of what would come next?

Yes, of course, we do need Forms; but these Forms need simultaneously to be balanced by and filled with Process, and thereby in every moment new, as we can experience in our Christian Community sacramental Forms; or we need Forms that are able at any moment to die, to be let go of, that they might make way for living Process to enter and give rise to the new - to the next new Forms that are needed.

We live in a time where the need to start learning to live with Process is just beginning—a kind of rehearsal for what is still to come. The laws of Nature and Society start to shift again after millennia of predictable and reliable stillness, but there is no need to panic and desperately seek a New World Order. For accompanying the modern times is also the wisdom of the spirit worlds drawing near again as in long distant times, but this time not like a parent, but like a brother and friend that respects human freedom, and it is there with inspiration and strength every time we learn to truly let go and open up to uncertainty.

As Beuys indicates in the quotation above, Christ manifests himself in the element of movement. We could also say that in those places where we learn to die in freedom He is the one who provides the power of new Movement, of new Becoming. (Again we could turn to our Sacraments for living examples of this)

Beuys also says further on in the previously quoted conversation:

*In the beginning was the Word. That is the very evolutionary principle that can only originate in man, that can break out of the person in a new way since the old creation has now been achieved. That is the reason for the crisis. Everything new taking place on earth must occur through man.* (ibid pg. 63/64)

Yes the old creation has come to an end and the world holds its breath, waiting to see the new creation that will arise through human deeds on Earth. These deeds will be fashioned not out of tradition or repetition ('We've always done it that way...'), but will be each time fresh and new—imbued with the pregnancy of true becoming—begetting new small worlds wherever we are in our work and human interactions, in our dealings with Earth substance—in the kitchen; in the class-room; before the altar! Indeed our sacraments are perhaps some of the only places where we can

so far today speak confidently of free human deeds giving rise to new creation—albeit small and tender, but growing ever-stronger—a supersensible new creation that—as Dr Rudolf Steiner put it to the new priesthood—‘...is more real than nature.’—and will not pass away when heaven and Earth pass away. In this sense we could also speak about the need for all human deed to ultimately become sacramental.

If we can begin to achieve this in even the smallest of ways, then the social and environmental challenges of our time will no longer be a cause for panic, but will show themselves far rather as an opportunity for the truly new to come into the world.

And so we can look at ourselves again and ask: ‘Are we a Movement or an Establishment for religious renewal?’ The answer is clear—We are certainly a Movement! - as far as our sacramental life is concerned. As far as the rest of our congregational life is concerned however, the answer would have to be—Well, it is up to each one of us to what degree the substance produced at the altar can ray out into our communities so that true Process can live there and inform the social, cultural and economic Forms we choose to work with. As the profound German poet Christian Morgenstern once said, ‘We stand not at the end, but at the beginning of Christianity.’ For sure!

# The Act of Consecration of Man and the twelve human senses IV

Hans Werner Schroeder

Rudolf Steiner speaks of how 'a sacramental ritual is an event for the senses'. When we receive communion all twelve senses are activated. This makes it the culmination of the whole event. Three new senses become active at this point in the service when the bread and wine are received. The substances are tasted and when the priest's finger touches the left cheek the senses of warmth and touch are active. The sense of ego as well as the sense of life participate too in such moments. This receiving of communion must not be seen as something taken for granted. It must not drift into something routine. It requires an intensive preparation and a sensitivity because our whole being is involved: spirit, soul and body.

One such preparation can be a Sacramental Consultation with a priest from time to time. This is a real sacrament for the ego and can strengthen us in our wrestling souls and help us grasp our destinies better. This goes beyond the confession of sins which in earlier times was central to this sacrament. The sacramental consultation addresses particularly our higher senses; ego, thought, speech and hearing and these are penetrated by the power of Christ. This in turn allows our lower senses which are bound to our physicality to be touched and permeated by Christ's working.

If one is unable to receive a sacramental consultation, then it is important to prepare oneself the evening before the service is important. One can reflect on the

essence and the working of communion by turning inwardly to Christ.

