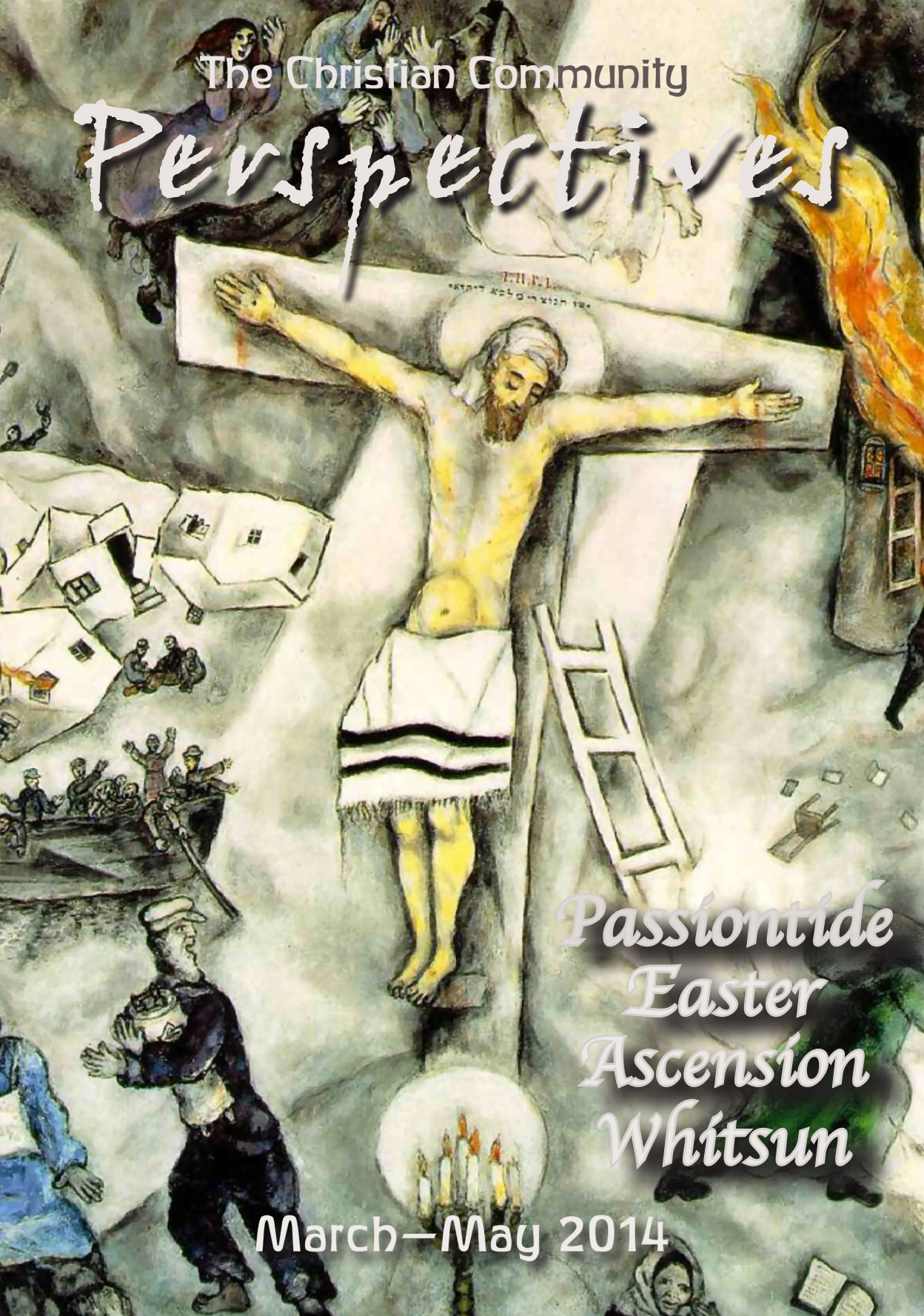
The Christian Community

Perspectives



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March—May 2014

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Cover pictures by Marc Chagall

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Deadlines

June–August 2014 issue: 8 April 2014
September–November 2014 issue: 7 July 2014

Perspectives is published quarterly by The Christian Community, a registered UK charity. It appears at the beginning of December, March, June & September.

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Subscriptions:
UK £14
Europe & Rest of World: £16
Please send cheque, payable to *Perspectives*, to Subscription Manager (address above), or send for more information.

USA: US$26
c/o The Christian Community,
906 Divisadero Street
San Francisco, CA 94115
(Cheques payable to: The Christian Community San Francisco)

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Advertisements:
Send ads five weeks prior to publication to the Editor at the above address.
Quarter page £40,
Half page £70, Full page £130
ISSN: 0967 5485

Printed by:
Neil A Robertson Printers, Forfar

Perspectives

Volume 84 No. 2
March—May 2014

Easter is the wellspring of Christian living and doing. The centre of the Act of Consecration draws us into the sphere of Easter when the priest takes the bread and then the cup and speaks the words that recall the Last Supper. An event from the Holy Week becomes our present reality. For the first Christian millenium, the transformation of bread and wine was so real for those attending the Mass that it did not need to be questioned. Since then, theologians have veered between two extremes: are bread and wine only symbols of Christ, or is there an objective change—one that could be measured chemically, if our instruments were fine enough?

The Easter story contains the key: the women arrive at the tomb expecting that the life of their Lord will have found its tragic and predictable ending. Instead they experience that the place where he was laid is now empty and has become the pointer to the new kind of existence that he has inaugurated.

This Easter mystery is continued in every Act of Consecration. That which we take in with bread and wine is part of a new reality, one which can become more real for us than the world we see with our eyes. Tom Ravetz

Saint Valentine's Day

The year turns outwards, moving between poles
around which all our lives revolve, the heart
and the sun. And here, now, our warmest part,
our lovelight, heart-lit candlelight, ensouls
the bond the heart would make with all of sun-
light's children, every bud around us waiting
to unfold… and show what we are celebrating
like a play, conceived… perceived… Everyone
participates. A festival may follow
a meeting in the street. Sundown's birdsong
—or being surprised by anything stopped
for—becomes our own offering tomorrow
opens with. How suddenly we belong,
poles reversed, world and self a moment swapped.

Cresswell Oaks

above Cresswell Quay, Pembrokeshire
The woods awaiting spring are gathered listening
to human suffering. No coin, or clerk
at counter, figures details like these trees' bark
where moss might ferns' community of nourishing,
community of Earth's illumination,
make round each ivy-tendrilled-lichened-heart,
rebuilding root to bud Natura's part
in soul recovery, true currency, one nation.
The woodland overlooking riverland
meets the winding estuary of man
and woman's loneliness, and into pain
the tide and wind might move from hearts becalmed
Natura brings the Easter of the lamb
that ends the isolation of the brain.

Roy Sadler

Faust and the Easter Bells

Luke Barr

Goethe's Faust is the great modern drama concerning the problem of evil. At the beginning of the play, the protagonist is alone in his dark chamber, a study full of books gathering dust on shelves. He is a Doctor, a man who has acquired much learning. And yet, he is also a picture of the human soul as it is today: alone, in the dark, surrounded by impotent words.

The scene is called 'Night' and has all the qualities of what Jung called Nekyia, a 'night journey' of the soul.

Faust is suffering under the frustration of the limits of science. He has learned all that can be learned from books and academia. He wishes to penetrate deeper into the mysteries of existence. He wishes to overstep the accepted paradigms of the science of his day but feels he must attempt this behind locked doors. The world would neither understand him nor accept him, and might persecute him as some kind of witch. He dabbles in magic and summons up a great Elemental, the 'Earth Spirit' in a manner that recalls a drug-induced hallucinogenic vision. When he 'comes down' from his hubris (or from his drug-vision, as we may more readily understand it), he is terribly depressed.

