The Christian Community

Perspectives

September–November 2017

The Reformation

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The Space Between

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On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther posted his 95 theses on the door of All Saints Church in Wittenberg, by which he opened the floodgates for the many new religious movements which came to be known as the Reformation. This transformed the theological, ecclesiastical and social landscape of Europe in the decades and centuries to come.

The Reformation of the sixteenth century had had precursors. At the Diet of Worms in 1521, Luther was accused of reviving two heresies: that of John Wycliffe (ca. 1324–1384) and that of Jan Hus (ca 1370–1415). Wycliffe was a priest and theologian whose ideas and impulses foreshadowed those of Luther and the other reformers. He helped to make a translation of the Bible from the Latin Vulgate into English and believed that the Bible was the only source of authority, in contrast to the Church's doctrine that the tradition of the church carried its own authority. Perhaps more remarkable than his teaching was the social and religious movement, Lollardy, which sprang from his inspiration. It persisted independently until it was absorbed into the British Reformation. The Lollards opposed the corruption of the Church, and they celebrated the ideals of a priesthood of all believers and of a literate laity. The Lollards did this in the face of persecution: for about 100 years, private possession of an English Bible was punishable by death.

We know that Jan Hus, founder of the movement to reform the church in Bohemia was inspired by Wycliffe's teachings; Luther in turn was inspired by Hus. The new consciousness that gave birth to the Reformation, which gave ever more weight to the inner voice and conscience of each Christian, found its first powerful expression in the English language. The beginnings of the settlement of North America by Europeans are also part of the unfolding story of protest and reform; the Pilgrim Fathers embodied the Lollard spirit of answering to one's own conscience alone. A historic shift in consciousness, such as the one embodied by the Reformation, is prepared by many human beings in many places; freedom of conscience and belief, which many of us take for granted today, had to be fought for by human beings of conscience and courage.

Tom Ravetz

He Will Never Leave Us

He will never leave us.
His soul is the green of springtime.

He will never leave us.
His thoughts are the blue of the sky.

He will never leave us.
The blackness of the soil is his doing.

He will never leave us.
The red horizon is his greeting and his blessing.

He will never leave us,
Yet every blossom is his final word.

He will never leave us.
Each tree and forest salutes him.

He will never leave us.
He has hidden the road, but walks with us.

He will never leave us,
For love is his classroom.

He will never leave us.
He is the moistness of decay and of life.

He will never leave us.
The sun is a candle in His room.

He will never leave us.
He fashions the days to His use.

He will never leave us.
For death has become his friend.

He will live forever,
Until our passions become His.

Michael Ferrel, Toronto

The Reformation

A Reflection on the Occasion of the 500th Anniversary of Martin Luther's 95 Theses

Michael Wiehle

At the beginning of the 16th century, the Christian west was in turmoil. The new discoveries of the great seafaring countries foreshadowed the imminent end of the unified medieval world. The new knowledge gained by the crusaders was spreading. Not least, the expanding trade in exotic goods was also extending the horizons of ordinary people. The Catholic Church had lost a great deal of its credibility through its betrayal of Jan Hus at the Council in Constance in 1415. Hus had been promised free passage to the Council, only to be taken prisoner there and executed. The past schisms within the papacy led many people to doubt whether anything good could be expected from the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, a large part of the population remained convinced that salvation was only to be found in the Church. The human soul-constitution was in a time of transition. Fear of death was growing ever stronger. On the other hand, the growing orientation to the world of the senses brought a growing feeling of independent self-awareness. Many people asked themselves how things could continue.

In this time of upheaval, a young theologian called Martin Luther completed his theological studies, becoming a master of theology and later a professor. The decisive moment in his life had come when in 1505 he had miraculously survived being struck by lightning. From that moment on, he saw himself bound by a vow to dedicate his life to God, and he became a monk. He found his spiritual home in the Augustinian Order. There, his talent was quickly recognized and he was encouraged to take his theological studies further. His scholastic endeavours were nourished by a deep spirituality that yearned to find a personal expression.

What marked Luther out was the seriousness with which he practised theology. He also showed this seriousness with regard to his practical duties in pastoral care. It was in this realm of his work that he came strongly to disagree with the practices of the Catholic Church of his day. He took issue with the sale of indulgences on the scale that had become accepted at the time. An indulgence could be bought from the Church to gain remission from sins already committed and for sins that one might commit in the

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future. This remission was a kind of promise that one's time in Purgatory would be shortened. Indulgences had been invented to cater for the fact that many of the Crusaders in 12th and 13th centuries were likely to die away from home and without the chance of confessing to a priest and receiving absolution. The Church deemed that the 'good works' of undertaking a Crusade counted against their sins. Thus the origin of indulgences was a true spiritual need. By the 16th century, however, the good works could be replaced by a cash payment.

It was also possible to purchase indulgences for those who had already died, with a view to reducing their time in Purgatory. Luther's objection to this was that it led to a completely external, mechanical view of salvation. Moreover, he saw the drive to increase the sale of indulgences in order to finance the construction of St Peter's Cathedral in Rome as corrupt. John Tetzel was the monk charged as Grand Commissioner for indulgences in Germany with this fund-raising campaign. He became notorious for his methods, which came close to blackmail, famously in the verse attributed to him:

> *As soon as a coin in the coffer rings*
> *the soul from purgatory springs.*

There is some dispute about whether Tetzel created this ditty, or even said it[1]. However, it summed up the popular attitudes of the day and Luther took issue with it in the 27th and 28th of his 95 Theses:

> *They preach only human doctrines who say that as soon as the money clinks into the money chest, the soul flies out of purgatory. It is certain that when money clinks in the money chest, greed and avarice can be increased; but when the church intercedes, the result is in the hands of God alone.*

Sola scriptura, sola fide

The other great issue that Luther raised was the status of the Pope as the supreme authority, as against his role as primus inter pares, one of the bishops making up a council of the Church. The Middle Ages had seen a continual struggle between the bishops who wanted ultimate authority to rest in the Councils, and the papacy, which saw itself as the guarantor of the Church's authority. Luther did not recognise the infallibility of the Pope. As a well-trained philologist with a deep religious faith, Luther saw the Holy Scriptures as the ultimate authority. This authority of the Bible was rooted for Luther in a spiritual perception; Rudolf Steiner points out that for Luther, the gospel

retained the last possible connection with the divine world. He summarises Luther's position:

> *If in the future you look towards the spiritual world you will find nothing, for the ability to behold it will have vanished. If you nonetheless wish to retain awareness of its existence then you must turn to the Bible, the most reliable record in existence, a record that still contains direct knowledge of the spiritual world which you can otherwise no longer reach. In earlier times one would have said: besides the Gospel there is also the possibility to look directly into the spiritual world. This possibility has vanished for mankind of the fifth post-Atlantean epoch; only the Gospel remains.*[2]

Luther saw in the Bible increasingly a spiritual legacy that would endure in future times of materialism. It was spiritual nourishment for the future. Thus we can understand his view of the Bible: *sola scriptura*—salvation by the Scriptures alone. Luther saw in the Bible the foundation of Christianity that could endure into the future.

Luther saw the second secure foundation of the Christian faith in the principle of *sola fide*—salvation by faith alone. Its starting point was the question: How can I find a merciful God? This was prompted by Luther's experience that all the religious observances which he fulfilled as a dutiful monk did not give him a feeling of certainty about his relationship with God. This led to a religious crisis, in the course of which he took inspiration from Paul's Letter to the Romans, about which he said: 'For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, *The one who is righteous will live by faith.*' (Romans 1:17) From this experience sprang his conviction that man is justified by faith alone, not by any 'works', which is to say outer religious observances.

Rudolf Steiner puts Martin Luther's understanding of faith into the context of evolving human consciousness. For human beings of an earlier age, it would have been meaningless to say that we come into right relationship with the spiritual world through faith: in earlier ages, the beings of the spiritual world were more real than the experiences we can have in the world of the senses. For human beings of our age, however, their reality fades away. If they had to rely only on what they could experience for themselves, they would have nothing to bring to the spiritual.

> *…if man's worth were dependent solely on what he accomplished in the physical world he would be in fact just a creature of that world. He would be more and more convinced that he merely represented the highest peak of the animal kingdom. Man had therefore to forge a link*

with the spiritual world by means of something that in no way linked him with the physical world. That something is faith.[3]

Man was about to lose the connection with the divine world. He could only rely on what he is through the world of the senses, a human being. The only thing keeping the human being from being torn from the context of the spiritual world was faith.

