

The Christian Community

# Perspectives

June—August 2017



Leadership

# Contents

<b>The story of Offerus</b> <i>retold by Donna Simmons</i>	<b>3</b>
<b>Christ's conversation with Nicodemus on salvation</b> <i>Douglas Thackray</i>	<b>5</b>
<b>Crisis? oh, no!</b> <i>Bastiaan Baan</i>	<b>8</b>
<b>Bringing Christ to life — the mystery of Christian leadership</b> <i>Tom Ravetz</i>	<b>9</b>
<b>Perspectives on leadership</b> <i>Sebastian Parsons</i>	<b>14</b>
<b>Pastoral counselling through Michaelic listening</b> <i>Michael Ronall</i>	<b>18</b>
<b>Obituary: Richard Dancey</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>The fullness of time</b> <i>Luke Barr</i>	<b>22</b>
<b>Reviews</b>	<b>24</b>

*Cover pictures by Alexej von Jawlensky:*  
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*back: Murnau Village*

*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 £15

Europe £18

**Rest of World:** £22  
 (not USA, Canada, NZ & Australia)

Please send cheque, payable to *Perspectives*, to Subscription Manager (address above), or send for more information.

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## Advertisements:

Send ads five weeks prior to publication to the Editor at the above address.

Quarter page £45,

Half page £75, Full page £140

ISSN: 0967 5485

Printed by:

MBM Print SCS Ltd, Glasgow

## Deadline:

December 2017–February 2018 issue: 25 September 2017

# Perspectives

Volume 87 No. 3  
June–August 2017

Questions of leadership loom large in today's world. As political tides ebb and flow, we notice that the values we find in the Bible and in the Act of Consecration are rooted somewhere other than the fashions of the time. In the Gospel of St John, Christ enacts a lesson in Christian leadership that has not yet been fully embodied, when he washes the disciples' feet. Servant leadership was a buzzword in the 1980s and 1990s. The challenges of today's world make the need for another stage of leadership development all the more pressing. Joseph Jaworski calls those who embody this quality 'renewing leaders'.

*Such leaders hold the conviction that there is an underlying intelligence within the universe that is capable of guiding us and preparing us for the futures we must create. They combine their cognitive understanding of the world around them with a strong personal sense of the possibility of actualizing hidden potentials lying dormant in the universe, a view that carries with it the power to change the world as we know it.*

(From 'The Advent of Stage IV Leadership', [tinyurl.com/mx6hfmnd](http://tinyurl.com/mx6hfmnd))

In Jaworski's paper, which was written for people in the secular world, we can hear an echo of the working of the leader of 'the heavenly forces upon earth', through whom we attain 'the re-enlivening of the dying earth existence.' Leadership in service of renewal is leadership in Christ's service; creating places where his world-renewing forces can be at work will benefit the world.

TOM RAVETZ



Alexej von Jawlensky *Abstract Head, Enlightenment II*

# The story of Offerus

retold by Donna Simmons

Once there was a man called Offerus who was as big and as strong as a giant. He was proud of his great strength and he vowed to serve no one but the most mighty of kings.

In time he came to serve a great king, said to be the most powerful of rulers. Offerus worked hard and the King was pleased to have such a man in his service. But, after a time, Offerus noticed that whenever the Devil was mentioned, the King would shrink back and make a gesture against the Devil's power. Offerus confronted the King and demanded to know who was mightier, the King or the Devil. The King squirmed but eventually admitted that the Devil was mightier than he.

Then I seek the Devil and I will serve him. I vowed to serve the most mighty of kings, so I must go.

And, without a moment's delay, he set off to find the Devil. Well, it's never very hard to find the Devil and shortly after he had left the King, Offerus came upon a shadowy knight, riding a black horse.

'Are you looking for me?' asked the knight with a grimace.

'Yes,' said Offerus, 'if you are the Devil.'

'That I am,' said the knight.

Offerus explained his quest, and after being assured by the Devil that he was indeed the most mighty of kings, Offerus entered his service.

Offerus served the Devil well, but after a time he noticed that whenever they came to a cross on the road, the Devil shrank away from it and did anything to avoid it. Offerus demanded to know whose symbol this was and where he could be found, for it was clear that he must be mightier than the Devil.

The Devil came up with all sorts of excuses and stories, but Offerus stood firm, and in the end the Devil admitted that the Bearer of the Cross, the Christ, was the mightiest king of all.

Then I seek the Christ and I will serve Him. I vowed to serve the most mighty of kings, so I must go.

Immediately, Offerus set out to find the Christ. He searched and he searched, and he asked everyone he met where the Christ could be found. After many years, he came to a hermit, who advised him

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to stop his travelling and instead to take up a good work. The hermit took Offerus to a little hut by the side of a mighty river and said that Offerus could, with his great strength, carry travellers across the river. Offerus agreed and took on this task.

One night, many years later, Offerus was asleep in his hut when he heard the voice of a child:

‘Offerus, Offerus.’

He opened the door and looked around, but could see no one. He returned to bed. Again, the child called:

‘Offerus, Offerus.’

And again Offerus went to the door and looked out. This time he did see a child, and the child asked him to carry him across the river. Taking up his great staff, Offerus lifted the child upon his shoulder and set off across the river. Suddenly the river started to flood and Offerus, who feared nothing, became afraid. But he carried on, wading further into the river.

To Offerus’ amazement he realized that the child was becoming heavier and heavier. By the time they reached the middle of the river Offerus thought he could go no further. But, gathering all his strength and with the aid of his staff, he managed to stagger to the far shore and set the child down.

‘I thought I would drown. I felt that I carried the whole world on my shoulder,’ he said to the child.

‘Indeed, you did feel the weight of the whole world, for that is the burden I carry, and you carried Me. Since you have borne Me on your shoulder your name shall now be Christopherus—Bearer of the Christ,’ and with that the Child was gone.

Christopherus returned to his hut. The next morning when he went to take up his staff, he saw that it had sprouted leaves and flowers. He knew that this was a gift from the Christ, and he continued his life of service, satisfied that he now served the mightiest of kings.

# Christ's conversation with Nicodemus on salvation

Douglas Thackray

'Salvation' as a topic is considered an emotive theme as it poses questions to which there appear no clear answers. Are we to be saved from our shadow self, our sins or guilt? Has this to do with conscience or is there more to this than meets the eye?

As much as the modern human being seeks to ignore the call for salvation, he nevertheless hears its voice time and again echoing in his soul as an intrinsic part of life's questing to find meaning and purpose in the unfolding of his or her individual destiny. It is our heart's reasoning that speaks to us and if we ignore it, we do so at our own peril. It was the deep longing for salvation that led Nicodemus to seek out the Christ in the night and the conversation that ensued brings us new insight as to how we might understand this theme.

Christ speaks in a manner which Nicodemus cannot follow, and so he goes on to explain in another way what it is to be born again. 'Whosoever is not born anew from the heights cannot see the Kingdom of God. The wind blows where it will. You hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from nor where it goes. So also is everyone who is born of the breath of the spirit.' (John3:3)

*Not knowing where the wind comes from nor where it goes.*

This suggests that those who have been born again live in an 'unknowing state', that is to say, without expectation as to what comes next or looking back to what was before. They are at peace with the world, trusting in the spirit, no longer depending only on their sense perception or logic as reference points for their orientation, their safety and defence. 'Not knowing' is a way of speaking about a new sense of time that they now experience, which does not depend on the past or the future. Being born anew, they awaken to the experience of life in the present moment. Being born anew in this context means that an open space is created in which the content of the world around them is seen, heard and felt in a heightened way so that the events that happen outwardly are also experienced inwardly. By trusting in the spirit, a process is brought about which acts like a sixth sense to give the perceived world its meaning. The philosopher Fichte strikes a similar note when he says:

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*Accordingly the new sense is the sense of spirit, the same sense for which only spirit and nothing else has being and for which also that other, the everyday existence, assumes the form of the spirit and is transformed into it, for which therefore being as such has disappeared.*

To illustrate this theme, albeit in another way, we take our inspiration from Rudolf Steiner's biography, in which he states that he was inspired by Schiller, who spoke of a new consciousness in his description of the 'aesthetic mood'. Schiller describes human consciousness as oscillating between two states, whereby one moment the human being surrenders himself to what affects him through his senses, through nature and his instincts, and in the next he subjects himself to logical laws, principles of reason, and rational compunction. If however, he can develop the 'aesthetic mood', in which he is not given over one-sidedly to those two extreme positions, then the soul can live through the senses but now brings a spiritual dimension into perception and reasoning which then forms the basis for action.

