

The Christian Community

Perspectives

December 2017—February 2018

The New Man
Artificial Intelligence

Contents

Advent and the 'New Man'	3
<i>Luke Barr</i>	
The new inheritance	7
<i>Louise Madsen</i>	
I—not robot	11
<i>Peter van Breda</i>	
Preparing for the future	15
<i>J. Andrew Linnell</i>	
Maria and Child	21
<i>Sabine Haus</i>	
Advent—In the beginning—the Logos	23
<i>Elsbeth Weymann</i>	
Reviews	26

Front cover picture:
Detail from *The Garden of Earthly Delights*
by Hieronymus Bosch
Back cover picture:
Mary and Child by Greg Tricker,
stained glass window for the chapel
of The Christian Community in Buckfastleigh,
Devon. See article on page 21.

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Perspectives

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Thirteen point eight billion years after its birth, our Universe has awoken and become aware of itself.

This thought from a recent book (Max Tegmark, *Life 3.0: Being Human in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*, Penguin, 2017) echoes Hegel's insight: the world-spirit bestows being on the universe, pours itself out in creation, and awakens to itself through human self-awareness. Many readers of *Perspectives* will know the verse by Rudolf Steiner, 'The stars spoke once to man,' which describes the same thing in poetic language: the world is waiting for what human beings will 'speak' to the world of their origins.

The following quotation from the same book may seem more of a challenge to us:

Life, defined as a process that can retain its complexity and replicate, can develop through three stages: a biological stage (1.0), where its hardware and software are evolved, a cultural stage (2.0), where it can design its software (through learning) and a technological stage (3.0), where it can design its hardware as well, becoming the master of its own destiny.

With 'software,' the author means human culture and also what we call the soul. The 'hardware' is the body. Stage (3.0) refers to the likelihood that within the coming century (estimates vary wildly), artificial intelligence will have reached a point where it can design the hardware—the body—for more powerful versions of itself. This will usher in a process of exponential expansion, which could very soon outstrip human intelligence many times over.

If the first quotation sounds like a fulfilment of Hegel, the second one could be seen as a distorted version of the story of the preparation of the body of the Messiah. The divine word or Logos is the world-mind, the true intelligence that underlies all of creation. His incarnation as man at the beginning of our era is the turning point of history, making it possible that human beings may become co-creators, 'speaking' to the stars, the world of their origin. The prophecy of the embodiment of artificial

intelligence shows that our age asks of us not just that we deal with the social and economic consequences of technological change, but that we recognise the spiritual challenges that they bring. We will need to define and defend the truly human; that essence of our being which for Max Tegmark is merely a step on the way to the perfection of artificial intelligence.

When Rudolf Steiner was instructing the founders of The Christian Community, he gave a powerful illustration to make them aware of the inner reality of the offering. He pointed out that it would be possible to have a system of pulleys and vessels that would replicate the filling of the cup with water and wine and its subsequent elevation. Why would that not be the equivalent of the Offering? With this quite stark image, he pointed to the irreducibly human element without which the Offering is quite meaningless: the thoughts, feelings and moral impulses that we connect with the pouring in of water and wine, which open the process so that spiritual beings can take it up into their work.

We may find in coming years that the space for the irreducibly human will become ever smaller. More and more activities that we have considered to be uniquely human will be taken over by robots, as Peter van Breda examines in his article. If past experience of the adoption of medical technology (pacemakers, transplants) and communication technology (email, web) is a guide, many spiritually-minded people will vehemently reject these developments at first, only to adopt them a little later. It is all the more important that we conduct our own research and find the language to describe what could never be substituted. Perhaps altars where there is a true understanding of sacramentalism will be one of the last refuges for those in search of the truly human.

When we are preparing to receive the communion, we pray that Christ will give us his peace so that we may 'unite with the world's evolving'. This prayer expresses something of fundamental importance: we are praying for the strength to unite with the forward movement of the world. This does not mean blithely accepting everything as good, just because it represents progress of a kind. However, we clearly do not wish to shelter from the development of the world in other-worldly denial. The altar is intended not as a refuge but as a source of strength.

We were grateful for the many articles that were written in response to a call for this issue. We hope that our readers will find the variety of insights and opinions interesting and that they give rise to further debate. It is always possible to send a reader's letter to the address inside the front cover or to editor@perspectives-magazine.co.uk.