Against this background we can also understand Luther's attitude to the sacraments. He foresaw that it would not be possible in the future to see the transformation that takes place in the mass as an objective, almost alchemical process, but that the 'reality' of body and blood would come to be seen only in the reception of the elements by communicant. A subjective belief would be the only reality that could be understood. This explains why Luther could hold fast to the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, but rejected the medieval magical conception of the change. Finally, the spiritual reality of Christ in the Lord's Supper led Luther to the doctrine of ubiquity. If Christ could be present in the elements of the Mass, he was present at least latently everywhere and at all times.

Luther was a preserver and an innovator at the same time. He held fast to the Holy Scriptures and to the Christian faith. He was still rooted in an older stream of culture, feeling the spiritual reality of earlier times. On the other hand, he had a kind of clairvoyant feeling for the future. He saw the need for personal, independent access to the divine world. He could perceive the shadows of the future that occurred with the loss of the ancient spirituality. For him, these shadows were so real that he had to struggle with them in his tower room in the Wartburg castle, finally vanquishing them by throwing an ink bottle at them. They were the shadows of a materialism devoid of all spirit.

Luther's greatest achievement, besides the translation of the Bible into the German language, was his assertion of conscience as the moral authority of man. When he appeared at the Reichstag in Worms in 1521 an event of world-historical proportions occurred: he appealed to his conscience by saying,

I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe.

Standing before the Emperor and all the princes of the church, a humble provincial monk and theologian publicly invoked his conscience as his ultimate authority. The voice of the individual, of the individual 'I,' was thus raised to a new level. This shook the worlds of spiritual and secular rule (sacerdotium and imperium). In earlier centuries, the estates of the realm had had the right

to raise their voices in great questions of state. The fact that an individual was now insisting on his own moral authority was completely new. From that moment on, the voice of the individual had far more weight, also in regard to the divine world.

In addition to this impulse of conscience, a new form of freedom emerged, encapsulated in the title of one of Luther's great works: *On the Freedom of a Christian*. Here, he outlines the paradoxical nature of Christian freedom, which means that the Christian is free from any outer authority and is yet a slave through his freely chosen path of love. We could say that in this way, the human being was set free on the path of imitating God himself. This had consequences far greater than Luther could have imagined, and which he partly saw with horror, when his state-sponsored Reformation spread and metamorphosed into the radical Reformation and the Peasants' War.

The outcome of the long century of warfare that arose from the Reformation was the principle of freedom of conscience, through which the prince of the realm could determine the official faith of the realm, but the state had no right to intervene in the private observance of its citizens.[4] This in turn laid the foundations for the modern conception of individual human rights and freedom of conscience.

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1. For more information, see ***http://beggarsallreformation.blogspot.co.uk/2012/01/did-tetzel-really-say-as-soon-as-coin.html***
2. Rudolf Steiner, *The Karma of Materialism*: Lecture 8 (see ***http://wn.rsarchive.org/GA/GA0176/19170918p01.html***)
3. ibid
4. This was enshrined in the Treaty of Westphalia, 1648.

Faithful

As we passed the gates of Paradise
People raised a joyful shout
Do we enter in, we asked
Or are we going out?

Be faithful
I do not mean be good
- obey the rules
I mean, *observe taboos –*
Remember,
In the darkness
In the hour of desperation
When the time comes, as it must
When bodies become barriers
And actions seem attacks
When words wound,
Destructive of purpose, and
Cannot be taken back. *Remember then*
How you saw her once
Remember
How you saw him then
Transcendent
Like a sky of stars moving in a ring
Around one star, the pole
Your guiding point.
Remember and be near.
I saw you then
I saw you then
The shining self you've always been
The self you are
And who you will become.

And though he falls
And though she fails to rise sometimes
Remember his sweet spirit that you saw
Stand by her with the closeness
quiet witness
of an angel. *We passed the gates of Paradise*
People raised a joyful din
It is a daily choice, they said
And so, we entered in.

Peter Howe

Written for the marriage of a young couple. The main idea for the poem is taken from Rudolf Steiner's words, sometimes known as 'Faithfulness.'

The priesthood of all believers

Tom Ravetz

The Reformation upended what can seem to be the settled world of the Middle Ages, where kings and priests were invested with divine powers. In the Renaissance, a new spirituality had started to develop. The religious and spiritual life was in ferment. Wycliffe and Hus had battled to bring the Word of God into the language of the common man. For centuries, human beings had accepted that the language they heard in church was one that they did not understand; it was in fact forbidden for them to try to engage with the scriptures. What new feeling of self-responsibility meant that this was no longer tolerable? Erasmus, one of Luther's contemporaries, said:

> *I totally disagree with those who are unwilling that the Sacred Scriptures, translated into the vulgar tongue, should be read by private individuals. I wish that they were translated into all languages of all people, that they might be read and known not merely by the Scots and Irish, but even by the Turks and Saracens… I wish that the ploughman might sing parts of them at his plough and the weaver at his shuttle, and that the traveller might beguile with their narration the weariness of the way.*[1]

Another development of the late middle ages was the so-called *devotio moderna*, cultivated most famously by the Brethren of the Common Life. Here, the emphasis shifted from the observance of outer forms to the cultivation of inner piety. For the first time, lay people lived a communal life such as had been reserved for monks in the past. Both Luther and Erasmus studied under the Brethren, and their emphasis on the individual relation with God and the importance of studying the scriptures were important influences on the Reformation.

Luther's cry of protest against the abuses of the Church broke the dam on a reservoir of feeling and will to change the inner and outer landscape of religion. What was released by Luther quickly took on forms that went far beyond what he had envisaged. Luther's burning question arose from his acute awareness of a deficit: none of his religious observances had given him a feeling of conviction about his relation with the spiritual world. His protest at the corruption involved in the sale of indulgences (see above, the article by Michael Wiehle) went far deeper than the desire to clean up a practice which many agreed had fallen

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into disrepute. At stake was not just the question of whether a debased indulgence could do something for the seeking Christian soul: Luther called into question whether the Church as an earthly institution could prescribe any outer observance that could put human beings into right relation with God. His great breakthrough was the realisation that no outer observance, but only the freely given gift of God's grace, received by the human soul in faith, could restore this relationship. There is nothing that human beings can do to put themselves right with God; to imagine otherwise is arrogance and pride.

Faith is a fundamental aspect of being human. Since the Enlightenment, it has come to mean more and more a weaker kind of knowing. However, for Luther, its meaning was still close to the Greek word *pistis*, which is connected more with concepts like loyalty or indeed faithfulness than knowing and understanding.[2] We can appreciate this difference by meditating on the difference between 'believing that' and 'believing in'. For Luther, faith in Christ meant far more than agreeing to certain assertions about Jesus of Nazareth and his life and death. It meant entrusting ourselves to him, as he had entrusted himself to the Father. There was always a connection between faith in Christ and the faith of Christ.

The earliest Christians were convinced by the power of the preaching of those who had heard Jesus speak and walked with him. As late as the Fourth Century, for some Christians at least, the power of the resurrection was a tangible reality. This gave the martyrs their loyalty to the one whom they had recognised as their Lord. This power of conviction even unto death imbued their bones and blood, even the fragments of their clothing that might have been pulled from the pyre, with the power of the Resurrected One. The institutions of the church grew up partly to contain and gradually also to control these powerful experiences. As authority gradually moved from individual Christians—martyrs and wise human beings—to the clergy, this was possible because the laity sensed the grace that streamed down the line of bishops, the so-called apostolic succession.

Inner authority and outer authority

Modern human beings' decision about what will have ultimate meaning in their lives is supremely personal and individual. No outer instance can prescribe where I place my faith. This attitude was dawning in the beginnings of the Reformation and it underlay Luther's cry from the heart: How can I find a merciful God? This upsurge of individual responsibility lasted at least until certain marks of faith came to be codified, symptoms of the inner

transformation that supposedly can be judged outwardly. Within a generation of Luther's cry of protest, such conventions had been decided upon in some of the protestant churches. The most notorious of these is connected to the doctrine of double predestination: God decided before the ages who was going to be saved and who was going to be damned; nothing human beings can do could change that. However, it was reasonable to imagine that the lives of the elect would give evidence that God had made the right decision, so it was possible to hazard a guess about who might be saved and who was doomed. This in turn created pressure to behave in ways that demonstrated such evidence.