Interpreting this rebirth in the spirit from a Christian point of view, we look to St. Paul, who describes how the Son of God emptied himself out of his divinity in order to become man and in doing so humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death on the cross. (Phil. 2:8) Those who are being born again will strive to make the opposite gesture in that they will empty themselves of the mundane forces of fear, desire, attachment, hatred, in order to create an 'open space' into which the present moment can flow as the 'eternal now' to become the light of their lives. 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Behold everything has become new' and 'Whoever is in Christ, in him begins the new creation.' (2 Cor.5:17)

### **Nicodemus speaks with Christ**

The conversation with Nicodemus continues:

*No one has ascended into the world of spirit who has not also descended out of the world of spirit. That is the Son of Man.*

JOHN 3:13

We should be aware that this is not the only time that Christ refers to himself as the Son of Man. In the calling of Nathaniel, Christ proclaims himself as the bridge between heaven and earth:

*Verily I say unto you, you shall see the heavens open and the angels of God descending upon the Son of Man.*

JOHN 1:51

Returning to the conversation with Nicodemus, Christ goes on to tell how this union of God with man will be achieved. 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'. What is meant here is that at the crucifixion, his body will be lifted up and exalted by God.

*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert* [referring here to the raising of the bronze snake wound around a rod which was lifted up for the healing of the peo-



ple, Numbers 21:8], *even so the Son of Man will be lifted up, so that all who feel his power in their hearts may win their share of eternal life. It was not to judge the world that the Father sent His Son into the world, but to save the world.* JOHN 3:14

The salvation theme as described can be summarised in three processes without giving these any particular order. The scene opens with the instruction for Nicodemus to be born again of the spirit. This has to do with the ardent seeking for the light. The second has to do with the wind which means the ability to trust into the Spirit; and the third process linked with salvation is faith, believing in Christ's deed on the cross for the redemption of the world. This, however, is not enough to explain salvation. Indeed, no matter how many examples are given, they can only touch the surface, as this is not a teaching to be learnt, but an awakening to the moment in life when a man or a woman fuse with their destiny, when they bring about their individuality and when decisions are made, challenges are identified and opportunities are grasped to move forward into a new dimension of life.

Let us try and trace how the words of Christ seeded in that first conversation with Nicodemus brought about his rebirth in the unfolding of the dramatic events around the Christ during the end days. Nicodemus was one of the seventy Sanhedrin, the council of the Jews who were responsible for the hunting down of Christ. In the last week of Christ's ministry when they heard that Christ was preaching in the Temple, Nicodemus' colleagues were contemplating arresting him, but Nicodemus said 'Doth our law judge any man before it hears him and knoweth what he doeth?' and they answered: 'Art thou also of Galilee?' By that they meant and accused him, of having secretly become a follower of Christ. In the events that follow it would seem that this was indeed so.

We can try and see through the eyes of our imagination to where the crucifixion took place. The young Joseph of Arimathea went up the ladder to release Christ from the cross and slowly, gently lowered the body into the arms of the older Nicodemus who held him for a moment, time enough for both of them to then lay him tenderly on the ground.

Christ's prophecy that the Son of Man would be raised up must have left a deep mark in Nicodemus' heart for as we have seen he is there at the crucifixion or shortly after when he helps to bring down Christ's body from the cross. In his first encounter with Christ, a seed was sown in his heart which took root, grew and came to fruition in his moment of truth when he connected himself with Christ's deed on Golgotha. He now no longer needed an answer to the question of salvation for he realised that salvation is consummated in the moment when faith becomes action.

Rudolf Steiner: The spirit of Fichte in our Midst, Lecture held on December 16, 1915, GA 65

# Crisis? oh, no!

**Bastiaan Baan**

Crisis is something that puts everything in our daily life and usual routine out of order. In fact, we try everything to avoid crisis in our life—even if there is no other way than to go through it. It causes pain and suffering, but it can change the whole course of our life.

Only after going down into our abyss and after climbing up the other side, do we find new, solid ground under our feet. Only after our deepest struggle can we recognize that this crisis was necessary in our life.

Only those who can see beyond the outer events, the initiates, can perceive not only the necessity but even the future outcome of a crisis. Once an initiate said to somebody who was in the depth of his crisis: 'I find you ... fortunate.'\* While the person who was struggling with his destiny felt nothing but pain, the initiate saw the good fortune that would result.

What can we do in order to find fortune in a desperate situation?

*As he approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the wayside, begging. And hearing a crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, 'Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.' And he called out: 'Jesus, Son of David, have compassion on me.' And those who were in front scolded him, telling him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more: 'Son of David, have compassion on me.' And Jesus stopped and let him be brought to him. And when he came near, he asked him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' He said, 'Lord, let me receive my sight again.' And Jesus said to him, 'Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.'* LUKE 18: 35–42

The blind beggar at the side of the road can become our guide in each crisis of life. Although he is blind and poor, although he can do nothing but sit at the side of the road, he reaches out with a loud voice and asks the Healer to help.

He becomes a beggar for spirit. Now when we become beggars for spirit, there are usually a thousand voices that tell us to be silent, 'Forget it! All your efforts are in vain. Nobody will help you. Just sit and wait ...' That's what the crowd did with the blind beggar. The only one who knows what has to be done is he, himself. He calls out even louder: 'Jesus, have mercy on me!'

If you ever go through a big crisis in your life—and it will definitely come, sooner or later—don't forget to call upon the Healer. Don't listen to the voices that tell you to behave like the silent majority. Turn all your despair, all your blindness, all your poverty to Christ—and He will find you...fortunate.

\* Quote from the Mystery Drama of Rudolf Steiner: 'The Trial of the Soul', first scene.

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# Bringing Christ to life – the mystery of Christian leadership

Tom Ravetz

The first 'I am' in the Gospel of St John is an 'I am not.' This is John's response to the question of the Jewish authorities about his identity: specifically, whether he is the Christ, the long-awaited Messiah. After stating that he is not the Messiah, he says, 'In your middle is one whom you do not yet know.' (John 1:26). The great theologian of the early church in the Greek-speaking eastern Roman empire, Origen, gives a beautiful commentary on this passage, which can be interpreted in different ways in Greek: it can mean 'amongst you,' but also 'in your middle' or 'within you.' Origen takes it in the second sense and points out that the middle of the human being is the heart, understood in the ancient world to be the seat of inner initiative and self-leadership, which the Greeks called the *hegemonikon*. This organ of inner leadership is the place where the seed-word, the *spermatikos logos*, has been laid. When we exercise leadership inwardly or outwardly, we bring the Logos to life within ourselves.

The heart ceaselessly mediates and connects the centre and periphery of the human body in its oscillating rhythms. Mediating between extremes is fundamental to the experience of being human. Pondering on what happens when we walk can help us to understand this. In walking, we continually lose our balance only in order to find it again. We could think of walking as controlled falling. If we were determined to stay perfectly in balance all the time, we would become rigid and fall over. Maintaining our balance and moving forward means being prepared to lose our balance first one way and then the other.

## Moving Between Extremes

Doing the good is also a question of moving between extremes. Some examples help to make this clear. We probably all agree that extravagance is a vice. It's not good to run out of money before the end of the month and not be able to feed one's family. But what is the opposite of extravagance? Meanness? Surely, though, we couldn't commend an attitude of being tight-fisted as a virtue,

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perhaps missing out on chances in life because one is counting the pennies. In fact, there is a field of creative tension between these two, for which we don't have just one word: on one side is prudence; on the other, generosity. So, in relation to giving and keeping, doing the good means moving between prudence and generosity without going to the extremes of meanness or extravagance. What is the opposite of cowardice? We might think of courage. But is courage really the opposite of cowardice? That could be foolhardiness. True courage includes the capacity to know when to act and when to wait, as the proverb says: 'discretion is the better part of valour'. We could call this kind of thinking Trinitarian, in that it always looks for the dynamic that is at work between extremes.