He is caught between the pride of wanting to be the equal of the Earth-Spirit, and the misery of knowing that all his knowledge is in vain. He is caught between two terrible tempting extremes in the soul, one that pulls him away from his earthly responsibility and the other that tells him that his life is meaningless. All of us recognise these extremes in the human soul. They attract and repulse at the same time. He now begins to submit to the temptation that tells him that his existence is meaningless. In his depression, he prepares to kill himself.

It is at this point that he hears the Easter bells ringing out and a chorus singing 'Christ is arisen! Joy to mortality!' Faust is overwhelmed by emotion, and he recalls his childhood. He feels his early memories—of being close to 'heavenly love', of the joy of child's play, of exploring a friendly world. He weeps, and affirms once more his will to live.

Why did Goethe write this? Does he mean that the Christian religion as it is can save us? Are we passive recipients of salva-

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tion? Does it suffice simply to hear the Easter bells? Surely not, otherwise the drama would end here. But Faust's drama—our drama—does not end here. Faust still has to make the acquaintance of one who will pose an even bigger danger to him—Mephistopheles. Faust has not yet really lived, and his further adventures, accompanied by the devil, will make him more modern, more human. Today we stand at a point where Mephistopheles moves quite freely amongst us. As in Faust, he accompanies us through our lives in all things.

Goethe, an unorthodox Christian, knew that the Easter message held magical qualities that were sufficient to hold modern man back from self-destruction. But in the form that it had acquired in the popular religious life, it would only ever speak to the child in man. Goethe knew that this would not be enough for the future. Man would be sorely tested by Mephistopheles. But Man's fundament upon which he could securely stand would be the Resurrection, the message of Easter. It stands always humbly, modestly in the background of this human drama. It does not compel us merely to believe it. Nor would it wish to.

We see the reality of the Father God all around us in nature, and take it as a given. But the working of the Son God is hidden to our sight. It is our capacity to love. Love has been resurrected. Who can say in what way it has fundamentally changed and is changing since Golgotha?

Steiner called the Resurrection a 'mystical fact'. Without it, Man (as represented by Faust) would not be able to do as he vows to do: to strive ever onward—to evolve spiritually on earth.

This fact of Resurrection, symbolised by the clear and jubilant tone of the bells, enables the rest of the Faust drama to unfold.

Faust feels the truth of Easter, but cannot explain it. For the time being that is enough. But he will have to experience resurrection fully: he will have 'to die and become' (in Goethe's own expression) in life. Only then may he attain the mystical resurrection at the end of the second Part of the drama. This, Goethe tells us, is the future path of mankind.

Until then, the Easter joy sustains us. But what is this joy? What do we mean when we wish one another, a happy Easter? How do we know what sort of joy is being intimated here? Is it similar to the joys we know in our personal lives? Do we still experience the little joys—if not, why not?

The 'I am' of Man is truly at home in a spiritual world of joy. Joy manifests when the human 'I am' bursts through into the everyday personality. It appears briefly, but always with great strength. Its presence nourishes us. It is a divine attribute of Man, as Schiller described it in his 'Ode to Joy'. We

are then, as he expresses it, 'Feuer trunken—drunk on fire'—the fire of the 'I am' blazes in us.

The joy of Resurrection cannot easily be put into words. It can best be pondered in the forms and especially the colours of a picture like Grünewald's Resurrection. The warm orange, yellow and red in the painting activate joy in the contemplative soul.

Like Faust, we will one day progress to an ever greater understanding of Easter Joy. Until then, how may we best serve the spirit of Easter?

There is a Hindu saying: 'The best way possible to worship God is simply to be happy.' This is not an ignorant blitheness. It is the lower self dying. It means letting go of all our egotistical worries. It is a rebirth in joy, many thousands of times, until we resurrect into the light of Easter.

Faust and Mephistopheles, Ernst Barlach

Can People Change?

Deborah Ravetz

When I first read about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, I felt a deep joy. When I tried to understand why, I realised it was because it was a living proof that people can change. The miraculous thing about the work of the Commission was that when perpetrators and victims were able to go through an authentic process of truth and reconciliation, the healing that came did not only benefit the victims; it was mutual. The victims were healed by hearing the truth and being truly seen. In the same way, the perpetrators, who had been carrying their heavy secrets, were healed by being able to own them and express real remorse. I felt very lucky to be alive and to have witnessed these events.

For many years I worked with people in idealistic settings. We were all young and full of energy and we became close in that very special way that is possible between a group of friends working for something bigger than themselves.

In most people's lives there comes a time when idealism is tested. Relationships break down and work is broken up by unresolved conflict. This difficult time is crucial in a person's biography.

If we endure conflict and disappointment and our ideals become inward and freed from outer circumstances, we pass through one of the trials of youth to become a more fully realised human being. If, on the other hand, we decide to discard our ideals because we blame them for our feeling vulnerable, our failures and pain cannot become the catalyst for our becoming and instead become a hardened wound. Such wounds can then become a block to growing, a barren pain.

Psychotherapy speaks of these two kinds of pain. There is legitimate pain: the pain of growing and developing. We meet this pain as we learn how to be in the world, for example in experiencing conflict and failure as described above.

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Illegitimate pain on the other hand is the pain that we cause ourselves when we refuse to live in process. When we try to protect ourselves from being vulnerable, our suffering ceases to be an opportunity and instead can become a neurosis. An example of this would be a young person who decides never again to work with people because he is so hurt by the failure of his first endeavours.

The whole natural world is in a state of growing and dying, of moving from one state to another. For a tree or a plant these processes happen naturally. For a human being, who is free to choose to grow and change or not the process is much more complex and demanding.

In the book Markings, Dag Hammarskjold describes a painful incident that occurred while he was working as the Director General of The United Nations. He had fired someone very near the end of his career. All through his working life this man had been a problem. However no one had dared speak to him for fear of the conversation ending in an emotional meltdown. After losing his job the man had come to see Hammarskjold and asked him why he hadn't spoken to him sooner. He explained that if he had been told about the effect of his behaviour on others he would have had the chance to change. He wept because he was leaving his job with the feeling his whole working life had been a failure.

Dag Hammarskjold describes this incident and then explores why he hadn't spoken sooner. At first he wonders if it was because the man was too labile and he had been afraid to speak to him. Eventually he admits to himself that he had used that fear as an excuse. His real reason for not engaging was simply that he had not cared enough. He was aware of the work and commitment it takes to engage with someone over a problem and he had not wanted to take this on. This story shows how interdependent we are. We are in community when we work and live together. Our interest in each other is essential if we are to become who we are capable of becoming.

It is probably important when asking the question, 'Can people change?' to ask the question 'can I change?' I remember a hugely significant event in my life when I was confronted with this question. I was living in a Camphill community and was in charge of a dormitory of five girls with special needs. I had just finished university and was suffering from a broken heart because my teachers had taught us that the world had no meaning. I had joined a Camphill community for a year out to think and regroup.

Going from University to Camphill was a serious culture shock.

The Camphill Schools have a very high standard of care. The children are given the best education, food and cultural life possible. Helping the children take part in school and community life had a profoundly healing effect on my own broken heart. Their curriculum helped me but I did not know how to help the children.

The turning point in my life came on my first Christmas Eve in Camphill. My children were in their dormitory, dressed in their prettiest dresses and waiting to go down to a special supper. The room was clean and there were

vases of green boughs in the room hung with straw stars. Everything was perfect when I left the room for less than five minutes. When I came back everything was in chaos. Some small incident had caused a row; the vases were overturned and broken and the girls were all screaming or crying. There was no time to sort everything out and still take the girls to supper on time. Not for the first time I had failed in my role as a dormitory parent.