The movement of authority inwards set in motion a re-evaluation of the nature and role of the Church whose consequences are still with us today. In line with his radical picture of faith as part of the internal reality of each Christian, Luther saw the Church not as an institution, one of the 'estates' of the world parallel and in some ways superior to the power of the princes: rather, it was the 'Gemeinde', the congregation or assembly of those called by God and endowed with the saving grace of faith. From this followed the idea of the invisible church. No earthly institution can embody the totality of the church, because it is made up of those with true faith, whose number is potentially boundless. The role of the Church has changed, but it is still central to Christian life. Luther defines the Church as,

> *For, thank God, a child seven years old knows what the Church is, namely, the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd.*[3]

The Seven Marks of the Church

In his treatise On the Councils and the Church, Luther outlines seven 'marks' of the Church: the Word of God, the Baptism, the Sacrament of the Altar, the Office of the Keys (penance and confession), the consecration of ministers, their prayer and thanksgiving, and 'the holy possession of the sacred cross' (suffering). All of these except the first depend on community life. Even living with the Gospel is a corporate activity, because Luther was at pains to prevent Christians from individualistic interpretations, such as sprang up in the radical Reformation, which he bitterly opposed. However, the role of this community was not to mediate grace that was otherwise unattainable, but to strengthen believers and offer them comfort and insight. Out of all this came the central and deeply resonant idea of the priesthood of all believers. With this, Luther does not mean that there should be no division of labour within the church—a secularization of the clergy—nor does it mean that everyone can make up his or her own version of the church. Rather, it means

that becoming part of the community of faith through baptism means that we are charged to act in a priestly way, because we are baptised into the priesthood of Christ (1 Peter 2:9). Timothy George summarizes Luther's thought:

> *Every Christian is someone else's priest, and we are all priests to one another.*[4]

This is connected to another definition of the church that was central to Luther: the *communio sanctorum* or community of saints. In our language we might say, the community of those who have undergone the inner consecration of the human being. Whatever role we have been assigned within the community, we share in the tasks of Christian leadership. Some of this was covered in the last issue of *Perspectives*. Interestingly, the reality of universal priesthood remains a point of meeting and difference between the Protestant and Catholic churches. *Lumen Gentium*, one of the key documents of the Second Vatican Council, also affirms this doctrine:

> *The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated to be a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, in order that through all those works which are those of the Christian man they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the power of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvellous light.*[5]

However, it also reaffirms a key difference in Catholic theology, namely that the priesthood of the ordained ministry is different from that of the laity 'in essence and not only in degree.'

The Universal Priesthood

The Christian Community was founded as radical new step, quite consciously stepping aside from the historical stream of Christian church history, symbolized by the Apostolic Succession. One of the founders, Alfred Heidenreich, wrote about the universal priesthood in an article. He points out the radical departure of The Christian Community even compared to the Protestant churches, which quickly took on the role of overseeing, if not controlling, the interior life of their members.

> *The priests of The Christian Community have no jurisdiction over the thoughts and beliefs of their members. Membership does not depend on assent to a body of doctrine or teaching. Priests and members alike are seekers. The togetherness of the Community arises from the communal experience of the powers of the Resurrection communicated through the Communion Service, called the Act of Consecration of Man. In it the presence of the Living Christ is condensed.*

In and through this Act of Consecration, the Mystery of Golgotha becomes increasingly a knowable fact. The earlier stage of Christianity, when religion and science came to rest in a rather sterile form of co-existence, is overcome. The Resurrection becomes a scientific reality and bridges the gap between the natural and the spiritual order. 'Thus thinketh in us Christ's passion and death, His resurrection, His revelation…'—with these words the Communion Service expresses the liturgical ratification of a fact.

In other words, the Communion Service, reborn in the form of the Act of Consecration of Man, is a road to Damascus. It leads to a first-hand experience of the Risen Christ. Progress may be slow, but it is safe and certain. There may be other roads leading to the same goal, but it is the main road.

Fed by such a central source of inspiration, guidance and power, the whole of life can gradually become sacramental. Without such an ever-renewed contact with the Resurrection, the well-known cry of the anti-ritualists that 'the whole of life should be a sacrament' is likely to prove itself as a counsel of perfection or a pious hope. And let it be remembered that sacramental life does not mean only truth and goodness, but also beauty. It presents the archetypal event by which 'the splendour burning in the heart of things', even material things, becomes manifest. … If we disregard the altar, life gradually lowers its level, and the universal priesthood of all believers ends up in the universal layhood of all unbelievers—which is more or less what has happened to our civilisation. In The Christian Community the altar is not set apart from life, either actually by rails or metaphysically by doctrine as in the Catholic tradition, but is in the centre of it. No isolated miracle is enacted on it, but the pattern and type of all human activity. It is the heavenly leaven which leavens the lump of our earthly duties; and the Sunday becomes the source of light which shines into our work-a-day week ; the first day of the week, the week-start not the week-end.

For the proper conduct of these sacramental realities a priesthood is indispensable. The humble and sincere trusteeship for these activities or 'mysteries' is the first duty of such a priesthood.

In these stirring words, something like a programme for a renewed idea of congregation, membership and priesthood can be discerned. Perhaps in time we will come to see the life of The Christian Community as a fulfilment of the promise of the Reformation. Seeing this mighty perspective need not blind us to the fact that there is much work still to be done. It seems to be of par-

ticular importance that we explore the subtleties of the sharing out of roles in a way that respects and furthers the spiritual integrity of the membership. It is easy to fall back on old models, particularly if we call ourselves priests and build churches and do so much that looks outwardly like church life for the last 500 or even 1000 years. Becoming aware of the historical development of Christianity can give us clarity and courage to take up the truly new that has been entrusted to us.

1. Erasmus, *Novum Testamentum* (2nd edn. 1519), p. 8
2. Cp *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, San Francisco, 1995
3. Martin Luther, *The Smalcald Articles*, III.12
4. Timothy George: *Theology of the Reformers*, 2nd Edition, Nashville, 2013 (quotations are from the Kindle edition), Kindle location 1909
5. *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter 5

God is Looking Large for You

God is looking everywhere to find you,
To see what you are doing.
Maybe you are kind of embarrassed
To hear that, but
He is really interested.
Maybe you're not up to much.
You're really not proud of yourself.
It's not a good time for you now.
That's OK.

He will find you right where you are.
He won't ask you any questions
Or put you on the spot.
He's not going to show you up
Or put you down.
He just wants to say hello to you
When you notice Him.

Michael Ferrel, Toronto

Thomas More and the painful birth of conscience

Donna Simmons

The Reformation was a time of great social, religious and political upheaval in 16th century Europe (its earliest stirrings date centuries before). Characteristic of this time was the tension between the old and the new, especially in the relationship between the individual and the Church. How to reconcile the voice within with the voice from without was a question that came to the fore as human beings struggled with the question of whether conscience is held by the Church for individuals or by the individual him- or herself. Indeed, it is just this question of *conscience* which is perhaps the unique marker of the Reformation and of the dawning of what in anthroposophy is termed the Age of the Consciousness Soul, the time when each human being must take responsibility for his or her own actions and Self.

Thomas More (1478–1535) was one of the most enigmatic figures of this period. Although he left copious amounts of writings and correspondence and although many of his contemporaries wrote extensively about him—including his son-in-law, who wrote his first biography—there is very little scholarly consensus on who exactly this man was in terms of his motivation, inner life and what prompted his actions.

The facts of his outer biography are clear enough. He was born within the sound of the Bow Bells and was thus a true Londoner. His father was a lawyer. Although he seemed initially willing to tolerate his son's early interest in the priesthood, he eventually ensured that Thomas followed his footsteps into law. More eventually became the under-sheriff of London, a knight, and Speaker of the House of Commons. None of this was undertaken entirely willingly by More: a motif of his life seems to have been the following of instructions out of a sense of duty, not self-interest. It is this characteristic that prompts many scholars to refer to him as the 'last of the great medieval men.'

Yet parallel to this obedience to outer authority was an insistence on always honouring his inner conscience. If one takes the time to read through some of his writings (and to read them all would take several years) one is immediately struck by how often this word—*conscience*—appears, both in reference to himself and to others.