Aristotle examined this aspect of our inner lives. Meditating on the extremes and their damaging effects allows us to assert our reason and mediate between them. We form our character by cultivating good habits, which increases our capacity to do the good. Recent advances in neuroscience have lent force to Aristotle's idea of character. It is becoming ever clearer that everything that we do leaves its trace in the structure of our brains. Particularly in the case of powerful experiences, neural pathways are quickly established which threaten to fix us in patterns of behaviour.

If we take this thought in a one-sided way, we could think that we have to manage this with our own resources. What need is there of help from outside, if all that we need to do is to strengthen our character through rational thought and careful decisions? In Christian theology, particularly since the Reformation, there has been an on-going argument about the possibility of doing the good by using our own resources, as opposed to being reliant on grace. One of the pillars of Reformation thought was *sola gratia*, by grace alone, meaning that there is nothing that we can do to put ourselves right with God. However, if we have started to think in a Trinitarian way, we might notice the familiar extremes in this argument: on the one hand, I can do nothing at all, so I don't need to take any responsibility for my deeds; on the other, I can do everything and I don't need any help! Neither of these chimes with our experience: we can change ourselves, particularly when we notice the harm that our actions do to others. However, when we look at ingrained habits—those aspects of our personality that reside deep down, of which we are hardly aware—we can despair when we notice how our attempts to change ourselves seem doomed to futility.

In the seasonal prayer for Christmas, Christ's healing deed is described as liberation from the seductive light of appearances and the addiction to merely sensual being. In these two forces that threaten our freedom we can

recognise the common element that the extremes we have described above share. The seductive power whispers in our ear that we can do anything, achieve anything; the power of addiction would bind us to the earth and ultimately crush us under its weight. Both of these forces seek to undermine our capacity of self-leadership.

### **Responsibility in acknowledging Powerlessness**

In the twentieth century, an awareness of the fine balance of powerlessness and self-responsibility grew up in a surprising place: among alcoholics and then among the many other people who have used 12-step programmes. The constant effort is to take responsibility by acknowledging one's own powerlessness and the need to place oneself in the hands of a higher power. This seeming paradox is lived out in a spiritual practice based on searing honesty and self-examination. Whatever 'success' the addict achieves is not the result of their efforts; rather, they have got out of the way so that the higher power can take hold. Twelve-step programmes are non-denominational and deliberately avoid naming the higher power. However, Origen's insight into the Baptist's words allows us to recognise the middle in which Christ is at work.

Inner leadership is the precondition for any kind of outer leadership that we may be called upon to exercise. This is not restricted to those with defined leadership roles. Only tyrants can exercise leadership without those whom they are supposed to be leading using their own inner leadership to take up their role as followers. The struggle to develop leadership that rests on true inner leadership is a central challenge of our time. Just because it is so important, it leaves us prey to the extremes. These could be described as fantasies of omnipotence and fantasies of victimhood.

Recent political events have shown how potent feelings of disempowerment can be. How often do we feel like victims of family structures, companies, or societies which seem to deprive us of power? When whole segments of the population feel disempowered by social and economic changes, a dangerous instability enters public life. The opposite of these fantasies of disempowerment is impatience with our perceived bonds which causes us to rebel. For a few moments we indulge in fantasies of omnipotence: 'I'll blow my top, and then they'll have to listen!' Recent research into the causes of the terrible mass shootings in the USA has demonstrated how often they are extreme responses to feelings of disempowerment. The mania that leads to a mass shooting or an act of terror is mercifully on the extreme end of the spectrum. But we can discover the fantastical component in our own souls if we consider a moment when we grew impatient with our families,

our colleagues or our communities. In such moments, we have detached ourselves from reality that change happens through persuasion and negotiation. We fantasised that we could impose our will without all the friction of the social reality. This might have led to the seeming failure of our initiative, upon which we sank into a feeling of victimhood. We decide that there is nothing that we can do and that others are constraining our freedom. We conveniently ignore the fact that we have created the reality that we are now experiencing as if it were being inflicted on us from the outside. Once again, if we want to exercise self-leadership, we need to mediate between two extremes. We need to attend to our inner state whilst at the same time taking note of the context in which we find ourselves.

In general, we seek refuge in fantasy as a way of avoiding the pain of confronting a reality that we wish to avoid. That might seem obvious in the case of fantasising about being a victim—I am exonerated of any responsibility if there's nothing I could have done anyway. In the case of the other extreme it is perhaps harder to see—isn't the impatient imposition of my will an exercise of power? However, if my failure to attend to the context dooms my actions to futility, I am also giving away my responsibility.

### **The leadership of priests**

Congregations of The Christian Community have a particular challenge and opportunity in this realm. In the Ordination, the priests are given the authority to exercise leadership in their congregations. The Ordination — the Consecration of Priests, as it could also be called — is a priestly service in which the role of the congregation is subtly different from a normal Act of Consecration. Instead of concelebrating, the congregation is called upon to witness the service. This becomes apparent in the fact that uniquely, priests take on the role of servers. After the circle of priests has been closed to include the newly-ordained ones, the congregation is addressed and told that the spirit of their community has recognised the new priests as shepherds of souls—priestly leaders in the community. We live with the reality of priestly leadership in congregational life: our shared purpose is religious renewal through the sacramental life, and the priests have a central role in holding the sacraments and upholding the identity and purpose of the community. In earlier stages of the development of The Christian Community, this leadership role could easily be exercised in an old-fashioned way. Cultural habits meant that someone who was called a priest was granted authority in every area of congregational life. More recently, there has been a reaction to this. Some of the younger generation of priests and members want to dissolve the gap between members and priests as if

there were no distinction between them. This seems a shame as it sidesteps the creative challenge of recognising that we can achieve more in community by differentiating between our roles and that this need not prevent each one of us from exercising our inner leadership.

When I take responsibility for my own state and attend to the context in which I find myself, I can bring myself into congregational life in a constructive way. A concrete example may shed light on this. The beginning of the Act of Consecration makes it clear that we are all called upon jointly to celebrate this great service. In order to do this, it is very helpful if one can hear the words that are being spoken. I have experienced congregations in which members have felt that they needed to suffer in silence because they did not dare to let the priest know that he or she was speaking too quietly for them to hear. I have also experienced as a priest the pain of being corrected by someone who was apparently unaware of the challenges of speaking for the ritual and who seemed to feel that they had more expertise than I did. The first attitude is a kind of resignation. The other is a presumption. Taking up the role of the concelebrating member would mean to be aware that the priest will be working on his or her speech and that whatever I say needs to be brought with enough tact that the priest will still feel free to celebrate without feeling watched over. On the other hand, if I leave the priest unaware that I am unable to bring myself in fully because I cannot hear, I am withholding important information that could help him or her to take up his or her role more effectively. It can then happen that we are tempted to complain about the priest to other members, or to his or her colleagues. Here it is important to 'humanise' the situation and imagine a parallel in our work or family lives: would it help me to hear a comment about my work from a third person, perhaps anonymously, or would it be easier to hear it from the person who had the concern, so that I can ask about the context and hear the whole picture? Such situations may seem trivial, but they are of the deepest importance if we are aiming to create a culture in our congregations in which the culture of true, Christ-filled leadership can unfold.

In the Creed, which summarises the central truths of Christianity as an answer to the gospel reading in the Act of Consecration, members are described as those who 'feel Christ within themselves'. There is a danger when we take such statements in a mystical way and put ourselves under a kind of performance pressure to feel particular things. Perhaps 'feeling Christ' is less about mystical states and more to do with opening myself for the space of the 'I am not' of John. Then I can take up the yoke of inner leadership, following the one who is in my middle, whom I do not yet fully know, and allowing his strength to unfold within me.