In that moment I found myself falling to my knees, weeping silent tears. What went through my head was a revelation. Although I had been seen previously as a bright girl, I saw that in fact I knew nothing. I realised that with all my education nothing had prepared me to know how to look after these little girls who needed me.

Miraculously as I sat there weeping the girls became calm and gathered around me. In their own clumsy way they tried to comfort me.

In that moment we were bonded. I had reached such a low point that I gave away the picture of myself as a competent person. From that place of vulnerability I gradually began to learn what each girl needed and how to manage them in such a way that there was order and peace.

There are certain situations where the people around us have permission to ask us to change. In the right context criticism can be seen in a constructive way. Art students know that they will not develop unless the teacher is able to say what is wrong with their work. This works best when the student feels respected and valued as well as challenged. On the basis of this respect, the teacher can point out what is not working and the work can be refined. One doesn't feel attacked but relieved, as if someone has given one the solution to a puzzle.

A consultant told me recently of a conversation she had had with some high powered civil servants. She had asked them who they had felt had the most potential to lead amongst the politicians they served. They mentioned the one man they knew who was prepared to be wrong, who was prepared to live in process. It is interesting that it was not detrimental to his career that he could admit he didn't know things or that he needed to learn. His capacity to be vulnerable had the opposite effect. It made the people around him respect and trust him. It gave him authority and inspired trust and loyalty.

Friendships, colleagueships and family relationships often go wrong. When we are unable to speak together and to be vulnerable about our part in these breakdowns in relationship, positions become hardened and situations become immovable. On the other hand these events can be met with openness and vulnerability. This takes courage that is fully repaid with mutual growth both in self-knowledge and in trust. We then become able not only to work on ourselves but also to work together and bring into reality the ideals we hold dear.

Why did God create Moths?

Yaroslava Black

Although they do not sow and do not gather in barns, the birds of the sky have a purpose in the created world. They sing, they pick off insect pests or even mice, they are lovely to look at and put us in mind of heavenly messengers. The lilies of the field admittedly do not drive out the mice, but their beauty and scent are allegedly so delightful that even the glory of Solomon's raiment pales in comparison. Let's not say any more about the scent of lilies just now—after all, scent is basically a matter of personal preference…….

But moths? To what purpose did the Creator include the moths in His development plan? They are not beautiful, there can be no question of scent or song; no treatise has yet been written about their usefulness. Yet somehow the moths have even managed to get into the Gospels. And since those days, also into our wardrobes. They have withstood all the turmoil of history, steadfastly defied war and hunger, since they actually don't eat anything at all and only very rarely need water.

Unlike us. We always need a great deal—and then yet more. Why do we always want more? We collect stamps, beetles, stones, Meissen figurines, hats, tins, nutcrackers, old plates—and many other beautiful and useless things that enrich our lives but also gather dust.

Only on a foundation of prosperity could the collector thrive, for when we were still striking fire from flint and circumspectly consuming the laboriously hunted wild boar, there was of course barely time or energy left over to make a special collection of superfluous things. The first hobby of a female person was probably making a necklace of the teeth of a killed animal, since she, being the weaker member of the family, guarded the fire and perhaps out of boredom polished the teeth of the hunted prey to make a bracelet, or scribbled on the wall with a piece of charcoal. But this collection of pictures on the wall did not belong to any one person, it was no one's private property. It could neither be auctioned off nor taken along when moving.

How many remover's boxes does a person fill nowadays from a single wardrobe? Perhaps we would not even ask ourselves this question if it were not for the moths. For that is where they lurk in the darkness, munching away through

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pure Schadenfreude, and drive us to despair. For behind the closed wardrobe doors so many forgotten treasures lie hidden: little dresses and jackets belonging to the children, Grandma's quaint heirlooms, scarves and hats knitted by old friends, Grandpa's trilby hat, carnival costumes from the best years of our youth, Indian silk, Irish wool. All this is not only our property, it is also loaded with precious memories. It smells of far-distant countries and adventures, declarations of love, tokens of friendship, childhood happiness. And now comes the bitter question of disappointment: when and how on earth did this glory of the past turn into moth-fodder? We don't know. One day we open the wardrobe and look through the holes into the void.

A hole that damages the wholeness of matter and makes it unusable is nothing but a portion of void, created by a foreign, outside force. We must fill it again, or we feel compelled to distance ourselves from the entire hole-structure. Is this merely an encroachment upon the inside of the wardrobe, or is it, in fact, an encroachment upon our very selves?

Along with this feeling of powerlessness, certain wise sayings can pass through our minds: Buddha teaches that anyone wishing to reach the highest stage of human development must not strive after belongings. Meister Eckhart's teaching is that in order to gain spiritual riches we should own nothing, empty ourselves and not stand in our own way with our 'I'. Jesus teaches that we should not gather treasure which can be eaten by moths and stolen by thieves. 'For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also' (Matt. 6,19); and no-one likes to think of his heart being in the wardrobe.

It seems virtually impossible to fulfil these exalted aims nowadays. The 'I' defines itself ever more by property and belongings: I am what I have, what I consume. And therefore I am forced to go on consuming. For soon what I already own no longer satisfies me: I need more. Without noticing it, we are caught up just as much in the wealth of affluence as in the prison of selfishness.

In the course of time, our relationship to the word 'having' has changed. As recently as last century we did not speak so often of 'having'. Instead of saying 'I have a problem' one would say 'I am worried', instead of 'I have a doctor' it would be 'I am a patient of Dr. Such-and-such', instead of 'I have a wife' one would say 'I am married'. Nowadays we hear almost exclusively 'have': my wife, my children, my doctor, my salary, my problems.

This gives an appearance of strength: I have someone at hand, somebody to whom I can give orders, and I also have someone I can blame for my misfortune or illnesses. If that is taken away, it leads to the experience

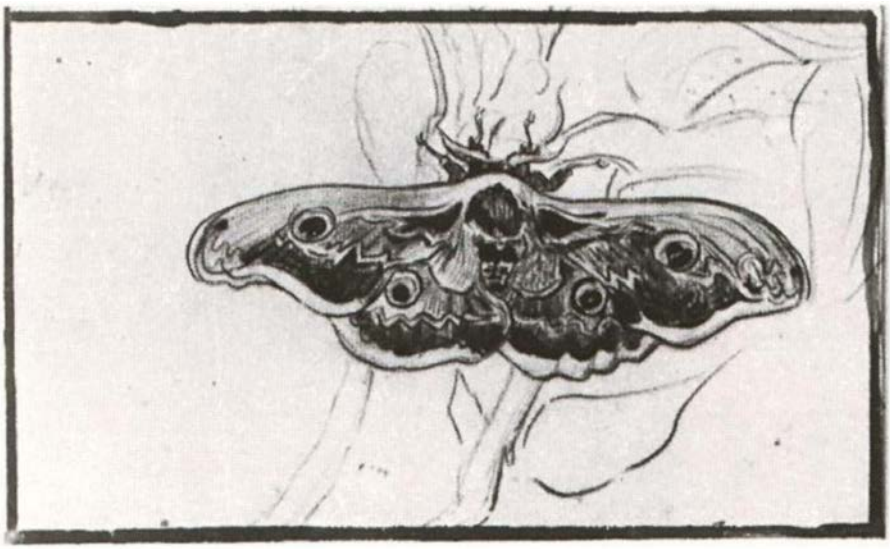
of an unbearable emptiness. The 'I am something' disappears' and one is confronted with 'I have nothing' like a dark hole. Life seems to have no meaning any longer, for we have been used to measuring the meaning of our life by what we have and not by what we are. That is the great illusion of wealth, of belongings. In reality, nothing of what we think we have belongs to us. Only what we ourselves are belongs to us. If we are in possession of joy, courage, faithfulness, honesty, it means that we are joyful, courageous, faithful, honest.