TOM RAVETZ

Advent and the 'New Man'

Luke Barr

Recent years have brought great changes in our understanding of what it means to be human. We stand at the beginning of an age in which technology is becoming ever more invasive and ever more powerful. It becomes a subtle part of our lives upon which we depend without being aware of it. The light switch that extends the day; the laptop upon which I am writing this article; the car that renders walking redundant; the mobile phones by which we are always available—all of these and many other technological aids have wrought a radical change-about in human existence, which continues at an accelerating pace. The conditions in which humanity lived for millennia have virtually disappeared in the western world.

And this is only the beginning. Within another two generations, we can expect further remarkable changes. It seems that these changes must and will come. What those changes are depends upon us and upon our vigilance. For either 'anything goes' and humanity will lose its humanity; or we may be enhanced spiritually by our relationship to technology.

It seems likely that human beings will integrate technology into themselves. Computer chips will probably become part of the human make up. It is conceivable that this is a necessary step in human evolution, abhorrent though it may seem to us, who see technological progress advancing at a speed with which we cannot keep pace. However, if we believe that the adversarial powers 'live' in the technological device, or consciousness, might we see this as only a necessary way of redeeming them in the future?

We already see the younger generation completely at home with advancing technology, whilst many of us older ones, in stark comparison, struggle with our computers and with figuring out how to use the mobile phone. The attraction of a 'new humanism' in which all the religious hang-ups and all the prejudices of the past are shed, and we become better, smarter human beings, is increasing. Another idea, where we become even partly robotic (trans-humanism) aims to render our emotional life with all its dark, depressing corners obsolete. We would then be on an endless 'joy-trip', exulting in ourselves and the world as our playground.

We hear this strange future already in modern music. Techno music, so alien to older generations, compels dancers to submit themselves completely to the unrelenting beat. The volume renders

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any thought impossible. There is no melody, no harmony. What happens to the human soul with no harmony; a soul with merely a beat to march to? We see it perhaps as well in the obsession with the body. Many young people to-day strive for a perfect body. Their body has to be optimised, turned into an instrument for the individual to 'enjoy life'. It is of course in each individual, far more complex than that. But the tendency is already in place in the young, to worship youth and its concomitant *optimal functionality*. The body then simply undergoes repairs when it breaks down; the tank is filled with quick fixes, 'shots' of high-protein, without necessarily paying much regard to health.

In a culture devoid of meaningful manual work, the body is built up in the gym or on the treadmill. Children have limited possibilities to move about freely in their environment. No one is truly tired out in a physically satisfying way at the end of the day. And our brain? It starts to be seen as a second-rate search engine that needs to be updated. Before long, implants will be the answer to this dilemma, the computer merging with the human being in an optimally functioning body.

All this is happening at an accelerating rate, and we may feel overwhelmed, as if a great flood and surge of technology may submerge us. We become 'anxious at the sound of the sea and of the ocean surge' (Luke 21:25).

Is this truly the future of the human being: the new (trans-)human?

At Advent, the gospel readings speak of the enigmatic figure of the Son of Man. These readings from the 'little apocalypse'¹ often perplex their hearers. This may be because of an unconscious expectation that we would be hearing the devotional stories of the preparation of Mary's soul for the birth of her child, as we prepare for Christmas. However, Christmas is not simply about the 'birth of Jesus upon earth'. It signifies a reversal in the relationship of the gods to human beings. It proclaims the decision made by the gods to create a new relationship to human souls: God is to become as helpless as a new born baby, to become dependent upon human beings, to leave responsibility in our hands.

It is through this reversal—where Gods no longer tell us what to do, but step back to make space for our freedom to develop—that something new and wonderful can begin to appear: the Son of Man.

The Son of Man is the future picture of the human being—what we may become. This is the 'new man' in truth. The creative powers, the gift of the Son-God, are the tool for the unfolding of this man, who is to become an angelic being.

At Christmas, we celebrate the birth of a divine power into the world—the power that provides the archetype of the new man. Just as Jesus' birth on earth was surrounded by dramatic events, so at Advent, we become aware of the

'little Apocalypse': the trials and tribulations which accompany this birth. We can see the 'Son of Man' as our higher self, which has transcended narrow egotism, who we are called to become and whom we can barely imagine. If we too are 'to stand in the presence of the Son of Man,' that is, to become aware of Christ's consecrating power within ourselves, then we have to expect that the birth of this power in our soul will also be accompanied by the trials, tribulations and the turbulence which we know so well in our lives.

These trials are our own biographical apocalypse. The 'I' of every individual has its own apocalyptic events by which it may mature into its true self. We may try to avoid them; we may bemoan aspects of our lives—but at the same time, we are beginning to grasp that our 'challenges' are necessary (even self-willed), stepping stones for our 'I,' in order that it may unfold.

How do we approach the 'new man'? How do we learn 'to stand in the presence of the Son of Man'?