# Perspectives on Leadership

Sebastian Parsons

This article is an exploration of organisational leadership from the perspective of self-leadership. Personal leadership matters whether the organisation has a single designated leader or a shared leadership structure because the capabilities and capacities of each person still flow into the leadership group, which then flows into and impacts the organisation.

The first part of the article introduces a framework of ideas. In the second part, these ideas will be brought into movement so that we can see how they relate to each other.

*Purpose* is an ever-present component of what we do: defining the style and content of a document, setting the agenda for a meeting, describing the focus of a department, directing the activity of a whole organisation. Awareness of common purpose makes it possible that the activity of the individuals within an organisation may be aligned. Purpose can be multi-layered: a smaller purpose can fit within a bigger purpose, as long as they are aligned.

*Decisions* are made and executed in organisational life all the time: smoothly, on time, with difficulty or late. The organisation flows with multiple strands of activity which are constantly influenced by decisions that are made and by changing circumstances. However, decision- and change-making requires care as wrong decisions and wrong changes can destroy the organisation. Decisions need to be made according to the desired outcome, which is itself an expression of purpose.

Good *organisational leadership* occurs when we apply ourselves purposefully in the pursuit of organisational purpose.

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## **Good organisational leadership is the purposeful deployment of self in the pursuit of organisational purpose**

In the definition, the self is 'deployed,' which means that the self takes actions. I want to use the word *power* to describe the capacity of the self to take action. Taking an action is a deployment of power in the world. We have power (the capacity to 'do') and it is our will to use it in the world. When we stir our will to exert our power then it has an impact on the world: on the most basic of levels, things come into



movement: the keys on the keyboard, our lips, the desk from this side of the room to that..

The situation is somewhat different in the case of our *feelings*, which happen to us, which stir us. Our feelings respond to our experience and we feel safe, angry, joyful, hateful, secure, fearful, loving, aligned or out of tune with what's happening... Our feelings constantly respond to the world through which we move, to what occurs, to what we do. Feelings are constantly looming, receding, surging, ebbing, flowing, moving us. That is the key point, we do not move our feelings, they move us. We cannot originate feelings according to our whim. We may be able to exert our will, deploy our power in the world, and bring about a responsive surge of one feeling or another, but we cannot short-cut that process, and simply 'will' a chosen feeling to fill our being.

*Thinking* is different from feelings in that we can determine its content, we can choose (perhaps with a bit of practice) what to think. A thought can come into our minds, but we can dismiss it if we choose. The thought may generate feelings—which we can't dismiss so easily—but we are able, if we wish, to lay the thought to one side. Like willing, thinking brings our soul into *movement*—a movement over which we have some . Unlike the will, our power of thought does not effect the world directly; it is a non-physical power, a spiritual power.

The realm of thought is truly immense. It holds the whole of our consciousness within its purview, but beyond that, with our thinking we can grasp hold of the idea of our unconscious. We can think about what we don't know, about our inner life, and contemplate what it might contain.

In our thinking, we can encompass the world before us; we can remember the story of our lives, all that has gone before; we can replay our actions, remember the way our relationships have developed; gone wrong or blossomed; remember what we felt, what we did; remember our hopes, both those that have been dashed and those that have been realised. We know about the world: how to solve equations; how to express ourselves in language; how to operate a computer; how to grow apples; how to... well, how to do everything we can do.

We also have the extraordinary capacity to imagine taking actions. From any single moment in time, we can imagine a vast number of alternative futures; we can populate our imagination with characters that respond to our actions and each other. In an instant, we can assimilate a situation, take a whole scene into our consciousness and know (often with remarkable accuracy) how it will turn out.

The world of our thoughts is constantly in motion but the power of our thoughts makes its way indirectly into the world.

In our willing and thinking, we initiate movement, changing the world directly and indirectly. In our feelings, we are moved by the multi-dimensional force of feelings that surges and flows within us. I'm reminded of a lyric from the John Prine song All the Best: 'And your heart gets bored with your mind / And it changes you.'

### **And your heart gets bored with your mind, And it changes you**

Yet it is out of the inner soul-*stillness*, if we can bear it, that purposeful resolve emerges. New ideas emerge from not-knowing and are explored as we move them around our imagination. A response emerges in our soul, a feeling of yes or no, an acceptance or a rejection. Somewhere in the soul there is a tipping point, a threshold of action. A myriad of factors revolve and resolve until at a certain point we shift. Before that moment activity is held back; after it our power flows into the world.

The art of leadership involves knowing this process, filling it with consciousness and illuminating it with curiosity. It requires courage and commitment to learn how to withstand strong feelings and hold action back to continue the search for the best possible, most purposeful action.

Organisations are made up of people and so are full of these powerful polarities: action and inaction; movement and stillness; inner and outer; physical and spirit.

Change comes through innovation, which is central to the path of leadership. Rudolf Steiner, the Austrian philosophy of the early 20th Century, was fascinated by the soul forces (thinking, feeling and willing) and observed that the new emerges through each in three powerful ways. Through thinking comes *imagination*, through feeling *inspiration* and through willing we receive *intuition*. Imagination and intuition bring with them new material, whereas inspiration is a rising of the waters on which the ship of change will float. Inspiration, imagination and intuition emerge when the soul is quiet. Inner stillness opens the soul to imagination, inspiration and intuition. Any stillness will do, even the stillness that comes with crisis and despair that a path will ever be found.

The leader must work with the feelings in their organisation—their own feelings; the feelings of everyone they work with; the feelings that are articulated, those that are known but secret, and those that are not known. It helps to understand what to call for from yourself and from the colleagues. If the inner 'traffic-policeman' is ignored and actions are taken that are against

the desire of the individual then vitality seeps away. Taking action because we are 'told to' makes automata of us and we fade away inside, our energy depletes with the loss of freedom and self-respect. If actions are taken that are consciously *self-authorised* then the energy is securely contained and amongst a group of people, it accumulates, strengthening all, available to all. The aim is to make agreements within groups of people where all leave are self-authorised.

The leader who turns to colleagues requesting they act purposefully as a team of individuals who authorise themselves will find that she can it possible to navigate even the stormiest waters. No matter what feelings are raging, if the leader can contain them, hold back action, and stay curious, the waters will be traversed. Curiosity is the watch-word of organisational thinking in action, capable of absorbing the most extreme waves of feeling, simply by being interested in them, and what they may be telling us. Whilst the spirit of curiosity is alive, the organisation will live.

The simplicity of action—the will—belies a potent and complex reality. In organisational life, the leader will constantly wrestle with the reality that despite having organised responsibilities and demarcated boundaries, everything that happens is the *co-created* responsibility of everyone. An organisation is the combined consequence of individual actions. In an organisation where individuals are self-authorised they will act powerfully, but if they can understand that everything they do is a co-creation, then they will act wisely.

The leader's task is to awaken self-authority and awareness of co-creation through curiosity. An understanding of inner activity can provide the courage to be patient and strong enough to contain the oceanic emotions of organisational life as individuals deploy their power, with all their might-and-main, in pursuit of organisation purpose. Then, the self can be purposefully deployed in the pursuit of organisational purpose.

# Pastoral counselling through Michaelic listening

Michael Ronall

*Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks. (Matthew 12:34)*

Hidden treasures make every life on earth a path of continual discovery. One such quietly radiant, jewel-like treasure lies concealed within The Christian Community's emphasis on collaborative celebration: the availability of individual consultation, a resource that can abundantly enrich those who seek it. Just because such conversations are held in complete confidentiality, even their existence is rarely publicly discussed or even mentioned. But in a world teeming with talk-therapies, the unique value of this form of personal ministering deserves to be widely known.

Those familiar with Parsifal's story will remember that the key to his and another's—and thereby many others'—redemption lived in his learning to take an overriding interest in a stranger's suffering; overriding, that is, his prior training in politely restraining his natural curiosity. But maturing into worthiness to receive another's confidence requires that we generate something at once less invasive than curiosity and yet more active than restraint; only after taking responsibility for the suffering incurred through his own trials did Parsifal acquire receptive interest sufficient to baptize his speaking in commiseration: He has shifted from restraining his native impulse to purifying it into healing compassion.