When we receive the peace blessing, we experience the warmth in the fingers that touch us. The warmth that is experienced allows one to feel something of the warmth living in the spiritual world. Rudolf Meyer, one of the founding priests, describes in an autobiographical sketch how he felt when touching the cup and the bread that these were no longer in his own hands. It was as if other hands were holding with him the cup and bread. Such an experience can help us to sense the mystery of being touched by the Christ himself.

In taking the communion our sense of taste is permeated by our devotion. The bread, the most everyday of any foodstuff, is now joined to the very substance. God-head bows down to us in the communion. The sense of smell too is active during these moments. It had earlier on been stimulated by the rising incense. Rudolf Steiner once said of this incense that it conveys something of the fragrance of the etheric world. In our everyday world we are assailed by a multitude of smells, from industry, from traffic, from tobacco, but there are also smells such as roses or the smell of a freshly cut pasture. A well prepared meal can also affect us and stimu-

*Hans Werner Schroeder is a retired priest of The Christian Community living in Stuttgart.*

late good feelings. Thus we can see that smells can work on us either positively or negatively. It is against this background that we can learn how the experience of incense in the ritual can be an essential one, leading deep into our unconscious realms.

We can now turn to the sense of life which is the least differentiated of the twelve. It enables us to perceive the varying conditions in our body, especially when something is not in good order. It tells us when we have slept badly or eaten or drunk too much. By means of this sense we can feel the whole of the inner realm of our physicality. However its influence goes beyond the purely physical. What, for example, the eye receives as colour impressions is taken up by the life sense like a shadow and becomes part of our soul experience. It acts in a similar way with sounds and smells. One can say: the livelier the life of all our senses is, the more the life sense itself is stimulated. Furthermore, our emotional life can be perceived by the life sense, eg. worries and anxiety. Norbert Glas in his book 'Dangers to the Senses and their Healing'<sup>1</sup> speaks of how the life sense has its organ in our hearts which can perceive all the finer forces at work in our organism. In his book on 'The Spirit of the Senses'<sup>2</sup> Ernst Lehrs shows how human beings breathe into their surroundings with their senses. The effect of a beautiful piece of countryside on us depends on how the life sense opens up to it. We can speak of the ritual as a spiritual landscape in which our senses are active. There are particular moments when the life sense is most active. One comes during the Transubstantiation when the priest silently makes the three crosses

over the bread and the wine. All the other senses are still in this moment, in which the mystery of the body and the blood of Christ touches the finer perceptions of our life sense all the more strongly. We can feel how this sense which is normally directed internally in our body, now perceives something of this most profound moment at the altar.

There is another moment of silence, namely when the priest takes the bread and wine on behalf of the congregation. Once again the other senses of those present have no activity. It is only the life sense which is stirred into action. We can say of this moment: the division between inner and the outer disappears. We become one with what takes place at the altar.

The final sense that we turn to is the so-called sense of ego. It gives us the ability to perceive the individuality of another person. The perception of this other person goes through many details drawn from the other senses; the words, the gestures, the bearing, the walk, the way a person acts and how they express their thoughts. I can penetrate all these phenomena and come to the realm where the true essence of that person manifests itself. Of course I can get caught up in the outer appearances and go no further but then I only get a vague image of that personality. Steiner points to these deeper aspects when he refers to religious rituals. 'The very essence of the spirit appears in the ritual and manifests to our senses.' In the ritual the divine ego of Christ emerges. Our ego experience is greatly intensified and our ego sense is deeply challenged.

We know from a conversation that Rudolf Steiner had with Friedrich Rittelmeyer before The Christian Community was



founded the astonishing fact that 'the presence of Christ can be brought about and it will be brought about.' When Rittelmeyer heard this he replied 'that is something tremendous' and Steiner simply said 'it goes without saying' (es ist das Selbstverständliche).