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By all appearances, More was a true and unwavering supporter of the Old Religion as it was referred to in those days, what we would call the Catholic Church. For him, the authority of the Pope, the clergy and the sacraments were not to be questioned. Whilst in the service of Henry VIII he was a diligent, even obsessive, persecutor of heretics. He also clung tenaciously to his principled stance against the King's divorce and declaration that he, Henry, not the Pope, be the Head of the Church in England, which eventually gave rise to the split from Rome. More's refusal to endorse this eventually led to his execution.

More's support of the Church and of the Pope won him the lasting admiration of the Catholic Church. Hagiographies such as that written by Rev. T.E. Bridgett cast him as a blameless martyr, battling against heretics and the greed of Henry VIII. His care for the poor, his devout nature and his dedication to his family are all cited as examples of his deep Christian piety.

All this is true. Yet it is also true that once in the service of Henry VIII, his persecution of heretics was, to modern eyes, horrifically enthusiastic. He did not send them to be burned with reluctance. And although *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, used for centuries as Protestant propaganda, paints him as being a man dedicated entirely to the service of murdering heretics (even blaming him for the death and torture of a number of people after his own execution) the picture is far more complex than this.

When Thomas Cromwell was manoeuvring to oust More as Chancellor and to wrest him from the king's favour, one of the treasonous acts he accused More of was association with the clairvoyant Maid of Kent, who foretold the downfall of Henry. More indeed had dealings with her and could have been expected to arrest her. But he did not. Instead, in his letters to her and from what is reported of his visits with her, he simply assured her that she was mistaken and should stop playing with her life in this way.

One might thus assume More had a soft spot for women, that he felt that any woman having religious thoughts and engaging in what was essentially politics, was out of place. But here we have another side of More which is hard to fit neatly into a consistent picture of him: More was a very strong proponent of education for women and his daughter Margaret, whom he tutored at home, was known in her time as the best educated woman in Europe. No topic was off limits and he delighted in conversations with her about political and theological matters. The latter he supported by advocating that the Bible should be freely available for anyone to read, a belief that is not readily reconciled with his supposed rabid anti-Protestantism.

Another episode from More's life illustrates clearly that he was not entirely intolerant. His son-in-law to be, William Roper, whilst courting Margaret,

was found to not only have seditious religious material in his possession but was known to attend meetings by heretical preachers and lay people. One might think that a powerful man like More would take a dim view of the suitability of a radical marrying his favourite daughter. Yet More responded to this situation with respect, sympathy and patience, eventually convincing Roper of his error. More acted as a man of conscience, respecting the conscience of another human being.

Esoteric Influences on Thomas More

Perhaps instead of looking to place More somewhere in the duality between the Catholic and Protestant impulses of the time, we need to step back and see that there has always been a third possible way to relate to Christianity and that part of the mystery of Thomas More might lie there.

Whilst a student in Oxford, More became part of a circle of men whose friendship lasted for many years. This circle eventually comprised a number of the top courtiers in the service of Henry VIII and included Thomas Linacre, William Lilye, Cuthbert Tunstall, and John Colet. These men were deeply influenced by what was called 'the New Learning' which can be considered to be the roots of European Humanism. There was a strong esoteric core to these beliefs, predominantly an interest in Neoplatonism. Indeed, Colet, who later became the dean of St Paul's and founded St Paul's School, preached about Dionysius the Areopagite from the pulpit of St Paul's, the most influential stage for Christianity in England at this time.

Another influence on this group was Pico della Mirandola. An esotericist from the previous century, who died young under mysterious circumstances, Pico had stirred up his aristocratic circles with a call for the right of human beings to determine their relationship to good and to evil in freedom. Pico so impressed the young Thomas More that he translated his *Life and Works* in 1510.

At this time it was still unclear whether More would become a priest or a lawyer. He was especially drawn to the Order of Carthusians, the 'White Monks' and stayed with them frequently, even after he bowed to his father's will and took up law. Aesthetic, strict and pious, the Carthusian way was one of meditation, prayer, silence and a rigorous inner life. For the rest of his days, More practiced the spiritual exercises he learned with the Carthusians.

Erasmus, Folly and Utopia

Perhaps the most important and long-lasting influence on More was the Dutch humanist scholar, Erasmus of Rotterdam, his close friend for over 40

years. Fairly early on in their relationship, Erasmus wrote the witty and enigmatic *In Praise of Folly* (1509), dedicated to More. In response, More wrote *Utopia* (1516). Here we can really see why Thomas More has inspired the most diverse of opinions about his intentions. Like the seven blind men who, upon touching an elephant, each proclaim that the part he has touched—its tail, its trunk, its side—is what an elephant is, so *Utopia* is what its readers are looking for. Most modern scholars regard it as a farce, citing its ridiculous and humorous details such as the minutiae of the chicken-raising practices of the Utopians and how whole families would fill the ranks of the army marching into war. Some focus on its relationship to Platonic thought and laud it as a modern Platonist masterpiece.

Others see it as an earnest refutation of 16th century politics and society (including Karl Kautsky, the famous Marxist who declared More thus to be 'the world's first socialist'). Still others see exactly the opposite, claiming Utopia to be a refutation of Reform and a plea for a return to tradition!

Perhaps this was the point: that the story of Utopia (Greek for nowhere), told by Raphael Hythloday (purveyor of nonsense) is a tale of *something* through *nothing*. In terms of its literary form, it is full of litotes, a device of negation, where one is saying something through its negative aspect. Bearing in mind that the circle of More's closest of acquaintances were strongly influenced by Neoplatonism, with its powerful descriptions of *nothingness*, could *Utopia* be saying something quite other than what it appears to be saying? Or is it simply a delightful exercise in scholarly wittiness, an inside joke between two great intellects, More and Erasmus? Another thread in this book is its emphasis on the moral obligation to engage in civic life. Perhaps this belief is what prompted More toward the final chapter of his life, his service to Henry VIII.

More in service to the king

Some of the most perplexing episodes of More's life have to do with his relationship to Luther, whom More loathed, calling him the 'scourge of God' and the Antichrist. Although he was undoubtedly aware of Luther before Henry VIII insisted upon him becoming his Chancellor in 1529, it was only under Henry's service that More engaged in correspondence with Luther and became, we could almost say, obsessed with him. Luther wrote *The Babylonian Captivity*, an attack on the Pope and the seven sacraments, in 1520 and Henry wished to refute its content. He asked More in 1523 to write this for him and thus was launched what surely must be one of the most scatological and completely unbecoming correspondence between two serious

and important men that history has witnessed! Although Luther had always been known for his rather earthy ways, this was a new side of More, who was regarded as a witty, clever, restrained and intelligent rhetorician, someone who delighted in the play of legalistic move and counter-move, not someone who lowered himself using the most vulgar of insults against his opponent.

What happened to More during this time? Not only did he become ferocious in his pursuit of heretics, but his attacks and counter attacks on Luther were notoriously venomous. Could the gold chain he wore about his neck as a symbol of his service to the king, the same gold which in Utopia is so completely shunned by Utopians that it is made into chamber pots, have weighed him down on an inner as well as outer level? As Chancellor to the king, he was 'keeper of the conscience of the king', the first non-priest in English history to have this dubious honour. Clearly well aware of the folly of kings and of this one in particular, could one regard More's acceptance of Chancellorship to have been a kind of sacrifice?

For the fact is, More's essentially devout and pious conscience did not change during his time of service to Henry. With his wit, intelligence, learning and experience, he could have easily played the game and avoided his eventual fate, possibly even out-manoeuvring Cromwell and his cronies. But More did not. There is no shred of evidence that he, though well aware of what was going on, did anything to compromise the oath he took to the king. And when that oath, in his view, came into conflict with his higher oath to God, when the king insisted that he endorse not only his divorce from Katherine of Aragon but accept his position as head of the Church in England, More was forced to resign. He did so with no illusions about the outcome of this step. When called before the commission assembled to examine his beliefs and guilt, More assured those assembled that 'when we die, you will go to Heaven for doing your conscience and I will be sent to Hell for not doing mine' if he relented.

Thomas More was executed at the order of Henry VIII on 6 July 1535. He spent the preceding eight months in the Tower, quietly reading, praying and preparing for his death. He wrote a long rambling treatise on the suffering of Christ at Gethsemane and his own suffering must have been acute, as even his beloved Margaret pleaded with him to 'swear to the oath, just not in your heart'. This was not possible for a man like Thomas More and he answered her by saying:

> *When a man has taken an oath he is holding his own Self in his hand. Some men are not capable of this but I think your father is not one of them.*

He also told her that he had 'secret reasons' for not signing the oath required by the king.

