An abstract painting featuring three faces in profile, rendered in shades of blue and yellow. The faces are arranged in a triangular composition, looking towards the center. The background is a mix of dark and light blue, with several star-like or cross-like symbols scattered throughout. The overall style is expressive and somewhat somber.

*Members
of a body
Salvation*

The Christian Community

Perspectives

September — November 2010

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Perspectives

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*And he is the head of the body, and his body is the great community
of the communities of Christ*

I once had a conversation with someone whose spiritual journey had taken him far away from the traditional church in which he was brought up. It was deeply moving to hear how someone had trodden his own, individual path for many years in his quest for the spirit. I was aware of the trust that he was showing in talking to a priest—of any church—about these intensely personal matters. I was all the more surprised when he said that in all his seeking and all the many practices he had tried, he had never experienced anything comparable to the power that could radiate into the world when a group of people prayed together.

Bringing this to consciousness ever and again can give us courage to meet a world that on the surface can seem to be determined by forces beyond our control. To be a member means to be part of the body that embraces heaven and earth. This body is animated by a spirit which prays for nothing less than that the world may be irradiated by the good. This awareness allows us to see things in their true proportions. The powers that seem so dominant and threatening are weak and are revealed to be far less than what we—what this body—can do.

*All the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe — people and
things, animals and atoms — get properly fixed and fit together in
vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood that poured
down from the cross.*

SAINT PAUL'S LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS 1.

TOM RAVETZ

The meaning of belief

Richard Masters

*I was asked once about the meaning of life
And my mind flew to the life of meaning
For meaning is a chameleon of many colours
Where belief is a palette of innumerable shades*

*My meaning may not be your meaning
But sometimes close : sometimes twin-like
Coloured in delicate shades—and other times
Further apart than mere black and white*

*A void filed by unsupported supposition
That transmogrifies into belief and
That belief can be an anchor or a mill-stone
Weighing down as a coat of chains.*

*But belief can also be as angel-wings
Lifting each of us to Nirvana and my belief
Is that one's choice twixt the two
Is the very essence of the Meaning of Life*

*One choice makes life meaningful whilst
The other renders it meaningless—so if you
Choose the first of these then truly rejoice
No matter what others say or do.*

*Richard
Masters is a
member of the
Forest Row
congregation.*

Written Down I

Iain Cranford Hunter

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 is an artist and poet, and member of The Christian Community, from west Fife.

Membership and The Church: Can we make thinking less frightening?

Roger Druitt

The subtitle for *The Christian Community*, 'Movement for Religious Renewal', is a constant challenge. Can one go on renewing something for ever? Or can we go forward by unfolding from within?

Two main features contrast *The Christian Community* with other movements within Christendom: first, the phrase 'let us', at the beginning. This indicates that the congregation is not onlooker but co-worker. Whilst people may have that feeling in any church, this one especially lends itself to inner participation. The energy and substance for the sacraments has its origin in the 'christened' hearts of the congregation. The second feature is in the Transubstantiation. This had, in the late middle ages, been protected from a scientific approach because it was realised that intellectual thinking could not reach the Mystery but only fragment it. Thus arose the schism between faith and knowledge; and it is the task of *The Christian Community* to reconnect these. So, just at the central point of the transubstantiation there is an invitation to think. We are asked to take that mystery into our thinking. More specifically it is the death, resurrection and future manifestation of Jesus Christ that is to find a place in our thinking.

These are significant aspects of membership. Members are thus asked to think the mystery while at the same time they work together with the priest to carry it out. This is religious renewal.

What else belongs to these preliminary thoughts?

Because *The Christian Community* in the English world tends to be very free, it appears that there is no obvious difference between Members and those who have not taken on membership: Holy Communion is distributed to all. So why have members? The simple answer is that the Creed mentions them. Members form the Community, not friends or guests. And communities whose members have certain spiritual feelings make up the one Church. It is a quirk of English that the phrase 'a Church' at the end of the Creed sounds to our foreign visitors as being rather indeterminate (the in-definite article) but it actually has a quite definite sense here because it says 'to which all belong'. That makes a quite clear that it is one Church,

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is a priest of
The Christian
Community
in Canterbury
and Kings
Langley.*

whereas if we would say 'one Church' in the Creed, the English mind would ask, 'what then of the others?' And so it is more definite to say a Church than one Church, even though one Church, a single Church, is meant, previously referred to as 'the holy catholic church' or 'one catholic and apostolic church'. If you say 'one church' the English ear asks, 'what others are there?' The Church of Christ is that body of people who respond to his call. (Church is derived from Greek for Lord and ecclesia from Greek for 'called'). The Church is the body of Christ, made up of communities (not necessarily only the congregations of The Christian Community), and the members make up the bodies of the congregations, not friends or guests. These are what the body breathes in and out until they are assimilated, more a soul element.

The other reason for having members is that membership is based on a commitment. What kind? Two thoughts may be helpful here. One is that before The Christian Community could be founded, those who were to become priests had to make a lifetime commitment to it, thereby connecting themselves to the spiritual world and to the being of the one community that was about to descend. It would make little sense in a human community if everyone took this kind of commitment because who would do the rest of the work needed? So the priest is a kind of servant of the community in that he or she carries out the sacraments, for the benefit of the rest. They in turn cover the priests' needs. But they work in the world; and as long as they are uncommitted they are not yet sharing in the common work of carrying out the sacraments as much as they could be. But if they make their own lifetime commitment to The Christian Community—not to work fully as the giver of the sacraments, but as a disposition of their spirit—this gap is closed. Without downgrading the institution of Ordination we can at least say that committed members and committed priests share in common the human response to the commitment of Christ. We can read in Paul's letter to the Philippians how the Cosmic Christ stripped off his cosmic dimension to come to and become man, and to go into death, 'obedient to death, even the death of the cross'. When we make a commitment of this kind we bring to life a part of ourselves that is often not adequately challenged in life—our higher self. When we make it out of that self, a commitment is not a limitation on our life but a broadening of it: a commitment opens up a new freedom. Membership is, in this realm of spirit, freer than where it has not yet been taken up. Whilst all who attend the sacraments may bring their whole soul with them to participate, the spiritual elements of a commitment of a higher self adds a fire-substance

of sacrifice that brings a different force to the aery quality of the soul's substance. It gives to the raw material of the sacraments the quality that is needed by the spiritual world to transubstantiate it. The element of fire is the one that connects the earthly world to the spiritual one.

That is the will side, the 'let us' side—a co-sharing in the real work of the Mystery. What about the thinking side?