Great affluence is just as much a great burden as is great poverty. A treasure that can endure both in the desert and in the city is this: to be much and to have little. And the moths help us on the way towards this goal. We open the door and become aware of nothingness gaping at us from the holes. Do we, too, stand there gaping—or do we rejoice at the liberation? Are we reminded by the squeaking of the door of the vow of poverty taken by the noble knights of long ago: we have nothing, yet the world belongs to us?

Who knows? Perhaps those little gluttonous beasties aren't, after all, quite so pointless as they often seem to us. The moths remind us of something: matter is not everlasting. It can be eaten; it is perishable. Hence one cannot possess it. The beauty of childhood memories, the warmth of words of love, the light of insight, the strength of friendship: these are the precious treasures of the heart. They cannot be taken from us. They belong to eternity.

Die Christengemeinschaft February 2013

Translated by Jon Madsen



Moth, chalk drawing by Vincent Van Gogh

Patterns in the Universe and in Human Lives

Rev. James H. Hindes

When God made the universe and the human race he used many of the same patterns for both. The physical universe in which we live came from the spiritual world in a series of steps. Using heat, pressure and a great deal of time the angels formed the 92 naturally occurring elements crystallizing spirit into matter. They began with hydrogen, a substance so light that it rises up through the atmosphere toward the stars whenever it is left alone by itself. So close to the spirit, just barely matter, it seems to want to go back to its home back to in the spiritual world. However, it is needed here to keep the earth from becoming too hard, too dense, too fast. Usually it is bound up with other elements. Water, for example is made of two atoms of hydrogen tightly hugging one atom of oxygen which only feels complete in their embrace: H2O. Without hydrogen we would have no water, no life on earth.

Scientists over the last 200 years have identified the 92 basic elements as well as the complex patterns found in their interactions with one another. The result of all that research is known as the Periodic Table, an arrangement that assigns numbers one (hydrogen) through to 92 (uranium) to the elements and reveals an amazing array of patterns. The simplest pattern shown is size and weight: during creation every element appears to have arrived out of the spiritual world bigger and heavier (and often denser) than the preceding element. This is reflected in the periodic table in the 'atomic weights' attached to each element. Scientists arbitrarily assigned the first element, hydrogen, an 'atomic weight' of one. Each succeeding element has been 'weighed' and then assigned its own atomic weight. These weights are always a multiple of hydrogen's one. Helium is twice as heavy as hydrogen and yet will still rise up through the air because it is lighter than air. Oxygen (the 8th element) for example is 16 times heavier than hydrogen, nitrogen (the 7th element) 14 times heavier.

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At first the ability to react and combine with other elements increases very quickly and each new element is very different from the last: nitrogen (7) follows carbon (6), chlorine (17) follows sulphur (16) while aluminium, silicon and phosphorus are element numbers 13, 14, 15. Each new

element brings something radically new, making the world much richer and far more interesting. However, as the elements become heavier they become increasingly similar to the preceding element. For example, iron (26), cobalt (27) and nickel (28) are very similar, though not identical. They are strong, sometimes brittle, metals with atomic weights of 56, 59 and 59. Already they are 59 times heavier than hydrogen. This pattern is seen also in human lives: as a human soul is descending into the earthly realm the first 20 or 30 years are usually very different from each other bringing new and interesting experiences that enrich and enliven one's biography. Often thereafter questions of professional life, domestic situation and circle of friends become so settled that, in retrospect, the years become very similar even blending into one another. And then heaviness can set in.

In the periodic table, by the time we get to elements numbered 57 (Lanthanum) through 71 (Lutetium) we are in a world of deadly monotony. These elements, sometimes called rare earth elements (although not all are rare) are so similar in appearance, chemistry and physical properties that they are nearly impossible to separate from one another. Hence, their discovery and identification extended well into the 20th century. It can appear as if each new element were merely a repeat repetition of the previous one. Even though the elements numbered beyond 71 occasionally display very different characteristics, for example, gold (79), mercury (80) and lead (82), which has an atomic weight of 207, nevertheless, heaviness, density and repetition are the rule.

Then something entirely new and unexpected enters the picture, an impulse that could not have been predicted from what had gone before. The last naturally occurring element, Uranium (92), which is 238 times heavier than hydrogen, displays best this new phenomenon. There is a natural limit to how densely matter can crystalize. When earthly matter becomes too heavy, too dense, it begins to fall apart and 'dis-integrate' from within the very core of the atom, the nucleus. Atomic radiation is given off: gamma rays, alpha and beta particles. This radiation is deadly to life. Radioactivity and death is the end of the road for matter, and the death of matter means the end of earthly life.

Death is not simply the opposite of life; it is a force that destroys life. The opposite of death is resurrection, the power to wrest life from death. In the world of earthly matter there is no power to resurrect. That power comes, like matter itself, from the world of spirit. But it can only come through human beings. We have the task of overcoming the death of matter. As Paul said, all creation awaits redemption; this includes the very atoms of matter.

How are we to do this? Only by first of all overcoming death in all its forms in our own lives. The same pattern seen in spirit's descent into mat-

ter is seen in our lives. Once we have passed through the adventures and transformations of youth we must face increasing seriousness in our lives. The heaviness of karma, the weight of our personal obligations and the dark threat of life's dreary repetitions can depress and discourage us. Sometimes we even fear that matter's destiny could be ours: disintegration. These difficulties are the consequence of living in a universe made of matter.

However, the advantages of living in such a universe are even greater: we are free to think, feel and act as we see fit. In this our freedom we can think and question; we can wake up to the gifts, abilities and powers that are ours by virtue of being human beings. Fundamentally, we can inquire as to the meaning of life, the meaning of our own personal lives. We are free to think of, and long for, the virtues and human qualities that give life meaning: goodness, beauty, courage, faithfulness, honesty, hope, integrity, persistence, forgiveness, compassion, purity, self-restraint, sacrifice and most importantly, love, which we can learn only in freedom. Consciously longing for and thinking these virtues with clarity, is actually a way to describe prayer. We are praying when we deeply long to do better, to help others and to improve ourselves.

When we pray again and again, that is, repetitively, something entirely new can come into our lives that could not have been predicted from what has gone before. Christ's strength and spiritual light will enter our souls; this is the strength to carry and transform the burdens of our lives. Christ does not free us from the weight of the world by magically lifting us out of the world of matter and back into the world of spirit. He came to earth to bring the power of resurrection to earthly matter.

God could only help by becoming a human being. That is because we human beings are the only spiritual beings possessing consciousness of self that actually live in this world of matter; matter permeates the essence of our physical bodies. That is why the power of resurrection began in the body of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. With Christ's power in our souls we can, with time and prayer, overcome the death in our soul and then resurrect this world whose natural fate would otherwise be the death of matter.

The new impulse that enters our lives is not disintegration, as with matter, but integration. The dark, all too human, corners of our soul are integrated with our higher self, which is carried by Christ. His transforming light streams into our souls, and thus into our bodies, bearing our true self; that self then can truly say, 'Not I, but Christ in me.' Thus integrated we become an 'integer,' a wholeness possessing integrity. Together with Christ we can then help to carry and transform the weight of the world.

Transformation in Fairytales

Elke Blattmann

From Die Christengemeinschaft April 2009

Fairytales are often about transformation: a person has lost himself and now appears in a different form. As the tale unfolds it describes the path of redemption, the finding of a new, often better and more beautiful humanity. On this path, help from others acting out of love is always necessary. The transformation may be the consequence of a curse or spell (e.g. 'Hans the Hedgehog' from Grimm's Fairytales), it may be given by destiny (e.g. 'The Donkey') or it is brought upon someone by himself with help by adversarial powers (e.g. 'Brother and Sister').