Only a little later on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1922 in Dornach the very first Act of consecration of Man was celebrated. Albert Steffen, who was also present, wrote in his journal: 'today the first Act of Consecration of Man took place at which the resurrected Christ was present... I can say that he was present because when the words about the bread and the wine were spoken I could see his resurrected body filled with light and life. This is the first time I have seen the being of Christ before me. His arms were outstretched and his head was bathed in light and I could experience him healing and sanctifying. He was there and is there. This certainty allows me to be a herald of his presence.' (written 16<sup>th</sup> September, 1922)

The words of Rudolf Steiner have been borne out and they become a reality every time the service is celebrated. 'Christ is present at the altar when the priest kneels and raises the bread and the wine and speaks the words from the original Last Supper.' This is another remark by Rudolf Steiner. Christ has no greater longing than to reveal himself to the people of today and in the future and to permeate them with his forces.

With the reappearance of Christ in our times, he makes a new step towards humanity. He unites himself more deeply with human events than he has done in the two thousand years of Christian history. Human suffering is increasing, the

abyss becomes darker and deeper, despair is growing. Christ does not stand distant from all this. He enters these realms and suffers, endures and bears this with the human beings. Yet he unfolds in all this darkness, in all these abysses, in all these death experiences, a greater power than ever before. Only a thin veil separates us from perceiving his closeness. This closeness creates new forms of ritual. That is why there is a renewal of rituals in our time. Christ shows himself in a new way in the Act of Consecration of Man. The original texts of the Mass have been completely renewed. For example it was originally said that the disciples were to be touched by the peace of Christ. Now we hear: 'I stand at peace with the world.' The peace that Christ rays back into the world is due to a power that has been wrested from death and evil.

Our own destiny, the future of our congregations, and the experience of our ritual in the future will depend on how much of the power of peace, this higher power of life of the Christ, can be carried into the world. This depends in turn on how far we can develop our sense of ego, through which we can experience Christ, in harmony with all the other senses that are engaged in the rituals.

*Text from  
Die Christengemeinschaft  
magazine, 1993, abridged and  
translated by Christopher Cooper.*

1. *Gefährdung und Heilung der Sinne*
2. *Vom Geist der Sinne. Zur Diätik des Wahrnehmens*

# Pastoral Points

## Preparing the one event that is certain!

Julian Sleigh

... and we can welcome it as possibly the most resplendent transition in our life: the unifying of the achievements of our earthly life with our personal Spirit. For the enrichment of this event there is the ongoing preparation through the religious life. The constant element is to cherish the awareness of the divine in our soul which comes through the words of the sacraments whereby 'Godhead is given again to Man.' 'I will not leave you desolate - alone and without Sun in your innermost being' is the promise of Christ.

Yet the passage towards death can be far from resplendent. The progress (progress?) into old age requires that the soul life avoids being caught up with the decline of the physical body, otherwise there is the danger that the person resigns to self-pity and despair. Self-esteem may give way to a feeling not only of weakness but of personal loss.

Two depressing words may scud around in the emotions 'I have become obsolete and redundant' giving rise to touchiness as in: 'The new team has taken over the organisation which I built up. The old ethos has gone. It is top-down in place of the team-work of my day. They have changed the logo, discarding the one which I inspired, and the notepaper has nothing of the style and dignity of our old one. It is all mission statements and organograms now. Not my scene any more. Obsolete and redundant sums up my life that used to be that of a leader and pioneer!'

A poem of Gerard Manley Hopkins comes to mind: 'The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo':

*... no, nothing can be done  
To keep at bay age and age's evils...  
So be beginning, be beginning to despair...  
Despair, despair, despair, despair.*

Then comes the Golden Echo:

*Spare!  
There is one, yes I have one  
(Hush there!)  
... Somewhere elsewhere there  
is ah well where! one  
... O then, weary then why should  
we tread? O why are we so,  
haggard at the heart, so care-  
coiled, care-killed, so fagged,  
so fashed, so coggled, so cumbered*

Our personal Spirit has been kept in the heavenly world:

*... Far with fonder a care  
(and we, we should have lost it)  
...Where kept?  
Yonder, yonder.*

So when the moment of death comes a wonderful reunion takes place! Resplendent!