To the religious soul, thinking may easily have a bad reputation and to some extent justifiably; because when we think, we dissect things, we separate parts out so that they can be grasped and smaller parts are easier to grasp than larger parts. Thinking can undermine religious substance. However, we would do better to refer to this as intellect rather than thought. Intellect as a word has descended down from intelligence, the faculty of reading between the lines. Instead, it has become the faculty for dealing with the sense world, which is obviously a very important faculty. It is this faculty of bringing everything down to its material basis that enables us to step out on the road to spiritual freedom. That is after all why this movement was founded, to be free in the spirit from theological codes, moral codes and the control of the state—because with our time comes the possibility of the Church, the one Church, now based on a feeling response to the being of Christ and his approach to us, to guide its members through the right experiences to making their own theology and their own moral codes. Many feel that it is not right now to impose either of these on a modern, free-thinking person. This of course makes life harder rather than easier—there is no rest. We have to work everything out on its own merits—but we do have the concrete experience of the sacrament and its quality of co-work with others to support us.

So what of thinking in this context? If we take those words referred to from the transubstantiation quite seriously it indicates that our thinking is not just a process that goes on inside us but is a place, a vessel, that can carry something. We place there the three elements, Death, Resurrection and Revelation. We can do that intellectually, and indeed the world has done that very well up to this point. Our challenge, however, is to place these three there as pictures because the picture starts to put the parts together. In picture-building what has been cut apart by the intellect becomes 'intelligible.' We do this in total freedom. It is totally dependent on our own inclination how we place these three pictures there. Now, thinking has the capacity to paint in the gaps between things. This is a second faculty added to the first. First we place the picture there in our minds, a purely intellectual activity. Secondly, we look at it; then our thinking becomes artistic.

We use artistic sense to join the three elements together. Our feelings come into play, but in the prepared context of a thought. This takes them out of the inner, personal realm into an outer, objective one. We are engaged in an inner activity that is at once subjective and objective. But can thinking join crucifixion and death, as a picture, to Resurrection and Revelation? Isn't there a threshold there that thinking cannot cross? This is true only as long as our thoughts hold on to material things, but when they are allowed to be carried by our artistic sense they undergo metamorphosis, change. Gradually the picture that unites death and resurrection becomes alive although not continuous. It is we ourselves who go, in our thinking, through death and resurrection. Our intellectual thoughts, our thought pictures, die away. They fade away from our conscious mind until there is nothing left there. We are in the silent darkness of Holy Saturday—in our mind. Then, after a time they become living pictures. They rise in a different form and this form is initially manifest as a kind of feeling, which then gradually unfolds itself as a kind of image, a living image, a sacramental thought.

So, one can get into trouble talking about thinking in the religious context, but if we begin by following the advice of the Service itself in the way described we shall develop a sense for what kind of thoughts are alive in the sense of the sacraments. That will help us see which ideas are still bound to matter and which can be used in the development of the life of our movement; the responsibility of our members.

When people have made the step of membership through their inner commitment; when they have taken upon themselves and worked out of themselves these aspects of priesthood, they receive and start to work with one part of the service, namely the Creed. This, as it is written, is a series of thoughts, but by applying the metamorphic thinking that we have acquired from the transubstantiation, these twelve statements start to weave together to become one living picture. Thus is the path of membership really to think, in the imaginative way sketched out above, of the whole of creation: its beginning, middle and future—the hope of eternal life.

The best handbook of eternal life from the time of Christ is St John's Gospel. Early in the first chapter this is referred to and again at the crucifixion and the end of the book. John writes the book to give material for our thinking life to turn into living thinking, which in the light of what I have been saying, I would call faith. This is a kind of thinking which has been generated by the heart. The heart comes to life when we love, and love becomes possible when we commit ourselves. Spiritual love becomes visionary for the deed of Christ and indeed for Christ himself.

This is the hard task that the Community gives to its members: working with the creed, thinking Death, Resurrection and Revelation. We are even guided to the idea that both our understanding of and our faith in these three elements—which we can refer to now as the Cross with body and blood, the Empty Tomb, and the Mystery of the ‘second coming’ in our time—live in our thoughts. They become part of us—we die in them, we rise again in them: we see and are seen by fellow members in them. They will carry us into death, into resurrection: into the revelation.

But just think though, how much the world will change the more we transform the thinking that has given us the civilization we have into an imaginative, warm faculty for perceiving what is needed to heal its problems.

This is the task of the Church. The Christian Community is that organ of this Church that knows the above. It contains that touchstone which can transform, raise religious experience into a new dynamic. The seven sacraments are so formed that they lend themselves to an approach where thinking can move from its material form to its spiritual dynamic. Each sacrament of this community, in its rôle within the whole Church, contains a living picture of one or more aspects of human life and as we think our way into them—that means take the substance for our thinking as their pictures; take their pictures to be the substance out of which to form our thoughts—we shall then feel true Members of the one Church through the organ of the sacramental community, The Christian Community.

Membership

The Meaning of Membership

Patrick Kennedy

This article and the one that will follow in the next edition of Perspectives were first published in the Newsletter of The Christian Community in Washington / Baltimore, USA

In Passiontide we hear one of the more well-known gospel readings from the altar: the feeding of the five thousand (John 6). In this passage, Jesus walks up a mountain followed by a crowd which has seen him healing the sick and long to be near him. They gather on a grassy field and, recognizing their hunger, Jesus feeds the five thousand with five loaves of bread and two fish. Traditional readings of this passage have emphasized this as a story shared to reveal the miraculous power at work in Jesus, demonstrated by the fact that so many were fed by so little. And yet the passage asks us to look closer—to notice that the food they received, that which nourished them, was not the physical bread, but the very presence of Christ Jesus. This reveals the meaning of what he says later in the same chapter: I am the Bread of Life; whoever comes to me shall not go hungry. We hear this passage during Passiontide because it turns our attention to the fact that human beings are starving; hungering not just for physical nourishment, but for a substance that nourishes the inner human being.

Now let us imagine that Jesus had walked around as the bread was being passed out and asked each person whether they would first commit to being a member of his group before giving them to eat. Or that he had required each one be baptized by John before they could receive the food

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USA*

they sought. It is an absurd thought, for Jesus laid no conditions upon this gift of nourishment—he saw that the people were hungry and he offered nourishment to those who sought it. It was a gift with no strings attached. This is why the healing nourishment of Christ has always been described as ‘grace’: it is a free gift.

With this in mind, it is understandable that The Christian Community would wish to align itself with the stream of Christ’s working by giving what we have to offer without first

requiring membership. This is why communion in The Christian Community is open to all who seek it. Anything else would be a conditional gift, and not a gift of grace. For this reason, membership in The Christian Community is not about what becomes available through membership. What is available in The Christian Community is available to all.

Since this is the case, one might think that membership is not important. This thought only reveals that our entire relationship to belonging to communities—and particularly religious communities—has been tainted by a stream of egotism and selfishness which it will take a long time to heal. People have been told for centuries that if you want to go to heaven, you have to do x; if you want to suffer less in Purgatory you have to do y. All of these thoughts appeal to the selfish part of our soul and put us in a dependent relationship to religious institutions. And these thoughts could not be further from the reality of Christ's working.