And some fairytales give a glimpse into the process of a transformation which is initiated by diabolic powers and whose outcome is at first uncertain. They describe how the protagonist of the story makes a pact with such powers and thereby gambles with his very humanity. These fairytale heroes are often discharged soldiers. They are no longer needed for warfare, since peace has been declared. Now they enter upon another battlefield.

This is the kind of young fellow who appears in the story 'Bearskin' in Grimm's Fairytales. Discharged from active service and turned away by his brothers, he realises that he is in danger of starvation, and he despairs. Then the Devil appears and offers him money, as much as he could ever need. In return, he must live by the Devil's rules for seven years: 'If you die before these seven years are up, then you are mine; but if you stay alive, then you are free, and in addition you will be rich for the rest of your life.' This deal is mortally dangerous, but the soldier who has so often confronted death decides to risk it again now and agrees.

First of all the Devil tests him to see whether he is afraid: he causes a great bear to come lumbering towards him. This does not frighten the soldier, he 'shouldered his gun and shot the bear in the muzzle, so that it collapsed and no longer moved.'

Then follow the Devil's stipulations:

For the next seven years you may not wash yourself, nor comb your beard and hair; you may not cut your nails, nor may you pray the Lord's Prayer. Also, I will give you a coat and a cloak which you must wear during that time.

The cloak mentioned was the bear's skin: 'Then he drew the skin off the bear and said: This shall be your cloak and also your bed, for on it you must sleep and may not lie upon any other bed. And because of this garb you shall be called Bearskin.'

These, then, are the Devil's requirements:

The soldier is
1. to be without fear
2. to refrain from washing
3. not to comb his beard and hair
4. not to cut his nails
5. not to pray the Lord's Prayer
6. to wear the Devil's cloak
7. to use the bearskin as a cloak
8. not to sleep in a bed

It is unusual for the Lord's Prayer to be mentioned in a fairy-tale. Here it comes from the mouth of the Devil in the form of a prohibition. And that appears to be the adversary's strongest weapon. All the Devil's stipulations are intended to cause the soldier to lose his humanity. In the first instance these attacks are aimed at his outer appearance, but the ban on the Lord's Prayer strikes at his inner nature, it concerns his soul.

It was this unusual reference to the Lord's Prayer that made me examine this prayer more closely. In doing so, I noticed that it has the same number of stages as the Devil's pact with 'Bearskin', and so I placed them next to each other:

1. Our Father Who art in the heavens (fear)
2. Hallowed be Thy name (washing)
3. Thy kingdom come (combing hair)
4. Thy will be done, as above in the heavens so also on the earth (cutting nails)
5. Give us this day our daily bread (no Lord's Prayer)
6. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors (Devil's coat)
7. And lead us not into temptation (Bearskin cloak)
8. But deliver us from the evil (bed)

In comparing the Lord's Prayer with what the Devil requires from the soldier, I noticed first of all that the prayer for the forgiving of debts corresponds to the soldier having to wear the Devil's green coat. In the coat pockets are a never-ending supply of money with which 'Bearskin' can forgive debts. This spurred me on to investigate and compare further. And what I found astonished me, for the Devil's stipulations are, pictorially, the

opposite of the Lord's Prayer, step for step. In a sense, the Devil's pact is a negative Lord's Prayer.

Let us now look at this, stage by stage:

1) Our Father Who art in the heavens.
With reverence and awe ('fear of God') the supplicant turns to God. The Devil demands that the soldier should have no fear; in the gunning down of the bear there is truly no place for reverence or awe!

2) Hallowed be Thy name.
'Bearskin' may not wash himself. Already in the second year his face was so covered in dirt that if cress had been sown there, it would have sprouted! He loses his face, he can no longer be recognized. He loses his identity, his name.

3) Thy kingdom come.
A kingdom is an ordered, structured system that is governed. 'Bearskin' may not comb his hair and beard, he may not put them in order and structure them—there is to be chaos. His face was almost obscured by his hair, his beard was like a piece of coarse felt.

4) Thy will be done.
The supplicant puts his own will last and asks for the will of God. Hands and feet are the instruments of the human will. The will can be expressed through the limbs. 'Bearskin'must o allow these organis of the will to 'grow wild'—his fingers had claws, already in the second year! In the course of the following years his hands became less and less human.

5) Give us this day our daily bread.
This is countered by the ban on the Lord's Prayer. That makes clear the significance of this prayer in the story. It is the daily bread that sustains our human nature, that nourishes the soul, and it is this that the Devil denies 'Bearskin.'

6) And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.
The Devil's surfeit of money, could be the soldier's undoing, could lead to him overestimating himself. But 'Bearskin' does not succumb to this! He never failed to do anything that was 'good for him and bad for the money,' using it sensibly, doing good deeds where he could and paying off other people's debts.

7) And lead us not into temptation.
The soldier must crawl into the bear's pelt and take on the name 'Bearskin.' The youth is to become a bear, an animal. Now, as regards their splendid one-sidedness, their special abilities, animals are far

superior to human beings in many things. On the path to the creation of Man, the animals came into being and were content with their various specific abilities. Looked at in this way, every animal is the image of a temptation. Human beings refrained from developing any specialized skills and so retained the capacity to learn and create culture—and ultimately to be omnipotent.

8) But deliver us from the evil.

'Bearskin' may not sleep in a bed. He is to crawl into the bearskin like an animal. It is part of being human to sleep in a bed. Human beings remove their everyday clothes and surrender themselves, unprotected, to the warm cushions and blankets. In this way they can let go and give themselves up to sleep. An animal sleeps differently—it always remains watchful.

The Devil is a master tempter, and his tactics ought actually to have been successful. The transformation of the soldier's external appearance was to make the soul of 'Bearskin' forfeit to the Devil. Initially, when the soldier realized with whom he was speaking, he had said: 'If it does not endanger my salvation; otherwise, I will have nothing to do with it.' To which the Devil had replied: 'You shall see for yourself.' And 'Bearskin' truly did see for himself and did not enter upon anything that could hurt his innermost being. Thus he was able to preserve his soul.

The faithfulness and love of his bride were also indispensable; she did not take fright at his monstrous appearance but was aware of his good heart. Furthermore, he was helped by the many prayers of intercession for him offered up by the grateful beggars that he had helped. Thus, despite the ban on the Lord's Prayer, his connection with the divine world was retained. And he knew whom he had to thank for his release from the demonic transformation: 'By God's grace I have regained my human form and have become clean once more.' And he was much handsomer than he had ever been before.

But although the soul of 'Bearskin' slipped through his fingers, the Devil did not give up and even presented himself as the winner in the end. For the bride's two sisters who, appalled, had rejected the unsightly 'Bearskin', were finally so angry and furious that they killed themselves, one of them by hanging, the other by drowning. And so their souls became the booty of the Devil and thus he gets to speak the last words in the fairytale: 'You see, I have now got two souls in the place of your one.'

An austere ending!

(Translated by Jon Madsen)

Glenilla Road, London 24th and 25th January 2014

Fiona Chapman

Some time ago, we took the decision to consolidate our work in London by bringing the two centres together into one congregation. Following the building of the new church in Temple Lodge, the priests responsible and the London Trust came to the realisation that we can best work to our purpose by concentrating our work and life in the new centre. Following a long and at times painful process of consultation with members and friends of the Community, we decided to put the church out of commission and sell the site. This is one member's description of the ceremony celebrated together.

Though not currently a member of the congregation in London, I did meet The Christian Community there and was married in the church at Glenilla Road. It felt important to me to go to accompany the ending of the work of The Christian Community there and I should like to share some impressions of the events held to mark this.

Most of all, what remains is the sense of a working towards a climax, a gradual multidimensional build up towards the final event on Saturday with the simple, yet almost overwhelmingly powerful and moving ceremony for the deconsecration of the church.