Look forward not backwards! Clear the clutter, forgive, know that you are loved also in Heaven!

No way are you obsolete or redundant: those are part of the dross, not the fonder care that you receive from the higher being, the Spirit that is truly you!

## Ormond St John Edwards

8<sup>th</sup> October, 1928 – 13<sup>th</sup> October, 2009

Ormond St John Edwards was born in Widnes in Cheshire. His father was a printer. Before her marriage, his mother had been secretary in London to Dr Down, son of the well-known Dr Langdon Down, who had identified Down's Syndrome. In Widnes she became a magistrate at a very early age through her involvement in the social issues of the town, which included the care of young people with various difficulties. Ormond with his two sisters and brother got to know some of these young people too.

After the war the family moved to Shrewsbury where Ormond attended the great Shrewsbury School, whose alumni include Charles Darwin, Sir Martin Reese, the Astronomer Royal, as well as original spirits such as Richard Ingrams and Michael Palin. On returning to Shrewsbury after a period of National Service in Egypt, he attended Shrewsbury Technical College for a year. Through a talk about Goethe given by George Trevelyan by invitation of the students, Ormond was encouraged to read Rudolf Steiner. About this time through quite different contacts he came to hear of The Christian Community and began attending events in Albrighton Hall, Shropshire, then the conference centre of The Christian Community in the UK. Ormond attended the large youth conference held in Engelberg near Murrhardt in 1950 that marked the opening of the church in the Werfmershalde, Stuttgart at

which he had the first of three significant meetings with Emil Bock.

He was part of one of the earliest groups of students in the newly founded Keele University, and often told stories about the ideals of its foundation as a departure in the British university scene, consciously trying to bridge the divide between the Arts and the Sciences. He graduated with Honours in Economics and Geography, with subsidiary subjects of Statistics, Geology and German. It is important to record Ormond's educational background, because one striking thing about him was his refusal to make any separation between his chosen vocation as a priest of The Christian Community and the wider world of learning and scholarship.

After graduation he worked for his father for a year, gaining considerable knowledge of the processes of typesetting, printing and binding books. His interest in every aspect of printing, particularly the character of the typefaces, never left him. He took a post for a further year teaching in the Steiner School in Ilkeston. Inspired now by what he had met in The Christian Community, he collected everything necessary to hold a service in the school, only to learn no service could be held, because there was no priest available to come. This gave Ormond his first motivation to find out what might be involved in such a vocation, and he resolved to attend the training course in Stuttgart. He



now moved to London to find work that could contribute to the training costs and to get to know the congregations. During that time he briefly met another candidate, Irene Taylor, who happened also to be planning to attend the same course in Stuttgart.

After Ordination in 1960, Ormond worked with Evelyn Capel in Temple Lodge for two years before being sent to Kings Langley. He and Irene married in 1963. After Alfred Heidenreich's death in 1969, Ormond joined Irene in North London. It was in this time that he acquired a second hand printing press and started publishing. He registered the enterprise as Floris Books, after Joachim of Floris. The first book was his own *A New Chronology of the Gospels*. He jokingly said that it

was probably the only book ever to have been written, edited, printed, bound and read by one and the same person. Soon, with great labour, he started producing other books, until eventually Christian Maclean came to the rescue and put the venture on a professional footing.

The theme of the first book was the major preoccupation of Ormond's mature years: the chronology of the New Testament. In a number of letters and articles to scholarly journals, which led to his being asked in 1983 to referee an article in *Nature* on 'Dating the Crucifixion', he developed these themes, which found a mature presentation in the book *The Time of Christ* (Floris Books, 1986). Ormond was undeterred by the seas of information that

had to be worked through and understood, and the whole areas of study that his researches took him into, from cuneiform inscriptions to the coins of the Roman Republic; from the Babylonian lunar calendar to the textual traditions underlying our New Testament. It was all grist to the mill. The underlying concern was to grasp the reality of the Incarnation, the mystery of how a spiritual reality becomes historical fact.