Membership, in its true meaning, has to do with being a part of something. It means being a member of a larger organism, a larger body. A person who longs to become a member is someone who not only wishes to receive the gift of grace; he or she person wishes to be a part of the body that makes that gift available. The also who wishes to become a member has recognized the living power of love revealed in the working of Christ and wishes to serve this power in their lives, to take this power into themselves and manifest it in their own life's work. In this way, the meaning of membership becomes clear: in Christ's community, all are welcomed to the table to receive the healing nourishment; members long to build this table—in sanctuaries, in their hearts, in their lives—and welcome others to it.

1 The practical path to membership

On Easter Sunday, we welcomed two new members into the congregation. We witnessed them signing their names in our Membership Book and saw how they received their own copy of the creed. But there were a number of steps—hidden from public view—that preceded this public welcome.

The first step towards membership in The Christian community is often taken in connection to a significant life event—a birth, a death or marriage. Such events are first encounters with the genuine reality of the renewed Sacraments. Sometimes it is a longer search for a community life of prayer that is devoted and spiritually rich but totally free of any moralizing that has led a person to us. Indeed, the path that one takes to begin seeking a

spiritually fulfilling religious life is so personal and intimate, that no two people stand at the same place on it. This is one reason that there is a feeling of reverence and respect in the congregation towards the freedom of the individual: we would never want to interfere, coerce or force someone to enter into any kind of relationship with The Christian Community, much less membership. It is healthiest when it is an organic inner process that is given time to grow and ripen into an outer deed. Then, when someone takes the step towards membership, it is an act of real significance—not just for the individual but also for the community. Eventually, in the course of this process, the point may be reached when one feels inwardly at home in the Sacraments and in the life of the congregation and the question of membership arises.

The next step towards membership would mean speaking with a priest about this intention. What happens in these conversations is not at all fixed or set. They can vary significantly because they are based on the individual who approaches the priest. For example, someone with physical and mental handicaps who lives in a Camphill Village wished to become a member but had little in the way of any theological questions. She simply wanted to be a part of the community and service she loved. Her challenge was simply the physical act of crossing herself and so learning and practicing the crossings was the preparation she needed.

Another person required a totally different preparation for membership. He met over seven times with the priest, going into questions about the nature of the Act of Consecration of Man and detailed questions regarding modern Christian spiritual life before becoming a member. Such stories show how there can be no single 'catechism' or check list that can be handed out; everyone has their own individual process.

And yet, there is a universal element in it. Each person, no matter how they have got there, has come to recognize that there is something missing in the world, in life, in their own soul, and this has caused them to seek Christ's healing presence. What has kept them coming again and again to The Christian Community is the concrete experience—however dimly grasped—that his peace and power is active in the renewed sacraments. Seeking his healing means seeking communion with him. Communion with him always means not just the taking in of the consecrated substances at the altar but communion with his community. And preparation for communion, both at the altar and in the community, is made possible through the Sacramental Consultation. This beautiful Sacrament outlines the path one must take in order to make communion possible.

This is why the Sacramental Consultation is also often the sacramental doorway into the community. Shortly before the Sunday where the new member would be introduced to the congregation, this Sacrament can be held for the individual. It involves two parts: a conversation with the priest in the light of Christ and standing before His altar, or before his image in the consultation room, with the priest in vestments, to hear Christ's words to the individual. It is perhaps the only sacrament in the world that begins with the word 'Learn.' This radical word opens us to the fact that membership is not only a destination, the end of a long road, but a beginning. It is one where we begin to know Christ as our teacher, where we begin to become his student, his disciple. This reveals some of the deeper wisdom as to why the new member is then given a copy of the creed, for in the creed are twelve sentences that contain the entire wisdom of Christianity.

The fact that something truly begins the moment one becomes a member—an inner and outer path of offering and receiving—will be the subject of a second article in a forthcoming issue of *Perspectives*.



The Watering Hole on the Ruby Mountain
Franz Marc

We are the members

Kevin Street

*We are the members
Making visible what is invisible
Holding together
And finding meaning in the whole.*

*We do not define
We do not demand
We do not always agree
We do not sign anything
We do not tithe
We do not own
We do not jump the queue
We do not attend everything*

But—

*We are prepared to move
We are ready to co-operate
We are willing to listen again
We are feeling the pulse
We are flexible
We are committed
We are here*

*Remember what we were once
A whole
Blissful
Floating in warm security
No doubt
No fear*

*Dismembered
Once and every day*

*Stark piercing conscious
Of me
Alone
Naked
Scrabbling to piece together
Meaning to cover
My inadequacies*

*Remember
New found bliss
Security now
In the whole body
In the sinews
In the nerves
In the blood
In moving and flowing
In harmony
With the blue print
A part of the plan
A part of the whole*

*And in this part
This frazzled scrap of me
This bumbling, tongue tied apology
This doubting, clumsy left footed dancer
Finds a new rhythm
A new word
Renewed strength*

*I am remembered
Dismembering fades
I am a member*

*And new life flows in me
Through me
Out of me
Invisible
Present
Here, now.*

*Kevin Street is a member of
The Christian Community in Stourbridge and
manages the subscriptions of Perspectives*

Members

Peter Howe

I am the vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing.

John 15. 5

Rendered by Eugene H. Peterson

Member: From Latin membrum limb.

Related to: membrane, dismembering, remembering.

- a body part or organ
- a unit of structure in a plant body,
- a part of a whole
- a constituent part of a complex structure

The following thoughts about the nature of membership of The Christian Community arose in a Stourbridge Member's meeting. We have left them in note form, aphoristic, open and waiting for more!

Members are part of an organic whole.

Membership is saying Yes.

It's making a commitment, taking responsibility: spiritual/ social/ economic.

Does the membership care for you or do you care for the whole community?

It is dynamic, not fixed or static. The self and the congregation are changing.

It's a sense of belonging to that which doesn't change.

I can take communion and I can serve in the Act of Consecration without being a member. This helped me to take the step to becoming a member.

Members' meetings are not in every congregation. Why do we have them? How are they different from congregational meetings?

Meetings are not a cutting-off, but an opportunity for the future.

Without members a body is not visible: the members embody a Being.

Membership is an inner formation without an outer expression.

Being given the Creed is the only outer sign of being made a member.

Commitment is needed for the spiritual to continue. Membership is essential if you wish The Christian Community to continue.

It is a commitment to a Being, so that I share in its destiny.

Membership of The Christian Community is a middle way between the twin dangers of total freedom and being bound to an organisation.

As each one of us has many members of his one body, and in fact each member has a different function from the others, so we, though many, are yet one body in Christ; and among each other we are also members of one another. The different gifts of grace are distributed among us according to the grace we have received. If someone has the gift of prophecy, then let him use it in conjunction with the power of faith.

ROMANS 12, 4–6.

Rendered by Jon Madsen.

For as the body is one, and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, form one body, so it is in the Christ Being.

We have all been baptized with one Spirit and thereby have become one body with one another, whether we are Jews or Greeks, slaves or free men; and so also the same draught of the Spirit is offered to us all.