Thomas More was a myriad of contradictions and he seemed to be able to live with this. He never renounced *Utopia* though Erasmus, perhaps made of less stern stuff, did eventually renounce *Folly*. He showed great tolerance and great intolerance toward those considered to be heretics. More's prayer life was not typical of a devout Catholic of the time and one can conclude that his esoteric path was one he walked, in various ways, all his life. Though he seems to have made sacrifices—in rejecting becoming a priest, in serving Henry—he did so in full awareness of the consequences. And when service to the king became irreconcilable with his own inner light of conscience, then he was forced to make the greatest of sacrifices. A truly modern man, flawed and struggling, he knew that the only truth lay in his own conscience, where he could find Christ.

A few suggestions for reading:
The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More George M. Logan (ed): 2011
Thomas More: A Very Brief History, John Guy: 2017
Life and Writings of Sir Thomas More, Rev. T.E. Bridgett: 1891
The Life of Thomas More, Peter Ackroyd: 1998
Utopia, Thomas More, Penguin Classics
www.marxists.org/archive/Kautsky/1888/more

I feel briefly overwhelmed.
What is the cause of this weakness?
It is not because the world has overpowered me
or because I am not rested or prepared.
All is well with me.
It is not humility or even repentance.
It is that there is a greatness inside of me
and I do not know if I am equal to it.

Michael Ferrel, Toronto

'We have to become communities of initiative!'

Vicke von Behr, the Erzoberlenker of The Christian Community, in conversation with Ulrich Meier

Ulrich Meier: *In order to mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation,* Die Christengemeinschaft *decided to turn to the theme of 'church'. Five years before the 100th anniversary of our own foundation, the question for The Christian Community could be: How do we wish to renew the image of the church as we go into the future?*

Vicke von Behr: I too am often asked how I imagine the future of the congregations. It has become clear to me in the course of the years that we are in a special situation in The Christian Community in relation both to the Protestant Churches and to the Catholic Church, because we have taken something into our own movement from both streams. From the Catholic Church, we have taken over the Mass, which has been modernized for us by Rudolf Steiner. Because our founders came from the Lutheran Church or were still working in it, we have also absorbed a great deal from this stream. This includes, among other things, something which was still a vital cultural factor in the 1920s: the Protestant congregation with its focal point in the pastor's family. Many great personalities who came to the earth after the Reformation chose to incarnate in protestant parsonages and parish families, which had a great influence on them, for example, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Matthias Claudius, or, more recently, such personalities as Friedrich Nietzsche, Gottfried Benn, or Friedrich Dürrenmatt. Since the Second World War in the GDR Angela Merkel and Joachim Gauck were also the children of Lutheran pastors. In these examples, we can see how much the ideal of the congregation has changed in the last 100 years. Today, the Lutheran congregations have a different position, and their pastors have a completely different role.

Sometimes we are asked whether The Christian Community has become too 'churchy'. This danger is in my view definitely connected to the fact that our image of the church was formed by the church life of the 1920s. On the one hand, this has been beneficial, because from the very beginning there was a strong emphasis on our teaching, our proclamation, naturally permeated through and through by

Ulrich Meier is a priest of The Christian Community in Hamburg and one of the directors of the Hamburg Seminary.

what came from the rituals, which in the Lutheran Church had relatively little significance. On the other hand, we need to ask ourselves: How do we make the leap into the 21st century? How do we move from this traditional image of the church into a concept of the church or of church life, which opens up new possibilities for the future? When we visit communities in other countries, we see how something quite independent has developed there. Buenos Aires, for example, shows how youth work can be used as a foundation of community life.

UM: *During the foundation of The Christian Community, Rudolf Steiner spoke about the need for 'free congregations.' Is this an idea whose time has come; should we allow more diversity in the form and life of our congregations?*

VvB: I believe this will be more and more important in the future: the congregations need to develop in their own ways, rather than conforming to a general idea of how Christianity should be lived. This also applies to the priests. When Rudolf Steiner said we should take hold of our priesthood from the ego, it means that there are as many different ways to be a priest as there are human beings who try to live this profession. This can be applied to the congregations, too. There should be as many congregations as there are people who share the impulse to lead a free religious life and to create communities together and keep them alive.

UM*: Are these ideas about the future being discussed amongst priests and congregations? Do you have any suggestions or visions?*

VvB: By bringing The Christian Community to birth out of anthroposophy, Rudolf Steiner wanted to reconcile the exoteric and esoteric currents of Christianity. In early Christianity, the stream of outer church history gradually separated off from the mystery stream. A stream of esoteric Christianity, which flowed into the modern age through the Rosicrucians and the Grail, lived on more or less independently. As Christian Community we stand in the stream of exoteric church history, but at the same time we also have the task of developing an esoteric Christianity. For me this means that the proclamation in the future will need to be far more focused on this esoteric Christianity. The members would need to understand ever more deeply what the rituals mean. Out of this understanding, a completely different inner activity in concelebrating the sacraments can develop. From this feeling of co-responsibility for the celebration of the sacraments, the impulses for the formation of the congregation could arise. Every congregation has to find out for itself at its altar: What kind of congregation are we? What kind of social life wants to unfold out of our common religious life? Not out of tradition, but out of the wishes,

the possibilities, the needs of the people who live together. We could put this another way: our social life around the altar gives Christ, who is reappearing in our time, the possibility to be at work in the destinies of individuals and to accompany them.

UM: *This combination of esotericism and exotericism could also have the effect that the churches take on a Christian mission within their city, their region. The weakness that communities are too much concerned with themselves could be transformed in both directions—esoterically and exoterically—so that the deepening inward and the radiant power beyond the boundaries of the community strengthen each other mutually.*

VvB: The great challenge here is to keep the balance. If there is a tendency to put too much emphasis on the esoteric aspects, there is a danger that one becomes like a sect and loses all connection with the outside world. If on the other hand one develops the orientation to the world too strongly, one can end up losing the substance of our community life. If we manage to develop initiatives that arise from this substance, which we offer to our neighbours, this need not be done in an outer missionary spirit. It could however lead people to experience that something is being cultivated here which has its roots not in the wider culture but in an active religious life.

UM: *We were both at the International Whitsun Conference and witnessed the impressive youth conference that took place on the same site. The young people camped on the grounds of the conference centre, and the services were held in a tent—the so-called Cathedral. I realised how far as Christian Community we rely on our established spaces and conventional social norms. In the sight of the tents, however, the question came to me: How are we going to be visible to younger people as those who are in movement, who demonstrate the longing for growth and development, which is an essential part of being Christian?*

VvB: The leadership invited young people to a conversation, where we wanted to hear their questions and hopes. About 50 youngsters took up the invitation, and I left the meeting with the question: How do we get away from educating young people so that they feel comfortable in what we already are as Christian Community? And how can we change what we are in such a way that the young people find their home here? The youth conference itself was a beautiful beginning. More than a thousand adults who took part in the main conference were often moved to tears by the young people's enthusiasm, *joie de vivre*, and love of The Christian Community. Many of us felt that this Whitsun event had crossed the generations!

UM: *To finish, I would like to switch from the world-wide perspective to the local possibilities in the congregations. The Catholic priest Thomas Frings, the*

great nephew of the famous Cardinal of Cologne, Joseph Frings, gave up his parish a year ago because he could no longer stand the mere administration of ecclesiastical traditions with ever fewer active members. His suggestion was that the Catholic Church would need to find a new quality of community life. He calls this quality the 'decision-making community' and wishes that the great responsibility that we as baptized Christians have for the sacramental life can gain a whole new force and substance from the decision-making power of the individual community members. Is this something that might concern us in The Christian Community?

VvB: I would modify it somewhat, and rather express it as follows: We must become 'communities of initiative'. I experience this with the young people: they do not have a strong need to get together and listen to talks or be served in some way; they come together and want to do something with each other. This is something that can be inspiring for the adults too, that we become communities of initiative in which projects come about which on the one hand enliven and inspire the life of the community and, at the same time, radiate into the world so that people can perceive that something is happening in this community of people which touches us, which perhaps even concerns us and makes us wonder whether we might want to take part.

UM*: Thank you for the conversation!*

Alone With Thee

When I am alone with these
clouds sky sun breeze
woodland shadow birdsong leaves
flowers field grass tree
stream storm wave sea
Then I am all one with thee.