Ormond was delighted when the recognition brought by his publications led to him finding new colleagues in his researches, particularly Professor Colin Humphreys and Dr Graeme Waddington. When I was studying for a Bachelor of Divinity in Aberdeen in the 90s, with Ormond's encouragement and support, we

were told in a class on the New Testament that the world authority on the chronology of the NT was living in Aberdeen. The class was taken by Professor Howard Marshall, himself a renowned scholar of the Gospel of St Luke. When I told Ormond, he recalled a pleasant conversation that he had had with the professor. With all his kindly recognition of Howard Marshall, he could not quite disguise his disappointment that this well-known scholar had had far less to say about this area of the background of the New Testament than Ormond himself.

Ormond and Irene were sent to Aberdeen in 1977. Ormond was always glad to work alongside someone with clear ideas about forming the community life. He was loved as a pastor and speaker. One achievement of those years that bears his mark, aside from the scholarly work that continued uninterrupted, was the work he put into bringing about a new phase of the relations between The Christian Community and the Camphill communities around Aberdeen, through better understanding of each others' roles and tasks.

In 1992, after completing a beautiful renovation of the chapel in the town-house near the centre of Aberdeen, dry rot was discovered. This seeming disaster, however, turned to the good when it emerged that a local company wanted to buy the house in order to convert it into offices. The eventual sale of the house made possible the building of the present Christian Community church on a disused plot of land only a few streets away. This opened up a new phase of congregational life, which Ormond led and then supported in varying degrees of 'retirement' over the next seventeen years.

In the Aberdeen years another interest joined the interest in chronology, which was evolution. Ormond read and understood a huge variety of books on topics ranging from palaeontology via embryology to the latest theories of neuroscience. Here the central concern was to investigate, behind Darwinian evolution, the more hidden stream of evolution of which T. H. Huxley, in spite of his unreserved acclaim for Darwin, said: human evolution proceeds in the opposite direction to what prevails in nature and the struggle for existence. Ormond found this view gradually gaining ground until he saw that Stephen J Gould, among others, (in 1977, in *Ontogeny and Phylogeny*) was able to show that the most important determinant of human evolution is neotony: the human being evolves by retaining the *juvenile* characteristics of our ancestors.

As Ormond had already shown in *The Time of Christ* through his gospel and historical research that the chronology of the last 'three years' of the life of Christ unfolded in stages in accord with the rhythms of the incarnating human being during the pre-natal phase of life, he now felt it should be possible to extend this knowledge into childhood.

In the last ten years this interest in the child which had grown up along with and parallel to the chronology and evolution became the central focus of Ormond's attention. He purchased a whole new shelf of books by modern writers on child development to investigate what the experts had to say about the growing phases of childhood and their manifestation in standing/walking, speaking and consciousness. He felt that the stages of (hominid) evolution on the one hand, and



the phases of development of the child on the other are paralleled in the Incarnation in ways that await wider discovery.

Ormond loved to support and enable others. His smile revealed his keen mind, which could assess human situations shrewdly and accurately. Nevertheless, his basic gesture was one of support and appreciation of others' achievements. He had his own yardstick for assessing his own achievements, and was not too perturbed by others' judgements. With all his independence of mind he was deeply loyal to The Christian Community and utterly convinced of its place in contemporary cultural life. His legacy can be read in his books and articles; it is there in the many people he helped and encouraged; he contributed too to the solidity of the ground on which we stand in our movement.

TOM RAVETZ

### Ormond Edwards—Friend and Colleague

Ormond summed up the main thrust of his theological work in his book, *The Time of Christ*. In it he shows an extraordinary grasp of the complex interrelationships of the various calendars in use at the time of the Incarnation. They are systematically sorted out and harmonized, allowing a pattern to emerge in which can be seen the basis for a threefold development, a threefold penetration and transformation by the Christ of the human soul, life and bodily constitution, which prefigures and makes possible the future evolution and transformation of the whole human being. It is an evolution motivated by a future goal, set forth in the completion of Christ's incarnation on earth. This basic thought is central to Christian teaching.