There are great dangers here. Nietzsche famously proclaimed the 'superman.' He wished to see neurotic, God-fearing humanity discard all limits and caution. His ideas infamously became the foundation of Nazi theories of racial supremacy in his homeland, a perversion of his Delphian manifesto. Similarly, we may wish to leave all our neuroses, weaknesses, limitations and embarrassments behind in one fell swoop—the quicker the better! We would like to be better human beings as soon as possible. We wish to shine in others' estimation, to be brilliant, smarter, more appealing, without fault, *sexier*.² The list is seemingly endless.

And yet in the Act of Consecration of Man, we experience that our weaknesses, our strays from and denials of our true being are all necessary 'ingredients' if transformation is to take place. They are a part of the substance which flows into creating the 'new man' in the offering; they seem to be an essential part of the process of consecration.

This means that we need to cultivate patience with ourselves and others³. We need time to transform our faults. We need time, long cycles of time, to overcome the 'sickness of sin.' This means that we need time to become our true selves, a state which is almost unimaginable: no longer separated, but at one, at peace with ourselves and with the world.

As slowly and imperceptibly as the fig tree 'when it puts out leaves,' our transformation proceeds. And when we feel the hectic pressure from a mainstream culture trying to sweep us all up into the mad rush for self-realisation, we can stand inwardly 'still, erect, and lift up our heads.' This inner cultivation of peace and uprightness helps us to prepare at the right pace for the new man, the 'Son of Man.'

We practise contemplating this at Advent. This can prepare us to receive an intimation of the precious birth of the ‘new man’ at Christmas. The mood of Christmas is the mood of reverence. *This* is how we approach the image of the coming human being, the ‘Son of Man’—with devout reverence. Like the shepherds in the Christmas play, we need a shy reverence, a sense of wonder as before the miracle of birth, a speechlessness where ordinary speech steps back, and only the heart sings its joy. This is the way to approach the ‘new man.’ And to bring humble gifts to him, as a sign that we wish to bring the humble talents of our soul, to pour them into the up-building of this helpless new-born.

We may perhaps not live to see the inevitable rise of the pseudo ‘new man.’ But we may help prepare the way for coming generations to learn to ‘stand erect and lift up their heads to see the Son of Man.’

We may do this by purposefully cultivating reverence. We may learn to perceive the divine, as the Children’s Service puts it, in ‘stone and plant and beast.’ This practice gives us the foundation upon which to perceive it in the human being. In this way, ‘we revere the Spirit of God.’ Creatively cultivating reverence and wonder (and not merely piously pretending to reverence) does not only serve to advance one’s own soul. It also changes the world around one. Others notice—and they find that they are able to cultivate it too.

Reverence is not an arcane relic from a bygone age. It is something which, cultivated properly, may serve purposefully and beneficially in the most modern of contexts. If it lives in the soul, it can change the experience of being held up for hours in a traffic jam; it may bring a decisive and deeply human element to a business meeting. If we are sincere in our reverence—if we hold the Christmas event in our hearts—then the young, who are deeply spiritual, may be aided in their struggle to bring the Son of Man to life within themselves. It may provide the counter-balance to technology that they require from us, the last pre-digital generations, who will very soon have all passed from this world.

The Gospel of St Luke challenges us to be ‘watchful at all seasons’ (21:36): ‘These things’ are beginning to happen. Yet our free power has not diminished. We may still assume the noble task of shepherding the pure sacrificial forces of our soul, and bringing the power of reverence, a consecrating power, to the child who is being born as we speak.

1. Gospel of Luke, chapter 21
2. The current catchphrase when something is appealing: that it is ‘sexy’; or a political document has been ‘sexed up’ to make it more appealing to the masses.
3. ‘It is through your patience that you will gain possession of your living souls’
Luke 21:19

The new inheritance

Louise Madsen

The genealogy of Jesus

It all began with an idea in the mind of God. He would create man, a being fashioned in 'His own image'. To provide the essence of that being he would place a miniscule portion of his own essential nature, of his own creative faculty in man, at the very core of his spiritual organism—just enough for this earthly being, Adam, to set out upon his own path towards achieving his full potential as man in his own right.

But it soon became evident that this would not get off to a good start without considerable help and guidance from God himself. Already, because of the Fall, some strong corrective measures were implemented to keep man on the right track, and thus man began to learn about pain and suffering and about the meaning of work. Yet built into this whole risky venture was enormous, immeasurable, inherent strength: God's unswerving, unshakable allegiance to his original idea and intention: his aim to guide man until he had developed and matured to the point at which he would be ready to take his place 'fully fledged', so to speak, close to the angels, in the realms of the new heaven and the new earth, the New Jerusalem.