But to return to the beginning. On Friday evening, Christian Maclean gave an invigorating picture of the energy and resourcefulness of Alfred Heidenreich who was the pioneer priest in bringing the work of The Christian Community to England and spreading it to the rest of the English-speaking world. Above all it was a picture of a man who moved forward, taking action, making decisions, making sure that people and places were offered the opportunity to take steps into the unknown, enabling change for people and places—even though we know (though Christian did not go into this) that feathers were sometimes ruffled and people felt toes had been trodden on. But great deeds were accomplished and the life of The Christian Community grew in England and the English-speaking world through his courageous decision-making and his resolute turning to face to the future.

With the reading in The Close of Day and Tom Ravetz's short address, we moved to another dimension. From The Book of Revelation, Chapter 14, he called us to recognise the inner, spiritual realitie s of 12, and even more, 12 x 12, calling us to be aware in, and act from, our cosmic inner being. This theme was further developed in another direction by Roger Druitt's address on Saturday morning. There we were called on to contemplate what jewels were created by inner endeavour and effort in the life of an individual and that of a congregation and the souls who had worked together to create spiritual substance. In remembering those who had worked in this way in the place where we were gathered, we were called on to take the jewels created by them further on their journey into the future. Sitting in the shifting sunlight and cloud coming through the church windows, almost tangible in the atmosphere within the church was this connection being woven between souls past and souls present, joining together to take what had been created in the many years before this day forward into the fu-

ture, a future that none could see but which all knew could and would be created. There then followed the wonderful words of The Act of Consecration of Man with the cosmic messages and calls to humanity in the Epiphany Epistles.

At coffee, there was much warmth shared in the relatively small group present who had decided to stay on after the service—members of the London congregation, friends from other congregations and those like myself who had come to honour more of a historical connection—and even a young Spanish man who found himself there at his very first experience of The Act of Consecration of Man in English, and his second experience of The Christian Community. There was also a moment's pause to remember those who sent their greetings but could not come, and also to remember those whose pain led to their choice not to come. Roger Druitt then described the form the deconsecration ceremony would take and we were all invited to move silently into the church and sit there in quiet to witness this ceremony, then leave again in silence afterwards.

Peter van Breda is a priest of The Christian Community in London.

The ceremony itself is stark it its simplicity: the walls have to be scraped, scraped through the surface layer, but not excessively deeply. The altar picture had been removed, the altar made bare, the flowers and the table for substances also removed, so all looked very empty but dignified. Three people then undertook the simple task: Peter von Breda taking care of the altar wall, while two members of the London congregation moved round the other walls, from each side of the altar wall to the middle of the back wall. Each held a wide scraping tool and together they moved scoring into the wall about waist height, to and fro over the altar wall and once round the whole church. Hearing the noise, the sound of metal scraping along plaster, accompanied by the solemn movement of each person, was for me an experience of searing pain that echoed on in the silence that followed. Then almost as a miracle, there came the sense of a lightening, a gentle, but strong flame of light rising from below, from within the church and moving upwards and on outwards into the winter sunshine, wind and rain outside: something was breathing into the heights, but not in a way that it felt it was leaving, more moving onwards. The pain lifted and it felt good to walk out; the building was now free to go too. Something had ended but in a way that could also be experienced as offering something for a new beginning. Initially I had felt I was not sure about staying on for the final part of the ceremony through fear that it would leave a sad, depleted memory of a place I had loved. But I can wholeheartedly say how glad I am that I did stay and that I went through the pain to the resolution and to receive the gift of a sense of wonder that this experience gave me.

Reviews

Mary and Sophia
The Feminine Element in the Spiritual Evolution of Humanity

Michael Debus

Translated by Jutta Teigeler and James Hindes

Floris Books, 2013

Reviewed by
Maarten Ekema, Stourbridge

As though a casement light will flood,
That darkness may be ended.
So through her maiden motherhood,
The child of God descended.

No human figure more holy or more humble appears during the season of Advent and Christmas than that of the Virgin Mary. In innumerable carols, plays, pageants and paintings her gracious motherhood shines forth, surpassed only by the glory of her holy child.

The verse quoted above from the well-known Christmas carol Sion's Daughter presents us with a wonderful image to help us understand the mystery of Christ's incarnation upon earth. Just as light is able to pass through glass without in any way changing it, so God's son passed through Mary's womb without in any way changing her purity.

Well, we think, that may be okay for the simple medieval mind. But we in the 21st Century demand more than pious images. The stumbling block to a modern understanding of the role of Mary in the birth of Christianity is the concept of virgin birth, a contradiction in terms which learned theologians down the ages have tried to reconcile without real success.

Luke's gospel describes the mother of Jesus as a virgin. Both Luke and Matthew are quite clear that Mary did not 'know' Joseph. It was the Holy Spirit which overshadowed her and conceived her son—a powerful image for the Jewish people as it made a comparison with God 'overshadowing' the temple in Jerusalem as a sign of His presence there.

The first three centuries of Christianity paid little attention to the mother of Jesus. The debate at the time centred on the whether Christ was of the same essence (homoousios) as God, or whether he was of similar essence (homoiousios) to God—the 'iota' question. This was settled in favour of homoousis at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325, which also defined key aspects of the Holy Trinity, as well as the basis tenets of the Christian creed still in use today.

The question then arose whether Mary gave birth to Jesus Christ, who was both Man and God, or to the Son of God who, having been declared homoousios was of a purely divine nature. By proclaiming Mary to be the mother of God (Theotokos, literally 'God-bearer') at the Council of Ephesus in 431, the church made a statement not only about the nature of Jesus Christ, but also about the nature of Mary.

The term Mother of God became dogma and eventually led to new questions concerning the nature of Mary. It was recognised that a human being subject to original sin could not possibly give birth to a divine being because the sin of Adam and Eve was hereditary and all humans were subject to it. If Mary was indeed the mother of God her own birth would have to be without sin, i.e. immaculate. Preserving the purity of the Virgin Mary in the mystery of her conception became a concern in the Christian church from the 7th Century onwards.

Mary's immaculate conception became an established article of faith, but not dogma, in the Catholic church in the 13th Century when the Franciscans won the argument against the Dominicans who were against it. The earliest known representation of the subject was painted by Carlo Crivelli in 1492. It can be seen in the National Gallery in London. Two angels carry a banner with the Latin inscription As I was conceived in the mind of God from the beginning, thus have I been made. These words echo the praise of Wisdom (So-

phia) in the apocryphal book of Sirach which was devoutly associated with the Virgin by medieval theologians.

In 1854, the immaculate conception was proclaimed Catholic dogma. Mary was conceived by her parents Anna and Joachim in the normal way, but through special divine intervention no hereditary forces entered into her. In this way she was exempted from original sin.

> *The Blessed Virgin Mary in the first instance of her conception was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin by a singular privilege and grace granted by God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race.*

From here it was only a short step to the entirely logical conclusion that if Mary was not stained by original sin, she wouldn't have to pay the wages of sin, i.e. death.

And so, on all Saints Day 1950, Pope Pius XII put into place the final piece of Marian doctrine in the form of a new Catholic dogma, the dogma of the bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary.

> *…after the completion of her earthly life Mary was assumed body and soul into the glory of heaven.*

Whereas Christ ascended into heaven by his own power, Mary was assumed, or taken up, by God. She did not do it under her own power.

A virgin birth; a woman not subject to original sin; the arrival of her physical body in heaven. What are we to make of all this? Are these just legends which we should allow pious Catholics to believe? Or is there more to it? Credo, quia absurdum said St Augustine, I believe, because it is absurd. I am engaging my powers of faith precisely because I can't get my head round it.