Ormond's work on harmonizing the calendars used at the time (each reference to a time in the Bible has to be allocated to a particular calendar) provides a clear pattern for the stages of the Incarnation, to be understood as an evolutionary process.

If Charles Darwin, Shrewsbury School's most notable scholar, put forward evolution as the origin of where we are today, implying that the overall impetus of human life is determined by natural selection, then Ormond's contribution, as a latter day Shrewsbury School scholar, in working on the 'time factor' in human development and in the Incarnation, should be recognized as an important corrective which needs an interpretation in a new dimension and is set forth in the Incarnation of Christ and in particular in its fulfilment in the Resurrection.

Of course, Ormond's basic task was as a priest, carried out in the congregations to which he was appointed, which was much appreciated by members and colleagues alike. His was a unique presence in our circle of priests who could always be relied upon for help and encouragement. He took a particular interest in the structure of The Christian Community, such as its legal and administrative arrangements. While his mind was well adapted to the detailed intricacies of these spheres, he could on occasion make things more complicated than was evident to others. But he invariably had a point to make. This provided a useful check, ensuring that everyone had a clear picture of what was actually being put forward. When contributing, he often appeared to be working out the points he wished to make, in a kind of thinking aloud. Nevertheless, whatever was under discussion, you could

feel his intense participation, as he sat in his chair, leaning slightly forward, hands in movement, engrossed in shaping the thoughts he wished to express, choosing his words carefully.

In lighter, more informal, moments he could recount amusing stories of actual incidents (I cannot recall him telling jokes). Again here, hands would follow the content, sometimes with the gesture of disbelief and accompanied by an obvious sense of incredulity. The voice would follow suit amid a not so subdued chuckle.

Ormond was, in addition to the scope of his theological and congregational work, an outdoor man. I knew him as part of the regular pool of colleagues who ran our summer youth camps in the 1960's on the Welsh coast near Harlech. He would arrive on his trusted motor bike and immediately get to work setting up camp. He was entirely at home with the young folk, and with the sea and the fairly wild hinterland which offered wonderful walking opportunities which he greatly appreciated. In fact, on one occasion he persuaded us to undertake a two day trek out of camp into the hills. It was a memorable occasion. Unforgettable for me was the overnight in a very primitive stone barn in the middle of nowhere to which he led us. Not only were walls and roof stone, the ground on which we had to doss down was also basi-

cally covered with rough stones. Whilst this was perfectly acceptable for such folk as Ormond who enjoyed a good night's sleep, for some it was a real challenge, if not a 'trial', which perhaps later, as in my case, could be remembered as a significant moment of the overall camp experience. The camps were enjoyed by many. Even today, I occasionally meet one or the other of those young folk who tell me, forty to fifty years on, how much they appreciated them.

So you could say that Ormond was a great all-rounder. He was a good loyal friend who served our cause so well in, what one perhaps can say, his own wonderfully self-effacing way.

MICHAEL TAPP

## *Stag*

*Then lights were lighted  
along the stag's antlers  
like holly and its clusters of berries,  
grouped like grapes great and small or  
the close-held cones along larch branches.*

*And a glow  
came from the stag's brow  
and long nose.*

*And he  
paused  
in the forest.  
Then turned away  
into the darkness  
like the hero  
of humankind  
going off  
to war.*

IAIN  
CRANFORD HUNTER

# Reviews

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## ***Studies in the Gospels, Volume 1* By Emil Bock**

Floris Books

ISBN: 978-0863157110

### ***Review by Louise Madsen***

Emil Bock's books give an impressive overview of the main events described in the Bible, from Creation to the New Jerusalem, from Genesis to the Apocalypse of Saint John. This series of books is well known and respected by English readers. Less well known is the fact that Bock also did an immense amount of work on the books of the New Testament as well.