Peter Howe

A meditation on Martinmas

Luke Barr

November is a bleak month. The dark and cold come quickly upon us, particularly after the clocks have gone back. After the trees have been stripped bare to reveal a grey skyline behind them, we can feel the moribund mood of this month.

Because of the advanced decay in nature, we sense death around us in November. Hallowe'en inaugurates the mood of death, and is followed by the days of All Saints and All Souls. Remembrance Sunday is also an integral part of this moribund month.

The colourful, crisp beauty of October has passed, and the inner warmth of Advent has not yet arrived. November is unsupported by any major seasonal festival. As such, we feel the old year 'die' in November, before the new Christian year that begins with Advent can be born.

November is like a question at the end of the year. It is so full of the forces of death, that it has the power to put all of life into question. The question that appears at Michaelmas, 'Who is like God?' dies in November. Like the decaying November leaves on the ground, the mighty question begins to decompose and enter a state of putrefaction. It must do, so that it can be re-born at Advent, and point us to the answer to Michael's question.

We must truly feel the impact of the death element in November, and our concomitant helplessness and hopelessness, so that we may then truly experience the grace of Advent; so that we may truly answer Michael's question.

But November is not without its light. There is the modest festival of St. Martin's day on November 11, a festival which continues to be celebrated, but often without true understanding of its import.

Luke Barr is a priest of The Christian Community in Aberdeen.

Children carry their home-made lanterns out into the night, and sing songs commemorating the deed of Martin as he shared his cloak with a beggar. Martin's act of generosity was spontaneous and uncompelled. It arose out of the powers of human empathy and compassion. It was a genuine act of freedom. In performing it, he realised that man did not have to live in communities which were held together by external authority of law and order—which his soldiering for the Roman Empire served to implement; but rather human beings could live as free moral agents in Christian communities—communities in which each individual's moral genius guided the life of the communal organism.

When we contemplate November as representing death and the dying process, then we may find in Martin's deed a picture of how human souls actually cross the threshold of their own individual deaths. For, as we pass into the 'calm of soul existence' we may, like the lantern-bearing children, carry our truly free deeds before us, like a meagre light, but a light nonetheless. These deeds—anything that was uncompelled, generous in spirit, compassionate and free of egoistic motives—we hold at heart-height before us, just as the children's lanterns dangle before them. And as we pass over the threshold, their light may begin to weave an 'eye' capable of beholding the spirit.

Our truly good deeds, it seems to me, never serve an ambition or plan that we may have, however altruistic. True moral deeds of love always have something sacrificial about them.

As with the legends surrounding most saints, Martin is described as going to live with the poor and the sick. This is a detail that we can easily read past, as if it were some kind of platitude. But what does it actually mean?

Martin does not go to live with the poor in order to make them rich, or even slightly better off. He does not go to live with the sick in order to heal them or make them paragons of health. Rather, he freely enters into the conditions of their existence with them. Before, he

had been a soldier, certain of his livelihood. Now, he gives it all up and enters into the pure, bare existence of poverty and sickness.

To be truly poor and sick is to be without a future. One is caught in the vicious circle of brutal poverty and sickness. How can one help the poor? Send money through charities? How can one heal the sick? Administer drugs?

Martin performs neither of these more worldly solutions. Instead, he freely gives up his own comfort and enters the conditions of the hopeless and helpless. He does not try to bring help or healing to them through medicine or money. Rather, *his very being*, his sacrifice and love are to be the help and healing. And his presence amongst them is the great precipitant for change amongst them. That someone came freely to be amongst them and loves them—this deed shines like a light in the opaque conditions of poverty and sickness. It creates new possibilities for the disenfranchised. It bears hope. Martin is thus the preparer of the way for Advent. His is a voice calling in the nature-desolation of November.

Martin's deed is *the* Christian deed. Its source is the deed of Christ—the one who had freely entered into the conditions of our existence, shared in them, made them his own. He entered into poverty of soul and sickness of sin. The deed of Christ whispers to us of a great and mighty love that we barely can grasp. This love lives and unfolds through the power of 'sacrifice', which means 'to make holy'.

November, the bleak month, the month of the crushing weight of death. Within your grey mists, a beautiful lantern light of freedom shines! The free, sacrificial love of this light has the power to redeem November, the year itself, and the whole course of time—and render it holy once more.

Two poems about poems

What is a poem?

A poem is words
And the space between words
Where meanings grow
Like the space between people
Where angels go

Haiku

A poem is words
That try to express what can't
Be put into words

Peter Howe

The vocational training at the priests' seminary in Hamburg is like biodynamic farming

Lucienne van Bergenhenegouwen

First, the preparations were prepared with great care: before the training started, there was a five-year period of preparation. It was guided by the question, How can we make the ground fertile so that the seed can find the best possible soil?

A weekend at the priest's seminar makes me feel as if my inner soil has been sprinkled with preparations, which can make it ever more fruitful. This process is intensified by the community, during the 'dialogue walks' at the beginning and end of the weekend and when working on shared tasks in groups of three and four. We participants observed with amazement how intensively we formed a group with our special bio-dynamic-social cultivation. The sessions on speech and eurythmy which we do together, and which anchor us in our bodies, contribute to this. The water from the sky, which keeps the soil from drying out, should not be forgotten: the recurring work on the gospels, which gives us refreshing insights. Back home, there is time for everything to ripen. After two weekend courses comes the week-long session, in which each of us presents the results of their growth in the group. At the end of the week, the sun begins to shine as we get a deepening course about one of the sacraments by a member of the Circle of Seven.

After a year in which we have been through the healing, forward-striving rhythm of the anapest (short-short-long) three times, I can say that it has truly strengthened me more and more, I go back refreshed after each module and enter more strongly into everyday life. My learning permeates my actions and encounters. More and more I seek the essence of life on earth and in the spiritual world.

Who can say how the harvest will be, what will ripen and ultimately be harvested? With gratitude I keep ploughing and cultivating together with my fellow labourers, so that this 'training for professional people' can give rise to something good, beautiful and true.

Lucienne van Bergenhenegouwen is a member of the congregation in Forest Row.

Reviews

The Chymical Wedding Christian Rosenkreutz A Commentary on a Christian Path of Initiation

Bastiaan Baan

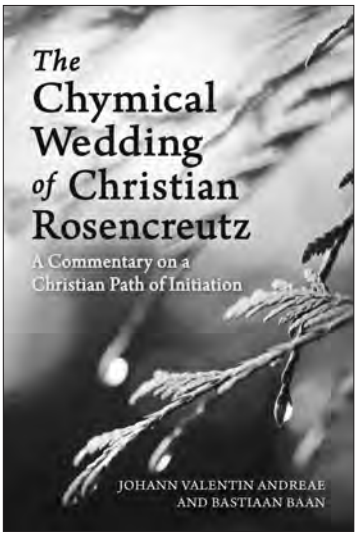
paperback, 256 pages, £ 16.99
ISBN: 9781782503170
Floris Books:

Review by Deborah Ravetz

In the face of the challenges of our time, it can be tempting not to love and value these times. We may feel dread at their challenges and give in to nostalgia for other, seemingly less fearful times. This book is the perfect antidote against that temptation.

Helpfully before introducing us to the Chymical Wedding, the author gives the context with a brief history of the Rosicrucians and their writings. This foundation supports our understanding as we are then introduced to the text of the Chymical Wedding a day at a time. The book ends with a brief but powerful few paragraphs entitled

'Who is Christian Rosenkreutz?' These help the reader to understanding the depth and width of that question and of the fruitful nature of this extraordinary personality.



What is so special about this book is the subtlety with which it explores and reveals its subject. The author makes very clear that he is not dealing with a black and white, rational content. Rather what is being shared is a living mystery which can be contemplated and worked with over many years, sometimes enlightening us and always stimulating us to deeper and more thoughtful questions and processes. Bastiaan does not explain the images and content of each day. Rather, he explores each day's images and concepts in order to plant them in the soul of the reader. Then they may serve as starting points for what can become personal interpretations and insight maybe far into the future at a different point in the reader's biography.

In his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl advised his readers to ask themselves, 'What is my life asking of me?' rather than to see themselves as the victim of something that life is doing to them. This gesture towards life shines through anything that has to do with Christian Rosenkreutz. We are asked to penetrate the nature of our world rather than to shy away from it. We are asked to seek transformation not for ourselves but for the world. It is this that makes the work so helpful for saying yes to now, to this time in which we live.