The body does not consist of one member, but of many. If the foot were to say, 'I am not the hand, therefore I do not belong to the body,' it does not therefore belong any the less to the body. And if the ear were to say, 'I am not the eye, therefore I do not belong to the body,' it does not therefore belong any the less to the body.

If the whole body were eye, where would be the hearing? If it were all hearing, where would be the sense of smell?

Now the divine Ground of the World has placed the members according to HIS world aims, each one for the particular task which it has in the body.

If the whole were only a member, would it then be a body? But now the members have manifoldness as their characteristic; the body, oneness.

The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I do not need you;' nor can the head say to the feet, 'I do not need you.' But rather, those members which appear to us to be the weaker, are precisely the most necessary for the body, and those which we regard as insignificant prove to be particularly important. Whatever in us is not beautiful is adorned with particular care; whatever in us is well formed does not need this.

The divine Ground of the World has joined the body together out of such different elements, and has accorded the unassuming members all the greater significance in order that there should be no division in the body, and that all members should work harmoniously together and care for one another.

If one member suffers, then all the members suffer, and if one member shines in the light of the Spirit, then all the members rejoice.

Now you are the body of Christ; each according to his portion is a member of it.

The divine Ground of the World has placed all in the congregation: the first as apostles, the second as prophets. Thirdly, as teachers; then follow the bearers of particular powers, those who possess the gift of healing, the shepherds of souls, those who guide and order, those skilled in speaking in tongues.

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all able to let particular powers work through them? Have all the gift of healing? Are all skilled in speaking in tongues? Are all able to interpret what is spoken in tongues?

Strive to make the best out of the gifts of grace working together.

1 Corinthians 12, 12-31.

Rendered by Jon Madsen

Experiencing Salvation I

Tom Ravetz

What did Christ do for us? Why was the Incarnation necessary?

These may seem such obvious questions that it's hardly worth asking them, or answering them. And they may seem like questions that the writer or speaker only asks to set up the tension; our job as reader or listener is just to wait for the right answer.

I would like to suggest that we treat them as real questions. We can ask the same question in a lot of different ways:

Why did Christ come to the earth? What was the problem that he came to solve, and how did he solve it? What threatened us, that we couldn't solve with our own resources?

Experience of this reality underlies the Act of Consecration of Man, experience so deep that it may never be clearly articulated. Anyone who has ever called out in a spontaneous prayer 'God help me!', or 'O Christ, be with me!', knew with the deepest kind of knowing that they were in need, and that they needed help from somewhere

above or beyond or below the forces they had hitherto found access to.

So although it may seem strange, I would like to mark a space with a picture, which could be useful for a moment of quiet reflection to find the different answers that come to mind.

At courses and seminars on this theme which I have led, most participants are surprised by the variety of answers that come to these questions. We are surprised because when we think about the things that are closest and most important to us, we tend to assume that they are obvious. It is strange at first when we realise that there are different answers to a question that seemed so clear to us. Gradually, though, we may see that we in fact have more complicated answers within ourselves—different aspects of the truth which could almost seem contradictory, and which we have just harmonised without thinking about it.

The sorts of answers that come to the questions asked here are: Christ saved us. He healed us. He released us from sin. He overcame death for us. He made us whole. He gave us strength. He showed us the way of love. He overcame the law, and showed us a loving God. He overcame the devil, or the adversary forces. He was an inspiration. Depending on the church background of people giving the answers, we may hear images like: he died for our sins; he paid the ransom to release us.



Bluish mythical creature, Franz Marc

There is a great variety of images here, and we will discover more through this series of articles. It is always a challenge how we deal with a multiplicity of answers to a single question. Modern, analytical thinking might say: if Christ came to do battle with the devil, and that's the important thing to say about him, then surely we can't also affirm that what's important is that he came to show us a better way. It's one or the other. Our challenge is to find a kind of thinking that draws on our experiences of the sacraments, of prayer and of our own devotional life, raising these deep experiences into consciousness in order to enrich our experience. The risk is that as soon as our thinking becomes analytical, it drives out experience. This was the very situation that Rudolf Steiner addressed with those young people who approached him in 1921 asking whether he could help them to bring about a renewal of the religious life. He made it clear that there was a need for a kind thinking that can put itself in the service of the sacramental life, the life of experience. It is the quality of 'higher divining' of Christ's deed that is spoken of the Michaelmas Epistle.

These words often echo on in us long after Michaelmas has ended, and we may feel a deep longing to develop such 'divining'. The Act of Consecration itself is a pathway to finding it. The very fact that we return to the Act of Consecration again and again shows that we intuit something of this reality. The service is not a lecture, whose content we grasp and take in as best we can. It is a living reality, a being, which reveals itself to us through the course of time in endless repetition and metamorphosis.

The cycle of the Christian year, which unfolds as sacred time from Advent to November each year, brings many images of salvation in its prayers and gospel readings. It would be quite inappropriate to try to extract from that cycle the essence, as if once we had analysed the intellectual content of the year's liturgy we could stop going to church. But allowing connections to light up, and giving a framework for our experience can stimulate and inform us so that we can participate in the unfolding of the year with greater understanding.

The Challenge to our Thinking

We are children of our age, and we cannot escape its predominant way of thinking about the world, which is scientific and reductionist. The founders of The Christian Community were aware that whilst their primary purpose was not theological or philosophical, nevertheless they needed to be clear that establishing a new religious movement without tackling the question of how the world works would be impossible. How could one honestly proclaim the incarnation of Christ in a world governed by causality; to human beings who felt they were the product of blind material evolution? Steiner predicted that even those who can experience the working of Christ in the sacraments without any critical reflection beforehand would nevertheless find that questions are stimulated in them by what they encounter there.

Although much has changed in the nearly 90 years since the foundation of The Christian Community, when it comes to the question of the Incarnation

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of Christ, we are in almost the same position. Many more philosophers and scientists have space for thinking about the Spirit as a possible source or principle in creation than did in the 1920s. They may even speak about God. But the idea of the Incarnation is so hard for modern human beings to grasp that it is largely left out of the discussion, even when Christian authors write about the marriage between science and theology. Understanding this blind spot in fact takes us into the heart of the question, what did Christ do—why did God become Man?

Far from being irrelevant to the problems and challenges of modern thinking, the question of the Incarnation is central. However it is overlooked because it addresses a problem for which there is little consciousness—it belongs to the ‘paradigm’, the unquestioned framework of thinking and understanding the world which underlies all other questions. This paradigm assumes the existence of a divide that was described by Descartes in his famous distinction of two kinds of things in the world: thinking things, ie human beings, and things spread out in space—everything else. Even if the debate has moved on many times since then, the question remains: how do we account for our experience of two different orders of being: the inner life and the outer world, matter and spirit, God and world. Painting with the broadest of brushstrokes, we could see three major strands of thought that try to cope with this divide: denying the world (as we find in some mystical and oriental literature), denying the spirit (as we find in the widespread neo-Darwinian culture of our time), and attempting to deny our experience of the divide, as do some philoso-

phers who want to stress our oneness with nature. None of these strategies addresses the question and the challenge.