The present volume, excellently edited by Tony Jacobs-Brown, gives an insight into the detailed work Bock devoted to many topics in these books: subjects about which we may have many questions and would like to be better informed. He looks in particular at some root questions: the relationship of the New to the Old Testament, the genealogy of Jesus, John the Baptist and his connection with Jesus of Nazareth and the 'miracles'. Other subjects he discusses are the parables, the Sermon on the Mount and the characters of some of the key personalities: Matthew, the gospel writer, Judas, Peter and Simon of Cyrene and Joseph of Arimathea. Some of these topics are also dealt with in *The Three Years*, but here they are approached differently and at greater length.

From the outset it is clear that this is not the usual kind of commentary. Other commentaries look at individual passages from a moral, religious or even historical or scientific viewpoint and often do so with great erudition. Bock maintains that these approaches, for all their thoroughness, are too restrictive. For him, the gospels are like wells whose depths can never be fully fathomed; we can never claim to understand them fully,

but if we turn to them again and again, new depths will be revealed to reverent and open minded study. 'They are messages from the supersensible, divinely spiritual world...' For the insight into this greater dimension to which he ever and again draws our attention, Bock unreservedly pays tribute to Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy, without which such an approach to the gospels would not be possible. For him anthroposophy 'provides a base for continual advance into understanding the gospels.' Without this help 'we could not ... turn our gaze upon the wholeness of the gospel revealed in its divine composition.'

For Bock, 'the gospels are not recorded tradition but the fruits of human initiation and at the same time of the revelatory gifts of god.' The 'miracles' are not historical events, complete in themselves, but they bear within themselves the phenomenon of a soul transformed through spiritual experience. In the discussion of the miracles, for example, he shows that it is possible for our souls to become what is described in the miracle itself: a 'pitcher' inside which water is turned into wine. We are no longer mere onlookers at the events described in the gospel; rather, we are so drawn into them that we begin to wake up to the realisation that the secret of the gospels is this: whether an event described in them happened externally and historically is not of primary importance; the essential point is that what happens takes place in the realm of the human spirit and soul.

Bock's original approach to the various topics greatly changes one's perception of the subject: reading about Matthew, the evangelist, for instance, gives one a much broader and enlivened image of the man that his gospel also begins to stand out in a new light. Another example: the treatment of the virgin birth is worth reading, even if 'only'

# THE SPIRIT WITHIN US

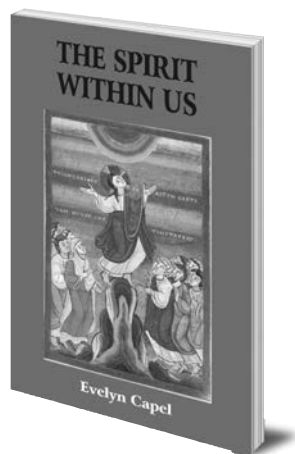
**EVELYN CAPEL**

Many people today find themselves in situations with which they cannot cope. How often do we feel, if only I could be wiser or more courageous to help me deal with problems that face me?

Most of the time, we must find our strength from within ourselves. This is not something which happens quickly or easily. Capel argues, however, that the spirit of Christ is a source of inner strength for each one of us. By developing an active inner life, the spirit within us can be found and brought into our consciousness.

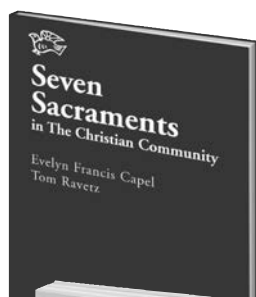
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Evelyn Capel (1911–2000) was born at Stow-on-the-Wold in the Cotswold Hills in England. She read History at Somerville College, Oxford, and then studied at the seminary of The Christian Community in Stuttgart. In 1939, she became the first English woman priest ordained within it to celebrate the sacraments.