Michael Debus, in this difficult and challenging book, attempts to resolve or explain these 'absurdities'. On the whole he does so successfully, provided the reader accepts his premises, all of which are ultimately derived from the work of Rudolf Steiner, particularly from his Fifth Gospel.

Readers of this book are expected to be familiar with the idea of reincarnation, at least as a working hypothesis. In addition readers are advised to keep an open mind about the differences in the stories of Jesus' birth as narrated in the gospels of Luke and Matthew, and to go along with the hypothesis that they tell about the births of two different children, and hence of two different Mary's. The concepts of male and female must be kept fluid and freed from the constraints imposed upon them by our knowledge of reproduction. Careful attention must be paid to the concept of a 'syzygy' which describes an original archetypal unity divided into two parts, masculine and feminine, in the broadest possible meanings of the words. There are five of these archetypal pairs in the course of cosmic evolution, culminating in Adam and Eve on the one hand and Mary and Jesus on the other.

After an introductory chapter describing male and female archetypes, the creation of man and woman in the two creation stories of Genesis is discussed. In the first of these, the created human being is androgynous, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them (Genesis 1:27). God was pleased with his creation, and behold, it was very good.

However, in the second creation story the mood is quite different. The creator is no longer Elohim (God) but Jahve (the Lord), and man is formed from the dust of the ground. In addition, his creation precedes that of the animals, which were created because the Lord noticed that it was not good for man to be alone. Something had been set in motion which needed to be corrected by providing a companion for Adam.

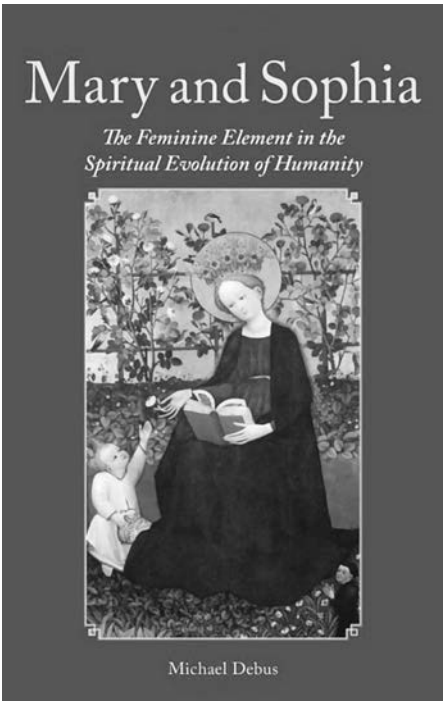
But no companion could be found amongst the animals, and so the Lord created wo-man, so called by God because she was taken out of Man (Genesis 2:23). The Hebrew word is *isha* (where ish means man or human being), translated as Vir-ago into Latin. Note that this is not Eve, who only appears after the expulsion from Paradise. Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living (Genesis 3:20). The division of the original androg-

ynous human resulted in disobedience to God (original sin), the expulsion from Paradise, and the beginning of personal karma.

However, another division not mentioned in Genesis also took place. Whereas Adam and Eve and all subsequent generations were condemned to toil on Earth, the feminine aspect of Adam remains in Paradise. It is not subject to original sin, and does not accumulate personal karma. In the fullness of time this pure feminine side of the original Adam divides and incarnates as mother and son in Mary and Jesus. While Debus has little time for traditional Catholic beliefs, he does provide in these first chapters, perhaps unintentionally, a framework within which the reader can come to an understanding of how the 'absurdities' of the virgin birth and the immaculate conception came to be accepted as central tenets of the Catholic faith.

The second half of the book concerns itself mainly with the various manifestations of Sophia. Chapter 5 discusses the nature of the divine Sophia with reference to the Old Testament, the early church fathers, and the writings of the three Russian mystics Vladimir Solovyov, Pavel Florensky, and Sergei Bulgakov. Chapter 6 concerns itself with the human Sophia and links back to that section of the book relating the events before the expulsion from Paradise. The last three chapters, Mary-Sophia and Christ, Mary-Sophia and the Holy Spirit, and Sophia Today look more to the future by focussing on the different syzygies (helpfully summarised in a flow diagram), the deed at the foot of the cross, and quoting more than once Steiner's admonition that it is now up to us to move beyond nature and society, and to move evolution forward by each individual giving themselves the finishing touches of their creation.

The inclusion of black and white reproductions of Renaissance paintings by among others Grünewald, Botticelli (in the Birmingham Art Gallery) and Girolamo dai Libri (in the London National Gallery) makes these challenging chapters more accessible to the general reader. For those



wishing to more fully engage their hearts rather than their intellects, it would be a relatively easy task to find representations of the depicted themes in other paintings from the period. For those with a romantic inclination there is Philipp Otto Runge's painting 'Morning' (Der kleine Morgen, from1808).

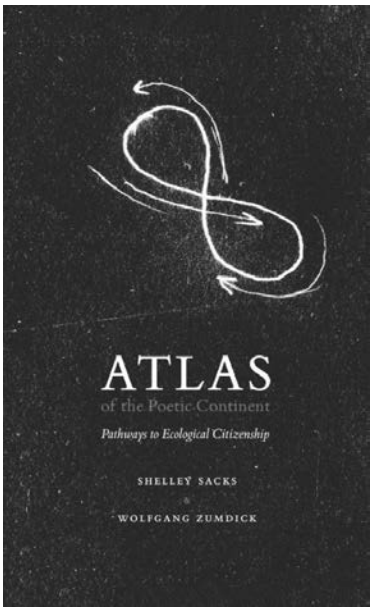
What about the third 'absurdity' mentioned earlier, that of the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven? Are traditional Catholics and believers in a renewed Christian faith looking at the same spiritual facts, only with different glasses? How can we understand this last Marian dogma? That it follows logically from the immaculate conception is clear. That her physical body, bones, blood, etc cannot be transported into heaven, not even through some cosmic 'wormhole', is equally clear.

The dogma of the bodily assumption expresses the belief that when the time came for Mary to leave the earth, 'after the completion of her earthly life', she did not die, but was taken up into a state of Blessedness

'bodily'. She had reached that state of perfection which all other mortals will only reach at the end of earth days as described in the Book of Revelation. She was the first to receive the blessings which all will be given in the fullness of time. From her exalted position she acts as an intermediary in our relation with God. This is most clearly summed up in the traditional Hail Mary'.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Where is Sophia today, and what does she expect from us? As Mary-Sophia she became a human being on earth, gave birth to a son, and died when he was 12 years old. She united spiritually with the second (Matthew) Mary 18 years later and was thereby able to experience the death of her son on the cross three years after that. She is unique in that as a human being she was untouched by the Fall and in that capacity is able to work for the salvation of mankind by teaching us how to heal a fallen world, and take our place as creative spiritual beings in a universe of love.



Atlas of the Poetic Continent—Pathways to Ecological Citizenship

Shelley Sacks and Walter Zumdick

Temple Lodge Press, £14. 99

Deborah Ravetz

This book is, in itself, a lovely object.

It is beautifully produced. It contains both texts and images.

It is small enough to carry around and that is important because of the kind of book it is.

The book grew out of a social sculpture process in a city. People were asked both as individuals and as groups to reflect on the question, 'What am I doing in the world?'

Social Sculpture is a term invented by the German artist Joseph Beuys. Beuys sought to widen the remit of art to go beyond what is conventionally thought of as art to include human beings who are striving for individuation and transformative community. It is our capacity to imagine and to act out of what we can imagine that Beuys had in mind when he asserted that everyone is an artist.

Social Sculpture moves us because of its capacity to create spaces where it is possible look at our deepest questions and to find creative ways of responding to those questions. A well-crafted social sculpture space empowers us and gives rise to hope. This book has the same quality.