When we take into account all the myriad vicissitudes of man's life and progress on earth, we can, even so, find and follow the continuous thread of man's ongoing evolution right up into our present time.

In the world brought into being for the accomplishment of this task, the physical world, man was endowed with the gift of *physical* inheritance. By means of the heritage carried down through the generations, the heavenly powers could guide the development and maturing of his soul and spiritual nature. Then came the time when one man, Abraham, was chosen from out of humanity as a whole to become the father of a people who were to be the ancestors of one who was to bring about a fundamental, existential change in the course of human evolution. He was to be so constituted that, for a (very) brief moment in time, he could become the bearer of something far greater, of an entity far exceeding that required for the make-up of a 'merely' human life: namely, a *human* being in whom *God himself* could, so to speak, take up residence, not in his own realm, in heaven, but—on earth.

From out of his very own self and being the Godhead, God the Father, sent his son into *human* existence.

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The new inheritance

And the entry of the Son into the world of humanity was through great stages of birth: 'Christ ...is to this being as the Son born in eternity' (Christian Community Creed); with the 'birth of Jesus upon earth' (Creed) the word of the prophet was fulfilled, 'See, the maiden will conceive, she will bear a son, he shall be called Emanuel'; which means: God is in our midst. And at the baptism in the Jordan a voice spoke out of the heavens, 'This is my beloved Son; in him will I reveal myself'. With that change of place or position of the divine in relation to humanity, no longer would mankind be directed from outside, for God was no longer 'out there' or, rather, he was not only 'out there'. Now, in his son, he was also *within* man and what is to be accomplished is to be done by working from within—outwards. By choosing his dwelling place to be within the being of man, the son took upon himself the 'lot' of mankind: *all* the joys and sorrows of existence, and, most of all, the stamp of all mankind: death itself, in order to transform and overcome it. And it is just through this, through his identifying himself with man and his destiny, that the son established the *new inheritance*.

The *first inheritance* prevailed from Adam until Jesus. In the register of the names of the genealogy of Jesus we see the many generations required for the preparation of that one unique body in which Christ could enter 'as man into the earthly world' (Creed). From the outset, that one human physical vessel was so wrought and formed as to allow the 'Son of Mary to be the vehicle of the Christ' (Creed).

The *second inheritance*, brought about through Christ's indwelling in man, evolves within the sphere of the human soul, the *new* dwelling place of God—in his son. And this brings about a total 'turnaround' in the relationship between the divine world and humanity. Christ says, 'I and the Father are one'; and 'the Father is in me and I am in the Father' (John 10: 30, 38) and, 'he who has seen me has seen the Father... Do you not believe that I am in the Father and that the Father is in me?' (John 14: 9,10). And even more strikingly, 'All that the Father has is mine' (John 16:15). All that was in God the Father now becomes (only) attainable through Christ Jesus: 'I AM the Way and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by me' (John 14: 6). When we take these words to heart and feel their reality and truth, we can recognize that Christ truly is God in man.

Whereas previously it was the law—that is, directives from outside—that held sway, now grace and truth become the guiding principles in the development of mankind, and the human qualities of love, truthfulness and faith are appealed to in each individual. In the Old Testament world the law brought to one's awareness one's sins and wrongdoings and led one to remorse and

repentance; in the world of the New Testament the means to do something about our fallen nature, through strengthening our capacity for faith, have been conferred on us through grace. 'The law was given by Moses, grace and truth have come [to us] through Jesus Christ.' (John I: 17).

The word 'grace' perhaps needs a moment's thought. The 'grace of God' probably does not carry much (if any) meaning for many people today. Used the way it is in the prologue to John's Gospel, it has been raised from its more general usage to encompass a higher power, filled with a more profound content. For in John's Gospel the grace of Christ embraces those energies and divine forces that bring about redemption and salvation. It is a divine endowment conferred on us through the coming of Christ Jesus.