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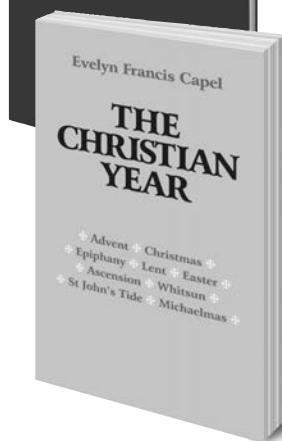


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to put some new thoughts into one's own mind as to how it could really have taken place. Bock's approach makes it possible to see that the record of the genealogical tree makes great sense and is essential to a proper comprehension of the birth of Jesus.

Where Bock takes his treatment far beyond what had been done when he was writing these studies is in taking full account of the composition of the gospels: the sequence of events and the context into which a given event or scene is placed, and taking this further, also comparing passages that describe the same event as they appear in the different gospels.\* The other key that Bock uses is to look upon what the disciples and others experience as stages of initiation: all the 'schooling' that Christ gives to those around Him sets them on a path of inner development, enabling them to reach higher levels of maturity and understanding and helping them grasp that which is of His world and what it is He is bringing to them.

Bock's thorough knowledge of his subject and the insights gained through the cosmic and spiritual understanding of Steiner's investigations in the supersensible worlds give his writings widths and depths that perhaps cannot be obtained in any other way. It is not necessary to accept it all in order to feel grateful for how much one's own understanding of what are often difficult and initially incomprehensible matters is enhanced and enriched by thinking along with him.

\* In the meantime other scholars have started to mine at this seam, for example Thomas Brodie in *The Gospel According to John*, OUP, 1993 ed.

## Temple Lodge Club a quiet oasis in the middle of London



Temple Lodge—a Georgian Listed Building in the middle of Hammersmith—was once the home of the artist *Sir Frank Brangwyn*. Whilst his studio has been converted into a chapel with a **vegetarian restaurant** on its former mezzanine floor, the house itself is given over to accommodating bed and breakfast visitors. They come from four corners of the world to enjoy the *quietness and tranquillity* of the house. Many have described it as a really peaceful haven, despite being a stone's throw from the centre of Hammersmith and its busy traffic interchange. The absence of a television in the house and rooms *adds to this atmosphere*.

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# STUDIES IN THE GOSPELS

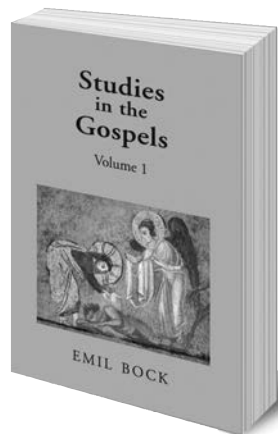
Volume 1

## EMIL BOCK

In the course of his pioneering work in The Christian Community, Emil Bock made many studies of different aspects of the Gospels. Bringing his wide knowledge of the history of that time together with his deep insights in anthroposophy, he brings a fresh view of the familiar stories of the New Testament.

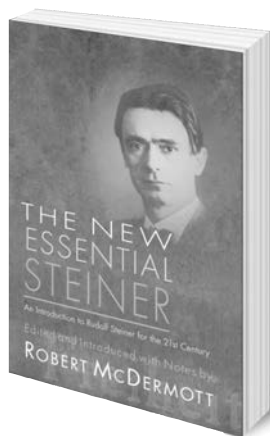
Volume 1 looks particularly at the relationship of the New Testament to the Old, at St Matthew and the Sermon on the Mount, at Judas and Peter, and concluding with Simon of Cyrene and Joseph of Arimathea.

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## Apology

For the last issue something went wrong with our system of sharing out tasks between the members of the production team, and the labels for individual subscribers were printed from a copy of the database that had not been updated with subscription renewals.

We have done everything we can to put this right: subscribers who received a renewal reminder after having just renewed have been credited with an extra issue. We are sending this issue to all subscribers who had a current subscription before the error came about, in the hope that we will renew contact with some who may have - very understandably - 'given up' on us.

We have found the root of the problem and rectified it. We are grateful for the understanding shown by many of the subscribers whom we have already contacted, and we apologise for all the inconvenience caused.

TOM RAVETZ for the editorial team

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