Recently Netflix, the internet based television provider, announced that their chief competitor in the battle for human attention was sleep. It is well known that many people 'binge-watch' whole series of soap operas and dramas, sometimes losing days or weeks of their life. Millions of human beings seek distraction in virtual worlds instead of seeking the stillness they would need to face their problems and frustrations. What might such a temptation be asking of us? How can we grow when faced with it rather than be devoured by it? The challenges we meet are exactly what we need if we are to develop inner resources and strengths, to become free in the face of all that can pull us away from our true nature.

Bastiaan's book encourages us not to flee our experience of life but to engage with it wholeheartedly. In order to enter the process described in this text it is necessary to be open and to live with images that ask more than they tell. This means being willing to take time with this content, perhaps a lifetime. We need to put ourselves in the uncomfortable position of living with rather than answering questions. It is also necessary to be humble, or teachable. We also need to face the dark sides of life. Sometimes we need to face what Bastiaan calls the desperation and fear which are evoked when we receive revelations from the spiritual world. All these demands are the exact opposite of the distractions we are offered by the modern world. It is these attitudes and experiences that can prepare us to live in our time in such a way that it begins not to be our enemy but the necessary resistance if we are to gain the strength and the qualities needed to understand the world and meet its demands as free human beings. In this way I see this book as something that can become a friend to its readers, something they will carry around and read not once but many times, which can become a friend and a guide.

MASK, Making, Using and Performing

Mike Chase

paperback: 192 pages, £ 30.00
New edition edition 1 May 2017
ISBN: 978-1907359668
Hawthorn Press 2017

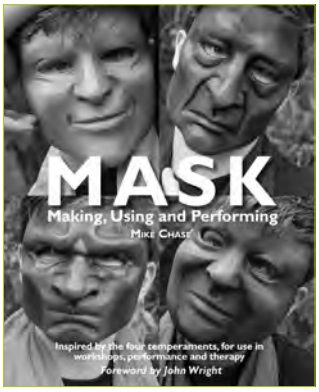
Review by Peter Howe

Masks have been a part of human culture since the beginnings of time. Spiritual leaders, healers and story-tellers used them to embody

> *the characters, spirits and gods from the stories, which would guide the ethical choices and moral development of society.**

In contemporary Western society, however, their use became marginalised, as human consciousness grew increasingly distant from its origins. Designs became 'either sentimental or grotesque.'

Mike Chase's great achievement, in a lifetime of designing, making and working with masks, and now in the writing of this outstanding book, has been to reconnect the medium with its spiritual origins through the use of archetypes;



> *to seek out meaningful cosmologies, ordered wholes, on which to develop my practice as a mask-maker… the temperaments and other archetypes, including the seven planets and the zodiac, have been the foundation stones for my mask designs.*

In his work as a teacher, therapist and theatre director, with community groups, specialist colleges and in prisons, he has rediscovered the healing, embodying and educating roles of mask. In a culture whose focus is almost entirely on the individual, he reinvents mask-use and design for the self-understanding, development and balance of individuals and groups.

He sees the mask as a medium through which the individual can find their voice and tell their story.

> *The outside of the mask becomes the externalised expression of an inner state, boiled down to its essence, arriving at an archetype that also has meaning for others. Filling the mask from the inside with the expression and breath, the body and gestures of the heightened state of the wearer open a doorway into another world. This vast and awe-inspiring world, both beautiful and terrifying, can be managed, named and expressed through the container of the mask.*

This is a beautifully produced book, illustrated abundantly with Jane Chase's colour photographs which are works of art in themselves. It is endorsed by Clark Baim as 'a generous book, full of clear guidance and practical wisdom.' It is on the one hand a practical handbook for making masks and their use in many educational, therapeutic and social contexts, but it would be relevant far beyond these contexts as well. In an effortless yet energetic style, Chase weaves together practical instruction, wise, emotional understanding and a theoretical underpinning laid out in economic, jargon-free language.

In particular, Chase's work is based upon the use of one set of archetypes: the four temperaments—choleric, phlegmatic, sanguine and melancholic. He cites others who have applied an understanding of the temperaments in modern contexts: Carl Jung in psychotherapy, Katharine Cook-Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers, (the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, used extensively in the business sector), Michael Chekhov in drama training, Rudolf Steiner in education and teacher training.

'*What captured my attention,*'

he says,

was the simplicity and depth of this cosmology and the manner by which it is applicable in all walks of life. This can be a tool to understand the self, relationships and behaviour, managing a classroom, training actors for the stage, mask makers for the theatre and design, mask using as a professional development process in education, business, therapy and theatre performance.

A fifth mask is included: the neutral, 'the mask of unmasking.' This is about being present in the here and now, and a preparation for entering into the 'powerful and extreme states of being' which are encountered through the four temperaments.

The book is in four parts:

1. Background to masks and to the four temperaments.
2. Mask-making. Clear instructions for designing and constructing masks.
3. Mask-using. A host of exercises, involving three elements: bodily movement, imagination and the spoken word. With charming line drawings by Allmut ffrench.
4. The application of mask work across many fields: education and special education, teacher training, psychotherapy and psychodrama, organisational and leadership training, community groups, theatre. And, not least, some stories from the author's extensive experience, which range from the deeply moving to the hilarious.

As well as a handbook, MASK is also about what lies behind the masks we all adopt every day.

...a relationship begins to develop between what is seen and what is still unseen... The psychology of masks as they challenge the notion of identity invites us to reconsider who the 'self' or the 'other' might be. The elemental psychology of the temperaments seems to awaken an ancient tacit knowledge of human nature, inviting us to consider the masks we might be wearing. These masks are not cultural or social, but rather correspond to a constitutional self, situated somewhere between the body and the soul.

In an age in which loss of meaning, the struggle to find the self and to understand the self all contribute to illness, mental health issues, alienation and criminality, this book is a source of understanding, recovery and even comfort. Every library, school, college, drama department, therapy centre, community and arts centre will be enriched by this; teachers, trainers, actors, therapists and facilitators will be inspired and assisted in their work. As John Wright says in his foreword, 'You learn through 'doing' with Mike and this is the quality that comes out when you read his book'.

* All quotations are from the book.

Helping Children Form Healthy Attachments
Building the Foundation for Strong Lifelong Relationships

Lois Eijgenraam;
Translated by Barbara Mees

paperback 120 pages, Floris Books,
£ 7.99, ISBN: 9781782503729

Review by Kevin Street

So—just what is 'attachment', and why is it so crucial in child development? Through the pages of this short, readable and helpful book, Lois Eijgenraam leads us through the labyrinth of childhood, and provides a sound foundation of understanding for all who have an interest in childhood—parents, the wider family, teachers—perhaps all of us, if we are really to come to an awareness of what can 'make or break' a child.

Babies are completely dependent on their caregivers to keep them safe and provide for all their needs . They rely on us to react to the signals they give about their state of comfort and happiness which in turn al-

lows them to have faith in themselves and in the world around them (p. 57)

This is a succinct and welcome description of the basic building blocks of healthy attachment, and it is when these needs are not consistently met, or when abuse and fear replace love and happiness, that attachment problems occur. Lois also steps back and wisely points out that the soundest of attachments are developed before birth: we are now aware of just how reliant the unborn child is on the mother's state of physical and emotional well-being.

Perhaps, though, the most startling aspect of this book is Lois' frequent appeals to parents themselves to take responsibility for their own relationships and life, and actively to engage in trying to understand their own inner working model (called by Lois 'inner weaving') of the world before they can effectively ensure healthy attachments for their own children. Indeed, an alternative sub title to the book could be 'A Parent's Inner Journey.' These challenges to parents are certainly great, but the need for them to be conscious of their own inner demons resonates with the inner, ongoing development expected of a Waldorf teacher.

I have often found that parents who struggle to bond with their own children are often struggling to come to terms with attachment problems in their own childhood. If that's the case it's important to recognise these issues and work through them. (pp. 27/28)

The more parents can reflect on their own childhood and how their sense of life developed, the more they will be able to offer their own children. (p. 62)

I urge all caregivers to examine their own biographic inner weavings and to enjoy the colours and patterns that life has given them. But I also urge everyone to look for any frayed edges and knots in order to recognise work that still needs to be done. (p. 111)

And if this seems a little extreme, the statistics for healthy/unhealthy attachment in the adult population should serve to justify the plea for parents to examine their own 'inner weavings'—that 55% of the population enjoy an adequately healthy attachment to themselves and the world around them, whilst 45% are insecurely attached, and therefore liable to unthinkingly pass on this style of attachment to their children.