At the other extreme from Parsifal's callow social passivity, many good willed people, sympathetically stirred by others' pain, will seek to relieve that pain by providing solutions. But these solutions are too often advanced

*Michael Ronall has been enjoying a year as guest-student at the priest-seminary in Hamburg, Germany.*

with the explicit or implicit expectation that the offered counsel be uncritically put into effect. What's more, this species of what Rudolf Steiner tactfully called the 'mania for imparting information' frequently serves mostly as a distraction from the would-be adviser's own shortcomings, as in the invitation to 'Take my advice, I'm not using it!'

Restraint like Parsifal's can provide a sounding board for venting—useful indeed when another's soul feels overwhelmed by

its own reactions to impressions, and sometimes sufficient in itself to restore emotional balance. At other moments, a practical solution to a technical problem is all that is sought. But when more substantial and lasting guidance is needed, pastoral counseling in The Christian Community seems gently, but with remarkable precision, to locate a middle ground in caring, by offering social communion while respecting the seeker's independence.

The living nourishment offered from, or through, priest to parishioner—or to anyone who seeks a priest's counsel—is rooted in a Christology that identifies the Redeemer neither as a peer nor a pal who encourages us with a smile, nor as the magician who simply erases our burdens, but as that foremost cosmic being who out of the abundant love that is his very being can endow us *with* that very being, and hence with that very love, so that we too may help transform the surrounding world into light and warmth. This path is open even when, and sometimes especially when, the density and sharpness of the surrounding world impinge upon us: A jewel forms under pressure.

Christ's freeing intervention consists principally neither in solving nor curing, but rather in his selfless accompanying. (The word *cure*, as in preserving through drying, is etymologically related to *war*.) Such accompanying equips us to become creative agents, capable of transforming the part of our own being that approaches us continually from without. Seeking to release this hidden power, pastoral counseling as offered in The Christian Community expands into a social deed the substance of a blessing whose long-term value may not be immediately obvious. The gesture is articulated in a letter, written to an infirm parishioner by the seventeenth-century Carmelite monk Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection, as recorded in his book *The Practice of the Presence of God* (1691):

*I do not pray that you may be delivered from your sufferings; but I pray earnestly that God gives you strength and patience to bear them as long as He pleases.*

The new approach to ministry can complement this prayerful outlook with guidance in just how to receive such strength and generate such patience.

While the Adversaries opposing human development do not respect our freedom—which is just what makes them our adversaries—Michael, the spirit of our time, offers healing only in response to our initiative. Instantiating *this* type of restraint, which reveals at once also the deepest comprehending compassion, pastoral counseling in The Christian Community confers blessings through words that leave our judgment free. In so doing, it invites us to kindle Christ's light in our own light, in order to recognize through its shining the other hidden treasures that make each life on earth that path of continual

discovery. Chief among those treasures is the laboratory to be found in the human heart, where we may convert our suffering into penetrating insight and radiant, jewel-like beauty—in fact, into the very Grail of fellow-feeling that is the object of Parsifal's quest, and as we are also here to discover, the object of every human being's earthly sojourn.

This article was reprinted with permission from Winter issue of the *Newsletter of The Christian Community in Spring Valley, NY*.



Alexej von Jawlensky, *Head III* from the portfolio *Heads*

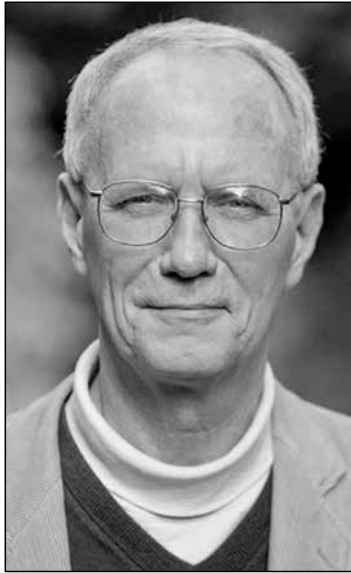
## Richard Dancey December 28, 1945 – February 14, 2017

Richard was born in Pekin, Illinois, the heartland of America on December 28, 1945. He was the eldest of three boys. The family worshipped in the Methodist church, where as a twelve year old boy Richard had a deeply religious experience in his encounters with one of the ministers at a summer camp.

He recalled the minister not speaking much, but when he did, he spoke of Christ so freely, objectively and genuinely that one could feel the reality of what and whom he spoke. In Richard's confirmation preparation he asked the question: How could what Judas did be understood? It was a question that stayed with him through life. Three weeks after his unexpected death on February 14th, he was due to teach a course at our English-speaking seminary on 'Christ and Judas – the Mystery of Freedom and Necessity'.

In his first year of college at the age of seventeen, Richard read a book called *Tell No One*. It was the recalling of a Damascus like experience, and in the preface of the book the author writes that the story is a true one. Reading this account, Richard had the same reaction he'd had listening as a boy to the minister at summer camp: This is real.

Richard Dancey belonged to the generation that lived their twenties in the rebellious, tumultuous and traumatic years of the Vietnam War. While at college, he studied English and history, extending the latter into philosophy and theology. When drafted into the Army,



he served for a year, before being released as a conscientious objector at the age of 26.

He then decided to complete his theological studies without really knowing where this would take him. During this time, a copy of Rudolf Steiner's *The Practical Training of Thinking* fell into his hands. It became a highlight in his life, and as if struck by lightning, he knew this was the right path. In the last semester of his studies he first heard about The Christian Community and experienced the Act of Consecration for the first time

on a Thursday morning in New York City. It immediately became clear to him that he could not become a minister in the Methodist church.

Already married to Margaret, he moved to Boston for three years to live in and with a Christian Community congregation. By the time he went to Stuttgart to study at the seminary he already had a four-year old son, Jacob, and another son, Amos, was on the way. A third child, Abigail, was to join the family a few years later.

After his Ordination he worked for a short time in Wuppertal, Germany before returning to the United States to begin his assignment in Devon, near Philadelphia, a congregation he served for nearly 20 years. In 2002, he and his family moved to Chicago to launch the North American seminary together with Rev. Gisela Wielki. For many years he was co-director of The Christian Community sum-

mer camps and Youth conferences on the East coast of the USA. His final sending was to the congregation in Washington DC in the fall of 2015.

On Easter morning the young man at the tomb says to the women: 'He is not here... He is going before you into Galilee'. On some deep level, young people know where they have to go to find and serve the future, but unless what they know is raised into their full consciousness, and unless they are helped to understand what they know deep down, this knowledge cannot mature and find expression in deeds. Richard was a master at helping the young people to understand what on a deeper level they already knew. He spoke to their moral intuition, and they loved him for it.

At Ascension, the Risen Christ ascends with arms spread wide, facing the earth with an all assuring, all-embracing love, committing to be with humanity until the end of the ages. The love that people felt in Richard's pastoral care had something of this gesture: 'I will always be with you.' While someone may

say with an affirmative gesture to someone in need: 'I will stand by you,' Richard's gesture was: 'I will walk with you.'

What a Pentecostal being he was in his very walking, always as if leaning into the wind, moving headlong into the future; he was one who had risen to 'confess unto', like the disciples did, when the flame of the spirit came to rest on their heads, like one who wished for a baptism with fire.

He had also something of the nature of John the Baptist: a real preacher who had it in him to go out into the wilderness, filled with a concern for the signs of the times, a proclaimer of the original word. He was an activist.

'I have come to cast a fire on the earth. How much I wish it were already burning. I long to be baptized with a fire.' It is the baptism into death. Richard had something of this fire burning within him.

REV. GISELA WIELKI

The first part of this obituary is based largely on Richard's autobiographical notes.