Our times demand new thoughts and new actions. It is easy to feel overwhelmed and helpless in the face of bankrupt institutions that are incapable and perhaps even unwilling to find ways to meet the challenges of our time. By providing an Atlas for the Poetic Continent, Shelley Sacks and Wolfgang Zumdick bring to our attention a whole realm of potential that we may not have realised was within our grasp. This is made all the more powerful when we realise that this realm is as near to us as our beating heart. It is in fact our own inner landscape, our own

inner world. Our very life of feeling can become an organ of perception, giving food for new imaginations and new actions.

The book is made up of small sections which bring to our attention the many different lands that make up the Poetic Continent. These include the lands of fear, of questions, intuition, determination, forgiveness and death amongst many others.

We can visit each of these lands by reading the book from beginning to end, or we can visit the one which we are most concerned with at the moment. This is why it is important that the book is so portable.

There are certain books that become a friend to the world. I think of the diary of Dag Hammarskjold, Markings. Hammarskjold was the Secretary General of the UN. In his diary, he documented his inner life and his attempt to live in the world of power with integrity and equanimity. It was found and published after his death.

Atlas of the Poetic Continent has a similar quality. It is the fruit of an inner process. It has come about through trying to live something, rather than just talking about techniques for living. The book has depth and a modest self-confidence. It breaks through to a realm of life-giving potential. All this is expressed with a lightness of touch. The authors share their insights, poems, paintings and drawings and craft them together with the thoughts of philosophers and other thinkers in a way that leaves the reader feeling more alive and more confident, more able to find the resources to act in the world.

In an interview for the Ruskin Mill Educational Trust in 2008, Alastair McIntosh, the writer, academic and activist, said:

I realised that I have little optimism for the ability of our society to deal with climate change in terms of conventional political, economic and technological ideas. This is because our society's capacity to have rich authentic inner life has been historically eviscerated by the effects of hubris. I therefore see a huge role for the artist in every sense of the word in the transition process. We need to see prophetic art—including poetry, music, activism, you name it—stuff that sidesteps all the wackiness of narcissistic indulgence that often passes as art, and gets right to the one true function of the artist—to point towards the soul.

This sensitive and powerful book is a manifestation of what Alastair hopes for from art. It maps the inner landscape of the soul with all its mysterious processes and all its capacity to digest and understand and to give meaning, along with its capacity to endure and break through. I believe that this is one of those rare books that will become a friend to the world.

The Northern Enchantment Norse Mythology, Earth Mysteries and Celtic Christianity

Margaret Jonas

Temple Lodge, Forest Row, 2013
£12.99, ISBN: 978-906999-53-7

Anna Phillips

The scope of this book is truly immense. Not only does it travel through many ages of time, covers Europe from the far north to the deep south, from the sunken west to the unexplored east, it unites in its scope many esoteric and exoteric strands of research and knowledge in order to present us with an account of what lies behind our intuitive attraction to the cold, barren regions of the North.

Many sites, still visible to us today, are testimonies to ancient people and practises. Stone circles, mystery sites like the Exsternsteine in Germany, caves and churches, are reminders of what was once potent within the earth and streaming down to it from the stars. They are placed there to mark relationships between heaven and earth, or to express hidden earth currents; as focus points for spiritual practise and guidance. As a result these places serve to remind us of a wisdom that has not been entirely forgotten. Myths and legends have that same purpose, handed on first by word of mouth then in writing.

Jonas is drawing on many visible and invisible facts to prove and discover how mystery wisdom moved from west to east and back again, from north to south and visa versa. We meet Druids and their descendants, the Celts, who meet with Germanic tribes, which include the Viking Nations with their Odinic mysteries. From the south Apollo and his swans, Grail and Christ Mysteries travel north to where mysterious Hyperborea is located. Aligned with this is her expert knowledge of astrology which meets and mirrors the earthly movements, and an almost overwhelming amount of evidence of linguistic connections across the languages of the many folk encountered, including the ancient Norse and Celtic rune scripts.

The first part of the book is fairly densely populated with facts, which become easier to absorb from chapter five when the sheer volume of information is more clearly steered in one direction. This direction carries the reader forward into the future when the healing, redeeming figure of Vidar makes his appearance in connection with the Etheric Christ event.

The book is heavily steeped in the spiritual scientific research from Rudolf Steiner but Jonas brings a large harvest of knowledge from many directions together in a slim volume. I found this book fascinating. Nevertheless, I could imagine some readers might be daunted by its breadths and depths of time and space condensed in ninety six pages. It is, however, a valuable contribution to understanding the many texts, written or formed in stone or star in the northern regions of Europe. They foretell of Christ's incarnation at the beginning of our Christian era and continue to include the coming of the Etheric Christ, at the beginning in the last century and beyond towards a possible future.

An extensive section of footnotes is included and an equally appetising bibliography for further reading, round off the material presented. It seems in tracing the expert guidance of mankind there is no historic evidence or esoteric wisdom that does not foretell of these events and Jonas leaves no stone unturned in order to find them.

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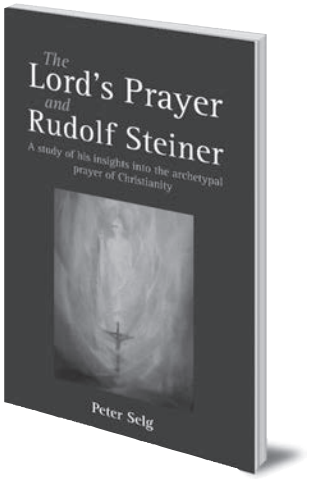

THE LORD'S PRAYER AND RUDOLF STEINER

A study of his insights into the archetypal prayer of Christianity

PETER SELG

Rudolf Steiner once called the Lord's Prayer the 'greatest initiation prayer', and he spoke about it many times, also referring to it as the central prayer of Christian experience.

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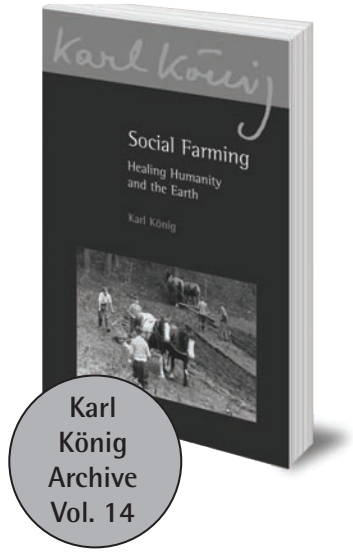

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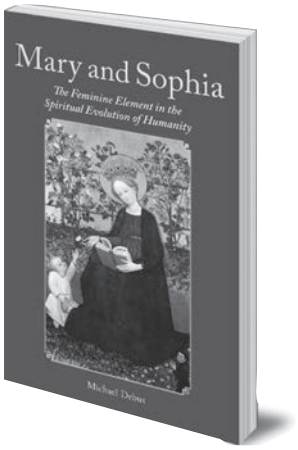

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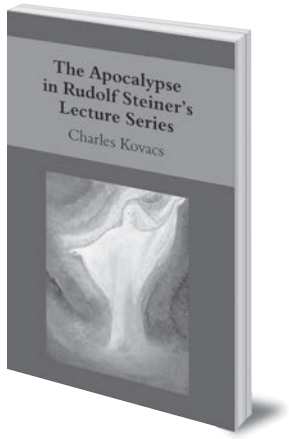

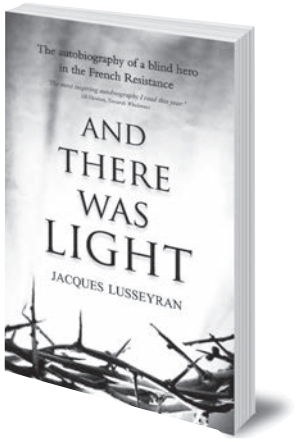

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