As an aside, it is only fair to point out that the degrees of severity of insecure attachment are on the sort of sliding scale found in the autistic spectrum disorder, that can range from mild Aspergers to total dissociation from the world. Many of the insecurely attached adults will be more than able to 'cope'—but at the extreme of the scale we find the abusers, the addicts, and those who will parent any children in such a way as to give rise to insecure attachments.

Lois deals with the stark issues of insecure attachments in a short but clear chapter towards the end of the book, and summarises well the reality of life for these children:

Insecurely attached children are either too independent or too dependent. They either don't explore the world

Kevin has worked for over 15 years with children who are insecurely attached, and currently trains foster carers to help them understand the challenges faced with Attachment Disorders. He is a member of The Christian Community in Stourbridge, and edits the Newsletter *of the Region of Great Britain and Ireland.*

around them, or they run away. Those who are wise have learned that they are alone in life and must do everything themselves in order to survive. (p. 107)

However, the impact on the physiological development of the brain, the adverse effect of cortisol in compromising all aspects of childhood, the extremes of anti-social behaviour, and the survival instinct to stay alive at all costs, even if this involves total alienation from any caregiver who might try to help, is beyond the remit of this book. (For teachers but also parents who want more information on how to approach, understand and work with attachment disorders, I would strongly recommend : *Attachment in the Classroom*, Heather Geddes, Worth Publishing 2006)

The main thrust of Lois' book is to engage parents and caregivers with the gentle, nurturing pedagogy that underlines much of Waldorf early years education, through well-structured chapters and useful diagrams. Perhaps a little more on the dance of attachment that is so special between the caregiver and the newly born when feeding, through eye contact, proximity to heartbeat through holding, and smell, would also have underlined the crucial importance of these early life encounters.

Lois is also pretty robust in her assertion that boundaries have to be set, and that neither the child, the parent nor society are best served by woolly minded, weak parenting styles that again reflect something ultimately unresolved in the parent's own biography.

Fulfilling children's needs does not mean that we should raise princes and princesses and pander to their every desire … Children who are raised with healthy attachment may well grow up to be adults who behave like kings and queens, reigning with love and wisdom, and living happily ever after. (p. 60)

The concern and love for children is conveyed strongly in Lois' book, and *Helping Children Form Healthy Attachments* should become basic reading for all those of us who yearn to see children who can relate positively to the world, and so enrich themselves and all that they encounter.

Film Review

Arrival

American science fiction film directed by Denis Villeneuve.
Screenplay by Eric Heisserer
based on the 1998 short story 'Story of Your Life' by Ted Chiang, Starring: Amy Adams, Jeremy Renner and Forest Whitaker.

Pearl Goodwin

There is a deep-seated longing for the spiritual in all human beings, but the predominant thought forms of our time forbid its expression—not in everybody, but for very many. But spiritual images escape their bondage in several ways, and one of these is science fiction, whether that is in written form or in film.

A recent example of this is the film *Arrival*. The basic event is this: a number of objects (space-ships) arrive on various parts of the earth. They are large, black and egg shaped and place themselves, point downwards, just above the ground. There is, of course, widespread panic, fear and potential chaos and the military become involved and become prepared to engage, as with an enemy. The 'egg' that lands in the USA is, however, treated differently. The military set up a camp nearby. They engage the services of a renowned linguist, Louise Banks (played by Amy Adams) She has a genius for penetrating rare and even unknown languages and bringing out their meaning. Part of her personal biography is important—she had a child who died of cancer.

Human beings are allowed access to the 'egg' from below, near the ground, but it

opens only once every 18 hours, so Louise and a few others enter what should be a vertical column but it seems that they can walk on its wall as if it were horizontal. They reach the end, which seems to be a transparent wall that they cannot cross. Behind it, there is a sort of cloudy atmosphere. The beings on that other side, two of them, make themselves known. They are dark, cephalopod-like (octopus, squid) but they have seven appendages, not eight as is usual for any earthly animal species. These are attached to a rounded 'head' that has no visible sense organs.

Louise begins to communicate through written word and gesture, but mainly through who she is. Their eventual reply is the central image of the film. The end of each arm/appendage opens into a 7-pointed star from which there streams what can only be called 'ink' (squid?). This forms language, but not like any written language that has been seen before. It is nonlinear, neither horizontal or vertical, nor is it a hieroglyph as we might recognize from Ancient Egypt. What emerges from the fingers and is written in the ink is always a circle, but individualized through spikes, forms and shapes that are part of this circle. Each circle directly translates into a complex meaning; importantly, the meaning has to be grasped all at once, not in a linear fashion, unlike in our speech and writing, where we always leave meaning behind as we read or speak.

The rest of the world, where the other' eggs' have landed, is in crisis and the military want to strike, but want to know, through Louise, if the visitors have weapons, and what kind. After much trial and error in learning to read this language, it appears that they have a weapon, but they call it a tool. A tool that humanity badly needs—to develop an awareness that is nonlinear, and will connect past, present, and future into meaning. For Louise it means her being aware of her dead child as if she were with her in the present and seeing into her future, but not in any fixed way. We might call it an awareness of karma. Once this lesson has been learned, the 'eggs' rise up into the sky where they appear to dissolve or enter another time realm.

This film is about the limits of language, when it is linear in the way it is. It does of course carry meaning, and is a sign of civilisation. Gospel language and also poetry overcome some of the linearity, but can language be developed so it is both artistic and precise? Can we carry the past (life after death) the present in which we experience and act, and also the future (life before birth) in our consciousness all at once?

Visually the film is rather underwhelming, with little of the excitement usually associated with Sci-Fi. It is well directed (Dennis Villenneuve). It is a film about meaning, about human beings and whether we have a future or not.

This is a film which should be taken seriously for it shows us something that is not always available to our thinking about language, using powerful images.

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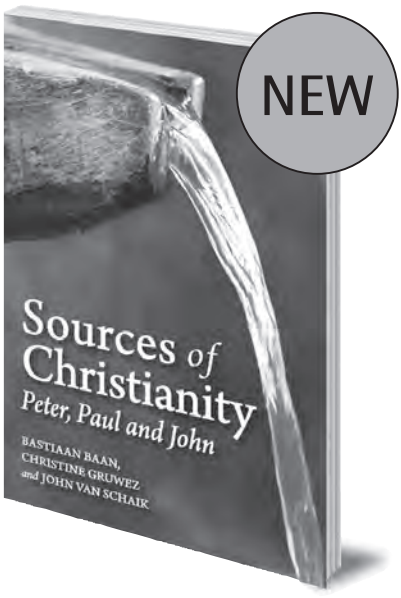

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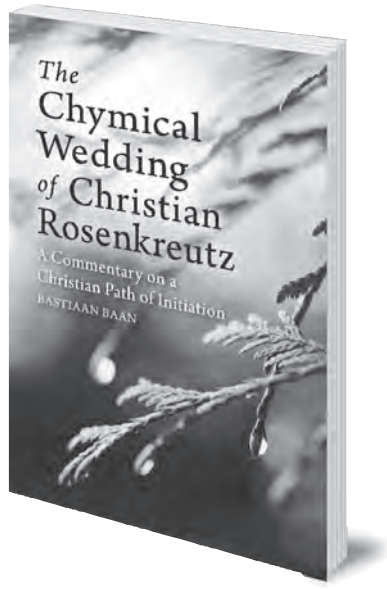

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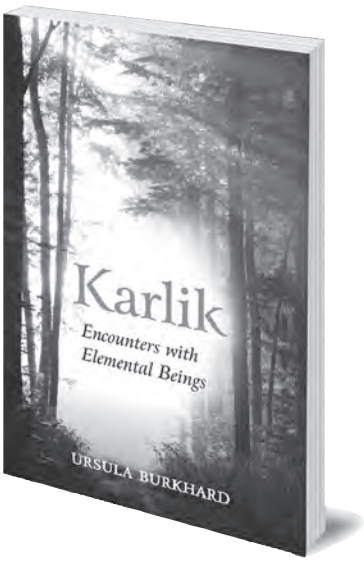

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