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## The fullness of time

### Luke Barr

Controversy has broken out recently in church circles concerning the date of Easter. Should it be a fixed date, or should it alter according to the waxing of the first Spring full Moon? It is a question that is recurrently raised. But this time, it would appear that it will be settled without fuss, understanding, or even interest. This does not simply reflect the obvious fact that we are a secular society today; rather, it reveals us to be an un-philosophical culture, lacking curiosity and sophistication: we are becoming merely consumers of things, information and time.

The date of Easter has always created great problems. The Eastern and Western

churches, using differing calendars (Julian and Gregorian respectively) celebrate Easter at different times of the year. One might also ask, 'when is it truly Easter in the Southern Hemisphere?' And more to the point, when is it truly Easter within us?

This last question can only be answered in any way, by the mysteries of our biographies and what they may reveal to us.

However, we now find ourselves in a time when the external form of Easter threatens to become even more diluted than it already is. Until now, the date of its celebration has changed from year to year, according to the complicated patterns of cosmic rhythms. The festival has, in this way, not been 'delivered into the hands of men'. Soon however, the affairs of

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The Christian  
Community  
in Aberdeen.*



man will determine the date of Easter, and fix it, as if nailing it to a cross.

Recently, Floris Books has published a short booklet by Dr Walter Bühler, *Why is Easter a Moveable Feast?* Dr Bühler was a leading anthroposophical doctor who specialised in Goethean science. The booklet has been published in order to give a perspective on the festival of Easter which has seemingly been lost by the mainstream churches: the cosmic aspect, and time as a medium of the supersensible.

Bühler tries to show that the universe is not, contrary to popular imagination, some enormous mechanism in which we are pointlessly trapped. Rather, it is a living being, an organic entity of which we are an integral, even vitally important, part. We are not cogs in a machine; we are seeds of freedom.

Walter Bühler's book does not attempt any theology. But it is concerned with understanding the temporal aspect of Easter. For this he provides a firm foundation, and leaves us to develop our own understanding of the event further. He wishes to draw attention to the significance of the fact that Easter does not possess temporal rigidity. The festival is not something one can fix to a certain point in time, as little as one could fix an interpretation or description of what Resurrection is. Easter is not about iron necessity and conforming to physical laws, but rather about freedom.

The dating of Easter is not some recondite academic question. Rather, it is a concern for us all, and reflects our cultural standards of sophistication. In our day and age, the great Mysteries of time and of the human being have been discarded and replaced by utilitarianism and banality. We do not ponder the nature of time enough. It may be fruitful for us to do so occasionally. Instead, we submit ourselves to its apparent rigid laws for better or for worse. Time is a stream that we find ourselves within, and which we may not easily break from. And yet, we have all experienced the strange phenomena of synchronicities and temporal coincidences. We all recall how time felt different for us as children. We have all experienced the 'timeless existence' that the Act of Consecration alludes to.

In previous ages, the human soul 'read' time from the stars, and the art of astrology ordered our lives. Now, as astrology has commonly become seen as a pseudo-science, a different form of time has become our lord and master: clock-time, a god strapped to our wrists, ordering our day, mostly oppressing us. This experience was anticipated by the ancients, and they saw it as a danger to human evolution. The experience emanated from a god out-of-time; they called it 'Chronos'.

The dreadful monotony of many lives today, the oppressive experience of clock-time ticking away leads us often to try and flee this evil, only to succumb to another: escapism into fantasy in the face of an increasingly fearful world - an evident sign of our times. How do we find a right balance in which we are not slaves of, nor escapees from, time?

We have to feel our way into time subtly; thereby, we may experience time rhythms and in them, discover a healthy, supportive, up-building force in our lives. In the repetition of the rhythm, we are given a supporting structure for our consciousness which enables us to be as creative as possible. If we do not take this chance to be creative, then we fall into that well-known monotony which characterises so many lives in post-modern industrial culture. It will be increasingly a task of our times, to understand and master the course of time, and not to be subjugated by it.

To fix the date of Easter would be very useful for the ordering of our economic-based civilisation. Then we could plan common holidays ahead etc. This would serve our utilitarian culture well. We do it at Christmas, why not at Easter?

But it is precisely this mundane aspect of the world which Easter has come to emancipate us from! The economic utilitarian culture is a symptom of the 'dying earth existence' that our Creed refers to. After Golgotha that all changed. In the mid-point of the Creed, the event of Golgotha is referred to. We hear of a specific time-sequence, the enigmatic 'three days'. Then: 'Since that time [note the word 'time'] he is the Lord of the heavenly forces upon earth...'

It is these 'heavenly forces' which are now timely. They are to replace the phenomena of the 'dying earth existence', such as the egotism of our economic culture, or the lack of interest in what a human being is. We are charged to search for and maintain these new 'heavenly forces' in which he lives. Freedom, love, forgiveness: these are earthly expressions of these heavenly forces and this new life.

With Easter, his new life has flowed into the world. And it must change our experience of time, which currently is an untimely experience of the god Chronos. Chronos famously swallowed his children, and we may easily relate to this picture of our lives being apparently consumed by time.

Yet we immediately hear further in the Creed how, 'He will in time [again time is referred to] unite for the advancement of the world with those whom, through their bearing, he can wrest from the death of matter.'

The Saturn death forces of Chronos-time have been penetrated through, or wrested, by the 'fulfiller of the Fatherly deeds of the Ground of the World.' Chronos, who himself was a distorted picture of a Father-God, whose time is a false ground of existence, is not the true vehicle of our temporal experience. Christ is.

The Son-God is the Lord of the Mysteries of the Fullness of Time, the Pleroma, that meant so much to the Hellenic Gnostics, and that Paul famously elaborates upon in Galatians 4:4.

There is much to contemplate here. Perhaps we may simplify, and suggest that since Golgotha, new forces of life are flowing into time. To fix the date of Easter each year is commensurate to fixing one's thoughts on the crucifixion of Jesus, and stopping there; of remaining entirely ignorant of the Resurrection. It would be as if the Creed would end after the fifth sentence: 'The Christ Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate the death on the cross and was lowered into the grave of the earth.' Yet the event of Golgotha, fluid and mutable in essence, only begins there.

The alterable date of Easter reflects the organic nature of the universe, and our part in it. If we can grasp this, then we may begin to get a glimpse of the human being's magnitude, and of what our tasks may comprise. As Paul states in the passage in Galatians, 'you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.'

We may then feel the breath of freedom in this question of the date of Easter, a question that otherwise has become tragically irrelevant to the majority of human souls today.

## Reviews

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### **From 'Angel-ish' to English: How The Christian Community has been incarnating into today's lingua franca**

*Michael Ronall*

Anyone thoughtfully contemplating today's Anglo-American and German cultures, particularly those in English-speaking lands who are trying to assimilate anthroposophy and those in German-speaking countries who are reaching across the Channel and across the Atlantic, will wonder what the last century would have been like without

the catastrophic wars that so harshly severed the two societies. These brutal cataclysms left a comprehensive rift between the respective peoples long after enmity between their governments had ceased. Thus, an originally political divide now extends, although of course without hostilities, also into all the expressions of the science of the spirit that Rudolf Steiner inaugurated in German as well as in the renewal of religious life through The Christian Community. Contemporary seekers of the spirit must struggle mightily not only to reach that spirit, but even to find the conceptual, aesthetic, and linguistic resources for its col-

laborative attainment. How many English speakers today are conversant with German Romanticism, or German speakers familiar with the American Transcendentalists? Both movements offered firm if sometimes incomplete guidance for navigating the complementary dogmatic hazards of mechanistic materialism and new-age mysticism that have infected the world-views of even the most well intentioned students of spiritual science today; a broader cross-pollination would have strengthened each continent's homegrown immunity to withstand these twin pestilences.

But a more useful question than the futile 'What would have been different?' is one more in line with Steiner's own essentially Christian attitude when faced with setbacks of every dimension, namely, 'How can we redeem what has been lost, how can we quicken life from the available opportunities?' If the division imposed between the world's two dominant cultures was not simply a *felix culpa*, that is, a tragedy harboring a blessing, neither was the violence that occasioned civilization's final death-knell, though at the time it understandably appeared to some to be just that. Faith in the possibility of deepening and enriching the consciousness of our humanity, even through tragedy, means being ready to convert that consciousness into love; this book narrates the path taken by a few resolute souls in the service of that alchemical enterprise.