The Incarnation demonstrates that the division is only apparent. When God became Man in Jesus Christ, the great divide was bridged, and something from the ‘other’ world could be at work in ‘this’ world. The philosophers’ God or spirit could never enter our world of earthly laws as an earthly human being.

Rudolf Steiner’s help in taking our thinking further here is of great assistance. His life’s work can be seen as an attempt to overcome the divide that philosophy had erected between the world of spirit—the mental world of human beings—and the ‘real’ world of things in themselves. It was Kant who most famously said that we could know nothing at all of the things in themselves, and thus to talk of God or Spirit was meaningless. All of Rudolf Steiner’s early, philosophical work was an attempt to engage with Kant and show the limitations of his world-view; and the later ‘anthroposophical’ work was a demonstration of how human beings could indeed have a clear, thinking relationship with a real world of spirit. His lifelong striving was to think in the spirit of the Incarnation. Such thinking is the greatest help in developing the ‘higher divining’, which does not choose between matter and spirit, but sees them as ultimately one.

At-onement

The name for the study of the images of salvation in academic theology is images of atonement, or atonement-theory. It is a remarkable thing that this word, which seems to have quite a narrow meaning, as in the Day of Atonement, is used in this

general way; it is a word with a great depth of meaning. Part of its power comes from the fact that it is a composite word made up of two Anglo-Saxon parts; English theological words tend otherwise to be drawn from Latin, which can make them remote from us.

If we pronounce the word atonement as its constituent parts suggest, we arrive at its derivation: at-one-ment. Underlying it is the image of a process that leads from unity to division and to a new unity. The world was at one, and now has been divided, and we are striving for a new unity—to become at-one again. This word developed from a conscious choice of the great early translator of the Bible into English, Jon Wycliffe. He used the word onement to express what was conveyed in the Greek and Hebrew original languages of the Bible with words meaning reconciliation and absolution.

The fact that this word is used as the heading for our subject seems to be more than just coincidence. The word atonement hints at the underlying reality which shines through all the various images: why did Christ need to become Man? What was the problem? There was an original rupture or disjunction that means that we are not at one with our origin, not at one with our true self. This fundamental fact is reflected in every part of our being and our experience of ourselves and the world; we have already touched on its consequences in our thinking, which Rudolf Steiner described as the place where the fall into sin reached its final consequence.

Remarkably, the question of what Christ's saving deed was, and how he accomplished it, was never codified in dogma. The great disputes of the early centuries of the Church

were all directed to the question of who Christ is (the Trinity) and how we can understand the Incarnation. These questions are obviously of great importance in understanding how Christ saved us; but they do not answer the question itself. Through the centuries of Christian reflection, an almost astonishing array of images were produced. This is perhaps less surprising when we appreciate more and more how fundamental the need for salvation is, and how it affects every aspect of our being, and of the world.

Nevertheless, at different periods of the development of the Church, different images became almost universally adopted. We shall turn to some of these images as they amplify and echo what we find on the path through the year with the Act of Consecration. In the early church, the focus was almost entirely on objective images of atonement which addressed the problem of fallen human nature. The Incarnation itself was a restoration of the original constitution of the human being; it was a medicine against death, and a release from the overwhelming power of the devil. In the Middle Ages, the focus moved to the question of human beings' relation with God; the offence they had given him and his dilemma of how to remain just and yet show his love. In the modern era, the focus has been on subjective images of atonement. Here the focus is not on something that happens to us whether we believe it or not, but on our appropriation of what has happened; can we make it our own, be inspired, and follow the example? As we follow the course of the year, we shall see that each of these aspects is important, and when we hold them together instead of choosing between them, a deeper and living appreciation of the reality of the Atonement can grow in us.

The Heart's Free Power

Ulrich Meier

Following the two great cycles of Christian festivals in the first half of the year whose key points are the celebration of Christmas and Easter, the festival year in The Christian Community has two further focal points in the festivals of St. John's Tide and Michaelmas. At Christmas, the event of the incarnation of God in Man is in the foreground; at Easter, we celebrate the new beginning of Man's life through the resurrection of God become man—both gifts of grace from the divine world. In the second half of the festival year, between Whitsun and Advent,—the time which traditionally was counted as the Sundays after Pentecost—the participation of Christians in the further development of Man and Earth becomes the central theme of the Act of Consecration of Man.

Among the multiplicity of Saints' Days within the Christian tradition, two beings stand out who are connected with the working of Christ and man's participation in that work in a particular way: John the Baptist and Michael. In the preaching of the Baptist, we experience how the power of the Word draws close—the Word which

proclaims prophetically the arrival of the heavenly upon the Earth. After St John's Tide follow the ten Gospel readings that lead to Michaelmas. Finally, with Michaelmas Day, the possibility arises for the Archangel, as the 'countenance of Christ', to begin the harvest by making

'the free power' of human hearts receptive for the purpose of the divine world.

In this article we shall consider the contrasting and complementary ways in which Michael and John the Baptist work within Man.

St John's 'word of flame' fills our hearts with the knowledge of the powers of becoming which enabled Christ to enter into the earthly world; Michael now takes up the powers of the heart which turn freely to the divine. The Baptist preached his sermon out of his intimate union with the Spirit of the Father, in order to make the 'word of flame' burn in people's hearts. Michael's deed, by means of which he brings forth from human hearts that which is free in them, gives birth to the power of the Holy Spirit who is to work into the future as the 'Healing Spirit'. We received John's message into our hearts by listening; for Michael to be at work in us, our heart—source of our impulses for action—must become active and release the forces of Resurrection with which the divine world can work upon the new creation.

What happens to the heart when it is not only fired by the Baptist's word of flame but is also touched by the expectant hand of Michael?

Three aphorisms from poems by Rainer Maria Rilke (1872–1926) about the interaction between angels and archangels and human hearts can be helpful to us in understanding this process. In our day-to-day life it is easy for us to forget how near our angel is, and how he moves within the chamber

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of our heart in quite a matter-of-fact way. In a very few words, Rilke reminds us that it is particularly when we are in inner need that we are surrounded by the angels:

*Oh, and when we earnestly
await help from others
Angels cross with a single step, silently
Onto our heart as it lies.*

Letter to Marie Taxis of 12.7.1912

But it is a big step for us not only to be dimly aware of angels as night-time companions and comforters, but also to be open to their possible presence in the seemingly purely mundane experiences of everyday life. Not only the heart 'as it lies', but also the upright and beating heart can become aware of their presence. If a power is to proceed from us freely, this must happen through a consciousness which relates to the world of the angels in a waking way, not only in sleep and dream. In his second Duino Elegy, Rilke touches upon the risk of encountering the archangel not just in the blessed unfreedom of the night but in the wakefulness and the weakness of day:

*But if the archangel now, perilous,
from behind the stars
took even one step down toward us:
our own heart, beating higher and
higher, would beat us to death.*

Here Rilke imagines the immediate presence of the angel in our consciousness to be not only earnest but perilous. Anyone living with The Act of Consecration of Man knows the earnestness—but also the gentleness—of the sacred as it draws near to us in its wholeness, which is at once perceptible to our senses and goes beyond them. In the plain, unpretentious spaces, colours and words, and ultimately in the communion meal we also always experience spiritual beings coming towards us.