For all the misgivings that Steiner held about counter-evolutionary influences arising from economic and political powers in what he termed the West—meaning west of Central Europe—his regard for English-speaking peoples was patent. Such interest was carried with an eye not merely to assimilating them under a timely central-European cultural leadership, but with an incisive recognition of the specific promises

arising from their endowed constitution. This recognition is documented in the book here under review, citing Steiner's urgent forecast that the survival of The Christian Community in Europe would depend on its prompt expansion to England and America.

The outlook is intriguingly consistent with the prediction attributed to Steiner that his work as a whole, although incarnating in German, would spread through the world in the English language.

As has been widely appreciated, Steiner sprang into renewed activity when beset by even traumatic devastation, whether resulting from the demolition of the global social order by the World

War, of the first Goetheanum by arson, or from the many disappointments generated by his own students. It is also related that his grief upon viewing the charred ruins of the Goetheanum was, by his own astonishing account, not for the wasted decade of strenuous effort, but rather because its disappearance would deprive specifically Western men and women of the possibility to view its physical incarnation of spiritual reality. In the more gradual case of the worldwide decline of religion occasioned by nineteenth-century materialism, we find the beginnings of The Christian Community to have been much more tentative than one would guess from the firmness of the rituals' forms as we know them. But hesitation was only on the part of those who went to Rudolf Steiner with their probing quest. His own response was swift, energetic, and comprehensive, ready to entrust to those who approached him a potent remedy formed out of the spiritual worlds, with power, as we know, radically to consecrate not only substances, but man himself.

The story of priests of The Christian Community who have carried its mission across the Channel, the Atlantic, and then into every corner of the world is faithfully and

***Pioneers of Religious  
Renewal: A History of The  
Christian Community  
in the English-Speaking  
World.***

**Christian Maclean**

paperback: 192 pages. Floris Books (21 July 2016). B/W photographs. £20.00; US \$35.00

ISBN-10: 1782503153

ISBN-13: 978-1782503156.

vividly recounted here by the present Chair of the Trustees of The Christian Community in Great Britain. Following a childhood in its religious upbringing, he studied in its seminary in Stuttgart and then for close to forty years managed the movement's English-language publishing company, Floris Books. In this volume Christian Maclean has enabled those who found The Christian Community in English to meet the figures who made that encounter possible. The book will be invaluable as well to anyone seeking to follow the destiny of this small but potent force for the redemption of the earth and its inhabitants.

The book is, as Americans like to say, 'lavishly illustrated' with many photographs. As the power of the transubstantiation may be detected not through any biochemical analysis, but rather in the introspectively and socially perceptible changes that it effects in its communicants, so human faces come gradually to be animated by and inscribed with thoughts of their bearers. Accordingly, Christ's own apostles grew so closely to resemble him even outwardly that his arresting soldiers were forced to rely on his being pointed out to them among his followers. The pictures in this book reveal the varied physiognomies of their modern successors who often at great personal sacrifice shepherded the renewed sacraments out of their original incubation in German-speaking communities. The faces of these pastors, although certainly distinguishable one from another, nevertheless reveal a common cast of deep, unobtrusive responsibility. Their kind eyes show an openness to the ever-surprising manifestations of humanity and a readiness to reflect the essential dignity of each individual they would meet, a dignity under systematic and widespread attack across the century in which they worked.

Maclean nevertheless reveals to his readers priests not full-blown from the head of Zeus, but rather arriving from such vocations and avocations as psychotherapy, teaching school, and volunteering in crisis-intervention. In The Christian Community they found opportunities to fashion their own souls into instruments of accessibil-

ity for others' healing and insight, notwithstanding that their religious work often had to be supported by outside jobs. Some had been brought up and even ordained in other Christian denominations, some in Judaism; some found The Christian Community directly, others through anthroposophy, and many paths were paved by uncertainties, occasional crises of conscience or loyalty, and in rare cases mental imbalance or the dissolution of marital and institutional unity. These are realistic portraits of struggles, of overcoming illnesses, of sometimes longer periods needed for healing social crises, not all of which could be resolved within one lifetime. But the great bulk of human energies depicted here have been sacrificially and effectively devoted to sowing the Word, and indeed on fertile soil: When during wartime in England air-raid sirens pierced celebrations of the Act of Consecration of Man, all remained in their seats, resolved to fulfill it worthily. The tenacious nature of this prophetic enterprise puts one in mind of the historically decisive reverse—that is, eastward—trails of Irish and Scottish monks into Europe that stretched over a millennium, beginning in Scotland with their conversion of sixth-century Picts and lasting to the Industrial Revolution, baptizing the Continent into the humanistic civilization that we know today. Those who have become familiar with the subtle power of the renewed sacraments will be forgiven for wondering whether the present counter-wave of pilgrims carrying the metamorphosed impulse to the West will not have as significant an effect on the future.

Many of the movement's leaders seemed able to change in and out of various languages like vestments, and this while running an obstacle course through the early twentieth century's distracting desperations: wars, financial crises, political tyrannies. Some of the pioneers lived in ways that now seem colorful, sleeping under a desk and daily transforming bedrooms into offices, into chapels, and then back again, but these practices were not eccentricities. Rather, the clash of idealism with straitened

circumstances forced them into poverty, illness, literal and figurative battle-wounds, hunger, and through brushes with repressive regimes, persecution, imprisonment, and risk of death. But perhaps the requirement to improvise, apparently antithetical to ritual, belongs to the destiny of spiritual movements attempting to enter modernity. The latter, which locates authenticity only in naturalistic spontaneity, adjusts only obliquely to acquaintance with the value of form: Even in the more protected environment of North America, both The Christian Community and the Anthroposophical Society took their starts in a converted chicken coop and other structures built to house livestock.

Taking into account this imponderable marriage of ceremony and apparent accident, as well as the mysterious collusion of karma and grace upon which every meaningful human enterprise depends, it seems nevertheless significant that Christian Community founder Friedrich Rittelmeyer came to meet Rudolf Steiner as a direct result of simply doing his homework as a Lutheran minister with a project to research heterodox movements. One thinks of the modesty enjoined in Steiner's paradoxical guidance for souls who seek to transcend the imprisoning boundaries of the sense-world, counseling that '... anyone capable of always performing his duty, even though inclinations and sympathies would like to seduce him from this duty—such a person is unconsciously an initiate in the midst of ordinary life.' (*Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment* GA 10, Chapter 3, 'Initiation.')

Although, in this religious movement, 'Priests undertake to celebrate these sacraments objectively, without personal alterations or additions,' (Preface, p. 9) their every expression outside of celebrated ritual relies on the exercise of individual conscience and judgment. As mortals, they have therefore varied in being more richly or poorly endowed with diplomatic skills to maintain and express this conscience. There was the occasional gifted mediator, but at least as often those whom others 'did not always

find it easy to work with' (*passim*). The characterisation may actually reassure readers who would covet the apparently seamless harmony among the denomination's clergy. Yet so often is this depiction repeated that it might well serve as a standard epigram for consciousness-soul-epoch individuals struggling to balance heroic self-propulsion with pious self-denial—a struggle against which ordination, and we must trust providentially, seems not to vaccinate. Strife illumined by fierce ideals and warmed by devoted willing on both sides makes clear that the only available alternative to being 'not always easy to work with' would be 'impossible to work with'—precisely the condition that community-building toward the sixth epoch is designed to forestall.

The book is well organized into chronological and biographical sections and includes succinct accounts of the mutual influences between The Christian Community and the Camphill movement, the development of Floris Books, and the voyages of the organization into other countries. The latter includes the translation of liturgy into what Germans insist is a linguistic entity distinct from English, and which they call 'American,' but which its speakers call simply *English*, though if pressed will acknowledge that there is also a British English, though it varies almost entirely only in pronunciation. Subsequent adaptations into other languages followed, and the list is growing. At the end of the book, following the narratives, is a convenient time-chart and thumbnail biographies of the founding figures.

On the cusp of the Christian era, the Roman philosopher and man of affairs Cicero famously observed that 'Not to know what happened before you were born is perpetually to remain a child.' Christian Maclean has provided a useful and engaging resource to help this movement's members and friends mature in the mode that Cicero outlined, the better to prepare for the present and coming epoch. This is a stage in which the gods, with a degree of trust defying the predictions that a merely mortal survey could infer from present modes of social conduct,

are placing ever more responsibility into human hands.

While the past century has shown how effectively impersonal destruction can divide whole populations, the task of healing depends on individual encounters. Those who find decisive support in that endeavor through ritual communion with the 'I' of humanity will hold among their most urgent tasks making such communion as widely available as possible. Revealing and preserving for future contemplation the connections among this movement's founders through accounts that vividly show their subjects' aims, concerns, obstacles, and triumphs will inspire coming generations with confidence in that pursuit, whose fulfillment certainly requires its incarnation through the world-language of the day.

### ***Hermann Beckh: Life and Work* Gundhild Kačer-Bock**

translated by Maren and Alan Stott

Paperback: 338 pages, Anastasi

ISBN: 978-1910785157

***Christopher Cooper***

At the founding of The Christian Community in 1922 it was agreed that the new Seminary in Stuttgart was to have three incumbent teachers who were to live in the splendid new house. Friedrich Rittelmeyer and Emil Bock were given the ground floor and first floor respectively, with added responsibility for executive and administrative decisions. The top attic floor was provided for Hermann Beckh who had responsibility for teaching the relationship of Christianity to earlier religions, and who, as the only Professor among the 48 founding priests, could inspire the spiritual growth of the new community.

Beckh's extraordinary biography was meticulously researched and lovingly written by Gundhild Kačer-Bock and published by

Urachhaus in 1997, marking a great milestone in the records of The Christian Community. Having known the Professor since she was a child, Gundhild was able to combine early memories with factual discoveries resulting in a rounded picture of a truly great man who was both a pioneer of the spirit and a warm colleague. It is impossible to avoid the insight that Beckh had the most profound knowledge of ancient languages and texts—Tibetan, Sanskrit, Pali, Avestan and Hebrew—and could relate this knowledge to his own personal path of spiritual development as a priest at the altar.

The biography shows that Hermann Beckh (1875-1937) was one of Rudolf Steiner's most distinguished pupils who remained loyal since he first met him close to Christmas 1911. Steiner was actively seeking a circle of highly competent and gifted individualities around him, both for his own lifetime, and who would continue to carry his great legacy into the world after his death. In these pages we find that Beckh was one of those souls intimately connected with significant and poignant moments in Steiner's life.

In 1913 he was admitted to Esoteric School as a chosen pupil. The biography indicates that Steiner gave lectures particularly with Beckh in mind and that there was an extensive correspondence between them which is awaiting investigation in the Dornach archives. On New Year's Eve 1913 he attended an unforgettable evening dedicated to the poetry of Christian Morgenstern. Marie Steiner recited several of the poems with the seriously ill poet himself in the audience. Rudolf Steiner added a deeply moving tribute at the end of which he took several red roses from a vase, stepped off the podium and walked to where Morgenstern was sitting, handing the roses to him with further words of heartfelt appreciation.

For a short while in 1914 Beckh joined the wood-carvers working on building the all-wooden Goetheanum, with Steiner regularly present to give instructions. In 1913 Beckh was present at the very first public eurythmy performance, an art which he deeply treasured. His relatively short military service

during World War I with the German army in the Balkans must have prepared him for a dramatic event in 1922 when Steiner was giving a public lecture in Munich. All was going well during Steiner's talk when suddenly the lights went out, stink bombs were thrown, and there was an attempt to attack Steiner. Beckh had been chosen together with other leading anthroposophists to form a bodyguard to defend Steiner from such attacks.

September 1922 brings another pivotal event in Beckh's complex life, the founding of the Movement for Religious Renewal, otherwise known as The Christian Community. This took place with Steiner in the White Hall at the Goetheanum only about three months before the devastating arson attack, which took place on New Year's Eve 1922. Beckh had felt prompted to join those seeking new ways for religious life. There is a reverberating anecdote of his loud statement on the stairwell of Rittelmeyer's vicarage, 'Now I am here and belong with you; even if you don't want me, you will never get rid of me.'

Many of the insights and stories relating to his life are woven into this remarkable biographical document by Gundhild Kaçer-Bock. This now appears in English for the first time and gains in poignancy when one reads how at a young age (she was the eldest daughter of Emil Bock) she would visit Beckh in his attic flat. No matter how busy he was, he always found time to speak with her. Despite his immense erudition, Professor Beckh retained a child-like sense of wonder about the world, and so the visit of this young child was something he deeply valued. They built up a particular ritual during the visits. They would greet the pictures, the shells and fossils, and the wonderful array of precious stones. Her favourite game was 'naming the stones' which always produced a lot of noisy merriment. He would play to her on his piano and tell fairy stories. To her and her siblings he was always 'Fesser Beckh'. On his visits he would write home delightful notes on post-cards, a number of which

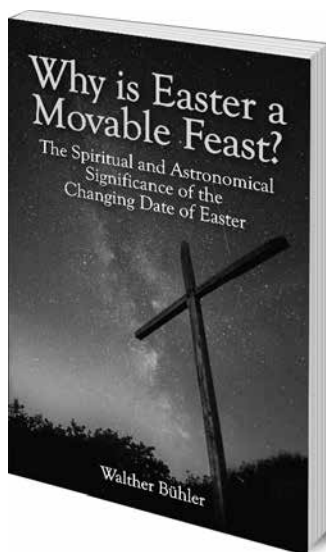
are included in the book. 'The first of May today was beautiful, like the light of Paradise which you once painted. I thought a lot about your picture of Paradise. Warm greetings, yours, 'Fesser B.'

Over the 318 pages of this book a rich, highly nuanced series of pictures of a remarkable personality emerge. The all-too-short autobiographical fragment of about 50 pages is included, leaving off with his student days in Munich. In its very moving style it offers many keys to unlock the deeper layers of Beckh's being. We read of the deep love of the high mountains, especially the Bavarian Alps, beginning in early childhood. Here among the peaks and the precious mountain flowers he felt much closer to the worlds of spirit than in the lowlands and certainly the cities. At the age of five he felt in an experience of body-free consciousness a realm beyond our narrow earth-existence, 'on the other shore of existence', from where the true human 'I: originates and where the 'wafting cosmic breath is perceptible'. At the same time, he felt an almost unbearable compassion for humanity. The experience was repeated later in life, as if to remind him of his deeper destiny that he eventually discovered.

We can be most grateful to the team of translators and editors who have worked tirelessly for several years to bring out the *Complete Works of the Rev. Prof. Hermann Beckh* in time for the Centenary of The Christian Community in 2022. The translations read well and the editing is of a fine quality. Maren and Alan Stott, Dr. Neil Franklin (the General Editor) and Dr Katrin Binder (advisor in German translation and Indology) deserve much praise, thanks and encouragement for their loving commitment to Hermann Beckh, as do the publishers Anastasi Ltd of Leominster, who unconditionally back these publications which signal a new perspective in our understanding of the first generation of teachers in The Christian Community.

*Christopher Cooper is a member of The Christian Community in Devon.*

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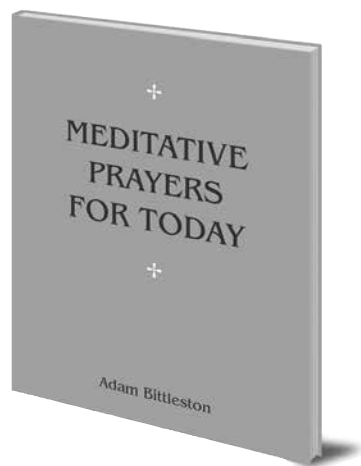
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