The delicate eyes of the heart know of this unconcealed element in the sense-experiences of The Act of Consecration of Man. If now, with the Michaelmas prayers, we move towards the archangel, longing for the eyes of our souls to be opened, we are met by his earnestness and then also by the gentle gaze of Christ.

Ever since the Middle Ages, Michael's presence has been felt throughout the whole year in the fire and the delicate aroma of the incense. He carries our offering up before the countenance of God, so that Christ may unite His offering with ours. The free power of sacrifice, of which the Michaelmas prayer speaks, shows that our loving devotion to the one who gave himself to us in his world-sacrifice is of even greater value than our hope for the saving power of the heavenly world. The flame glowing in our hearts from St. John's Tide now streams forth as Michaelic fire and becomes 'love, creative of being,' at the end of the Offertory. Through this it receives the power to engender 'timeless existence.' Filled with the power of this fire, the heart—beating so powerfully in the encounter with the archangel, as Rilke describes — contributes to the continued existence of the Good.

In one of his numerous angel poems, Rilke describes the encounter with an angel in a beautiful way. The human heart raises itself, weightless in its free power; coming to meet it is the angelic Being, inclining itself towards Man's freedom and uniting the two:

*The angel
Bowing his head a little, he dismisses
such things that limit and direct
for through his heart there
moves, mightily erect,*

*the future endlessly circulating.
Before him deep heaven
stands, full of figures,
and each can call to him:
come, and know —.
Put nothing into his ethereal hands
of all your burdens...*

The Michaelmas prayer, with its beautiful words about the free power of the human heart, culminates in an encounter

between above and below: ascending, this power can purge and bear ‘the earthly into heights of heaven’—and it does so through receiving the Spirit. As the counterpart to this, Michael descends from the heights in order to tread under his feet the powers that bind Man too strongly to the earth. Through him, human beings can find their power in freedom to arise and be re-united with the spirit of the heights.

(Translated by Jon Madsen)

Absence of Mind

Megan Collins

In the Michaelmas epistle we are beckoned towards ‘a higher divining’ of the deed of life and death on Golgotha. Elsewhere Rudolf Steiner reminds us that ‘Were the Mystery of Golgotha comprehensible with human intelligence, ... there would have been no need for it to take place.’ (*The World of the Senses and the World of the Spirit*)

Marilynne Robinson won the Pulitzer Prize in 2005 for the novel, *Gilead*. She is less well-known for her non-fiction, but in *Mother Country* explored issues around the Sellafield nuclear power plant in the UK. *The Death of Adam* engages with a variety of her concerns with her native country, America, lamenting in particular its loss of awareness of John Calvin’s work as one of its founding ‘sources’.

In a 2008 interview Robinson observed that ‘Ordinary things have always seemed numinous to me ... there is a visionary quality to all experience.’ In a 1996 essay ‘Psalm Eight’, she revisits childhood encounters with the other-worldly. She credits Presbyterian restraint with allowing the importance of the Biblical stories to

shine through. Of the parables presented at Sunday school she says: ‘No intrusion on the strangeness of the tales was ever made. ... I am convinced that it was all this reticence, in effect this esotericism, which enthralled me’.

Aropos of the text of Psalm 8 she reminds us that a ‘question is more spacious than a statement, far better suited to expressing wonder.’ Thus: ‘What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?’ (KJV, her choice) She also notes that the strategy of the Psalmist ‘is to close the infinite distance between God and humankind by confounding all notions of scale.’ This reminds me of Rudolf Steiner’s observation (in *World of the Senses*) that all human enquiry must proceed from wonder. We must also develop the mood of reverence, then a quality of feeling oneself in wisdom-filled harmony with the laws of the world and, finally, devotion or self-surrender. Steiner claims that these stages ‘must always run parallel with thinking, never deserting it; otherwise thinking arrives at what is merely correct and not at what is true.’

In 2009 Robinson delivered the Terry lectures at Yale University, which have now been published as *Absence of Mind*. These invitational, public lectures on 'religion in the light of science and philosophy' were instituted in the 1930s 'to the end that the Christian spirit may be nurtured in the fullest light of the world's knowledge'.

Robinson addresses her task by showing how a number of versions of what she calls the 'modernist' project, especially a whole zone of literature typical of the twentieth century which she calls 'parascience', has as its consequence the diminishment of the human being. She sees this outcome both in descriptions that have come to be normative in our world (often versions of Darwinism), and in the fact that we now see ourselves so reductively, compared to the great meanings propounded by metaphysics in its many forms, before it 'passed out of Western thought', having been discredited as 'a naïve exercise which we are now too knowing to persist in.' She focuses on what she calls the 'threshold' experience provided by many of our scientific thinkers (including Marx and Freud), which has supposedly taken us beyond the mythic and into a zone of certainty. Some of these thresholds are now taken for granted in our wider culture, such as the 'truths' of Darwinism, but Robinson reminds us that we can go back across such thresholds when we are moved by 'the voice of the Psalmist, the voice of any poet, saint, or visionary ... who has attested to his or her own sense of the holy.'

In an earlier essay on 'Darwinism' Robinson seems able to be more frank: 'I am sure I would risk offending if I were to say outright that modern thought is a failed project.' 'For old Adam, that near-angel ...,

Darwinists have substituted a [mere] creature.' Her question in conclusion is sobering: 'how much was destroyed, when modern thought declared the death of Adam.' Darwinism implies that we now have a different lineage—one we have given ourselves—and are no longer descended from Adam. I feel that Robinson here intuits that Darwinism kills off the human being in our deepest meanings, for 'adam' or 'the adam' in its first meaning is the Hebrew word for 'human being', and not yet a proper name.

In *Absence of Mind*, Robinson stymies herself in an odd way by not effectively separating 'mind' from 'brain': the metaphysics she uses remains quite a materialist one in the context of trying to engage honourably with modern science. So she provides this definition: 'let us say the mind is what the brain does.' Elsewhere she asks whether the brain 'in interaction with itself' becomes mind. She guesses that humanity belongs to another category of being, but her science cannot take her there: 'Might not the human brain, the most complex object known to exist ..., have undergone a qualitative change'? Is it possible 'that something terrible and glorious befell us, a change gradualism could not predict'?

Early in the book she takes us back to William James, who defined religion as the 'feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine.' We have travelled so far in a century from James's cultural and perceptual norm. For many years a teacher of writing, Robinson recently presented to

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her students a passage from Emerson's *The American Scholar*:

In silence, in steadiness, in severe abstraction, let him hold by himself; ... happy enough if he can satisfy himself alone that this day he has seen something truly. ... He then learns that in going down into the secrets of his own mind he has descended into the secrets of all minds.'

For Robinson's students, 'these words caused a certain perturbation. The self is no longer assumed to be a thing to be approached with optimism, or to be trusted to see anything truly.'

Absence of Mind has a curious subtitle: *The Dispelling of Inwardness from the Modern Myth of the Self*, which suggests the location of Robinson's own anxiety. But in her attempts to name who the dispellers are, she is herself bound up in the materialist language of our culture. She reviews various schools of positivism, whose recent manifestations she observes exclude from reality 'whatever science is (or was) not competent to verify or falsify.' In her view this approach has become the very pervasive but 'blighted twin of modern science', which she calls 'parascience'.

But although she dismisses a whole range of positivist accounts, from Comte's successors, to Freud, to Hamilton's cost-benefit analysis, to E.O. Wilson, she doesn't anywhere describe effectively what this form of science is 'para' in relation to. Mainstream science (para or otherwise) has not yet tapped into the possibilities offered by Steiner's 'spiritual' science, which may bring us closer to the 'higher divining' of our being-human which eludes Robinson in the language she has available to her.

Steiner's spiritual science offers us a discipline of mind, whereby we can learn to be present to our own consciousness as a reliable informant about the world. We can learn to step beyond the tug-of-war between science and poetry (or the realm of artistic insight), and come to know something of transcendent reality even as we struggle with limitations of the here-and-now. After labouring for many pages (in the article 'Psalm Eight') to distance herself from the child-self who felt 'to the point of alarm ... a vast energy of intention all around me', Robinson concludes: 'I think the concept of transcendence is based on a misreading of creation. With all respect to heaven, the scene of miracles is here, among us.'

We may want to concede that this is true, but anthroposophy might help us to see that it disguises the 'true-er'. For Robinson acknowledges 'the constraints of understanding that asserted themselves in me as I grew into this strange culture and century, and which oblige me to use language as little mine as mine is the language of that child.' Her poet-self protests these limitations, but her analytical self can't quite step beyond them, even in the newer book.

Rudolf Steiner gives a lovely summing-up of one aspect of the task before us in a Whitsun lecture:

If we understand the relationship of the physical to the soul of man and to the superphysical—which contains the true freedom of which man is to become a partaker on the Earth,—then in the interconnection of the Christmas, Easter and Whitsun festivals we understand the human freedom on Earth.

One might say that each of the festivals brings us a different 'angle' on creating this

picture—of becoming more fully human. At the end of St. John's Tide we might feel it is the figure of John/IOannes in his various guises, who summons us to our humanity. At Michaelmas we may contemplate what it could mean to become, with Michael, some part of a reflection of 'the countenance of the Christ'. Ultimately all these strivings seem to belong to 'the Son of Man' in us, 'the true 'I' of humanity [in] its future which is hidden in the Christ.'

I want to believe that Marilynne Robinson's intuitive self has met some part of these realities, even though she cannot name them in terms that mainstream science would approve of. She reports John Calvin's observation 'that when a seed falls into the ground it is cherished there, by which he means that everything the seed contains by way of expectation is foreseen

and honored.' ('Psalm Eight') Referring to the ambient silence in the mountains where she grew up, she remembers 'When I was a child it seemed to me sometimes it might be emptiness that would tease my soul out of my body, with some intention too huge even to notice my fragile flesh.'

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Reviews

Christ Consciousness A path of inner development

Danielle van Dijk

Temple Lodge, 2010, £14.99

Review by Anna Phillips

The first thing that strikes me about Christ Consciousness is the beautiful presentation. The front cover shows the famous delicate head of Christ as painted by Leonardo da Vinci, while throughout the book there are sections of full colour illustrations, as well as many black and white pictures and boxes with quotes and verses relating to the text. Danielle van Dijk's sources are apparently manifold and not just intellectual. She states however that her main source is Rudolf

Steiner's work, especially The Fifth Gospel and From Jesus to Christ, also the Nag Hammadi Scrolls, the Dead Sea scrolls and Gnostic texts. She takes a clear and outspoken stance against the official church which has done much to suppress the gnosis and its awareness of karma and reincarnation through the ages, thereby diminishing the strength of Christ's all embracing love, as it threatened their powerful hold over people.

Van Dijk was inspired to write this book in response to the call for World Earth Day on 7-7-2007. This call to raise awareness of the earth, the disasters endured and the threats of global destruction stimulated in her a wish to make people more aware of the need for de-

veloping ourselves to reach the highest possible Christ consciousness that is attainable in our time. This consciousness is intimately bound up with the future of our planet and can be developed through inner work, meditation and practical exercises.

Van Dijk charts the journey from hidden mystery centres and guarded esoteric knowledge to openly accessible knowledge in our time; the modern mysteries are everywhere and their centre is in our heart. She shaped her book in the form of a pentagram, the symbol of the spiritual human being, moving from cosmic events to earthly realities and back.

Part one describes the nature of the Cosmic Christ while in part two she recounts the childhood of the two Jesus children, their family ties and their spiritual origins. She includes modern discoveries like that of the grave of the Holy family in Jerusalem in 1984.

Part three begins with the baptism in the Jordan and includes sections on several of the disciples and their relationship to Christ Jesus. Mary Magdalene in particular is investigated. In part four the Resurrection up to the Whitsun event is explored.

This is carried over into part five where van Dijk pays a lot of attention to researching the phantom body, as it is this aspect which is of most importance to us. The phantom or resurrection body is woven out of the redeemed physical body and penetrated by Christ consciousness. This forms a mantle of light which each one of us is asked to develop through inner work. Christ consciousness is identi-

fied as the Whitsun event, the Holy Spirit or consciousness of universal love, which penetrates human consciousness like a flame of fire igniting an inner resurrection. This event also reflects the baptism in the Jordan when the Christ being entered the man Jesus. She identifies five stages in the development of Christ consciousness.

Other sources in this last part include the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the lore of the chakras, the Holy Grail, Cathar writings, Buddha's eightfold path, the Phoenix, the Rosicrucian path, Manichaeism and the Act of Consecration of Man. It ends with advice for inner work gathered from material provided by Rudolf Steiner: from study of esoteric subjects to six basic exercises and meditations like the Rose Cross meditation. Meditation is important because one detaches oneself temporarily from physical reality and lives in pure spiritual content. Some exercises van Dijk has developed herself based on her own experience and her years of teaching. I like the way she emphasises the importance of doing any of the above out of the motivation of loving yourself as much as you love others, by loving the process more than the results and pointing out that the mood of loving patience towards the path is more effective than if you were doing it out of duty or extreme self discipline.

Working in this way you prepare yourself to bear the karma of humanity, as Christ does. The old laws of karma have changed and it is up to each of us to recognise our interconnectedness. The discovery of the Zero Point Field in quantum

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mechanics shows that mankind is at a point where esotericism and science can reunite, since this field and the Akashic records which Steiner describes are one and the same, claims van Dijk.

Christ Consciousness considerably gathers in pace and intensity in the last and largest part of the book. Relating knowledge gathered from reading other people's discoveries is abandoned for personal connections based on experience, something that generally seems to read more easily as it touches the soul of the reader.

From the beginning, Danielle van Dijk is consistent in telling the reader where she is going and is succinct in keeping them on track. It is not a dense and difficult book despite its mighty subject. It is therefore a shame that she has coloured her writing at times too strongly with personal opinion and a self-righteous, even moralising tone. This may put some readers off. At other times I questioned the validity of statements made, as when she calls demons 'energies' instead of recognising them as beings, including Lucifer. So I would recommend the book because of its strength in being able to pull many facts together in the service of stimulating furthering our true human development, but I would advise to read alertly.

A couple of appendices and many endnotes conclude a vast journey through the development of the consciousness of mankind, leaving the reader with much to question, ponder and practise.

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**.

There is a quiet secluded garden. Most rooms look out over this large and **sheltered garden**. Two rooms look out over the front courtyard and garden.

Upon becoming members of the **Temple Lodge Club** (£1.00 annual membership) visitors seeking Bed & Breakfast accommodation may share in all the facilities the house has to offer.

Breakfast is served

in the ground floor Dining Room looking out over

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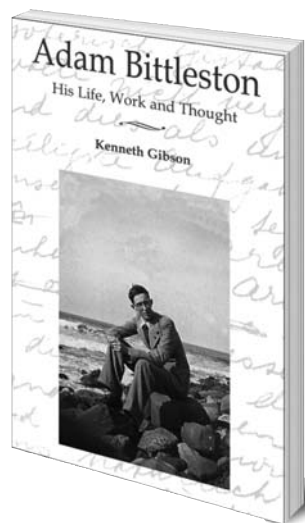
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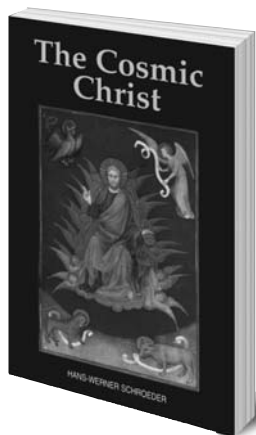
Bittleston was also recognized as one of the foremost theologians of The Christian Community in Britain. He was able to translate spiritual ideas into modern life and in keeping with modern times. He was the author of several books, including *Meditative Prayers for Today* (1953), *The Spirit of the Circling Stars* (1975), *Our Spiritual Companions* (1983), *The Seven Planets* (1985), *Loneliness* (1987) and *Counselling and Spiritual Development* (1988).

Kenneth Gibson is a lecturer at the University of Derby and specialises in adult education, history of education and seventeenth-century ecclesiastical history.



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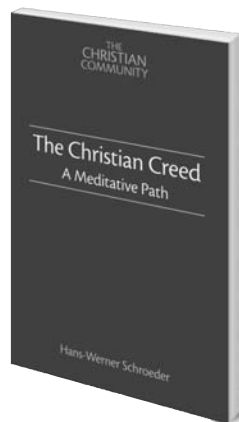
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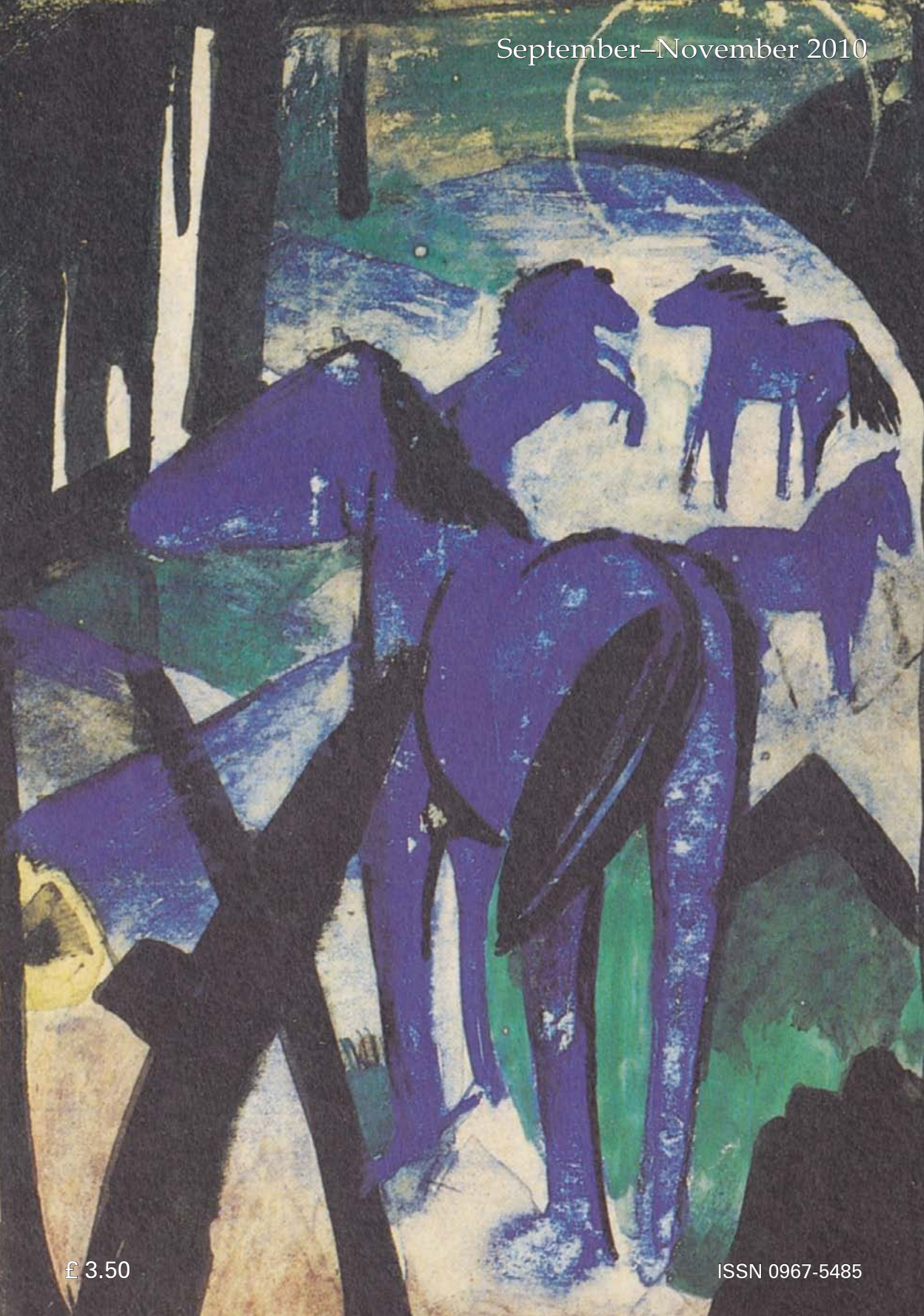
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