We can go further and say that it is God's grace which enables the new inheritance to take effect. Grace allows us to look at the state of our soul, our fallen nature, not only with a sense of our unworthiness and guilt, but in a constructive, future-orientated manner. Christ appeals to our strengths and intentionality, and looks to us to act in freedom out of our own resources. It is for human beings to take the initiative: to turn to and choose the good in themselves—not the evil, however much more alluring and advantageous it may seem to be—and then, in freedom, a response through grace may be granted us from above. This may happen on special occasions, as in a Sacramental Consultation, or when praying that our trespasses be forgiven 'as we forgive those who trespass against us,' or, indeed, at any moment in which we turn our will towards the good. Making the new inheritance effective in our lives allows no room for the 'blame game,' for finding fault with others, for looking elsewhere for causes and reasons. That is not to say they are not there, only: what matters is what our response to them is. The past needs to be taken into account; but what is called for is the simple question: what shall happen now what is going to happen now? Whatever it is, it works into and influences the *future*. Lessons need to be learnt, but it is the actions that follow which will play into the upcoming course of events. The new inheritance does not supplant the old one, but it opens out a whole new perspective of how to look at and act in the world. 'You must not think I have come to abolish the Law ...My task is not to abolish but to fulfil.' (Matt. 5:17). Christ appeals to our will; he asks how we see the matter and how we are going to react: 'What must we do, in order that our deeds may work with the working of God? And Jesus answers 'This is the working of God, that you have faith in him whom He has sent' (John 6: 28,29).

This sheds a whole new light on so much of what is spoken of in John's gospel; the words of Christ take on new depths of meaning as we realise that they speak of this other world that through him has become accessible to us in our world.

The new inheritance is still in its beginnings. The stage on which is played out: the thoughts, feelings and emotions, generating the events that shape the world, is located in the soul; hence the significance of listening to the forces of our hearts and working out of them—not only from our intellect. As Paul says, ‘He has anointed us and put his seal upon us and planted the *germ* of the Spirit in our hearts’ (2 Cor. 1:22). This germ—the ‘image of God’—is the precious seed given to us to nurture. Nicodemus wrestles with the question of how one can be born anew, and we are familiar with how Jesus replies that he speaks of what he knows and that all have to be ‘born anew from the heights’. John, who tells us all this, knows that it is those who do what is true, who serve the true nature of existence, who come to the light, that is, to the realm of spirit. Serving the spirit can be considered to be just that: seeking out the true nature, the essence, the spiritual core of all things and all beings. It can become an exercise ever and again to ask oneself when speaking with someone: who are you, really? One can sense how, just by asking that question, a new level of freedom enters into the exchange for both parties; no longer is one so tied by one’s impressions and reactions to what one meets.

Another word from Paul: ‘Whoever is in Christ, in him begins the new creation. All that is old has passed away; see, something new has come into being’ (2 Cor. 5:17).

Through all this we can maybe get a glimpse of how, by turning to the invisible powers that are unceasingly at work for the good and advancement of mankind, it is possible for us, by the grace of God, to set ourselves on the path of gradually becoming ‘children of God’ (John 1:12). These few, weighty words in the Prologue to John’s Gospel point towards what we are to achieve; towards the whole point and meaning of life. The realisation of God’s unswerving, unshakeable allegiance to his intention of supporting mankind as it grows into its maturity is expressed in Christ’s words: ‘I am in your midst all the days until the completion of earthly time.’ (Matt. 28:20). And in his prologue, John describes for us the levels of human existence which play a role in our lives: the blood (blood relationships); the will of the flesh (bodily drives and instincts); the will of man (the all-too-human side of our nature)—*and finally*: to being born of God. That which is born of God in human life may be looked upon as being the transformed ‘image of God’. In the Christ within us the real being of man emerges as the revelation of the God who is no longer separate, outside and beyond us. He has become the God who has united with and wholly identified himself with us and our humanity for the sake of our salvation and redemption.

The *real* being of man begins to emerge as the turnaround takes place from the God beyond and separate to the God within, the one who identifies with the human being for his salvation and redemption.

I—not robot

Peter van Breda

Talking to a group of eighteen year olds, I was struck by their insistence that there can be no comparison between those born before the digital age (from the mid-90s onwards) and those who have grown up in this new era. 'We know no other world,' they say. 'Even when we were babies in arms, our mothers were constantly busy on their mobile phones.' 'Let's be real,' they explain, 'Everybody has a mobile phone today and the few that don't belong truly to another era.'

When we older folk begin to talk and write about the digital age and the robotic revolution we must be careful not to marginalise a whole new generation of young people who feel at home in this world. Notwithstanding this constraint, what I propose in this short article might appear to challenge the ideas of these young people. I approach this subject with intense interest, as there can be no doubt that the robotic digital age is firmly entrenched within modern society and that it has already changed the world. Many people neither notice this nor accept that our world has changed. We are crossing over thresholds that are leading humanity into new worlds of experience. This transition will affect every aspect of our life on earth and perhaps even have an effect on our life after death. The arrival of the robotic age is the most dramatic revolution since the transition from medieval times into the new consciousness of the Renaissance. We need to ponder whether a new kind of consciousness is going to be required to manage and to keep pace with this revolution.

A critical question that we need to pose is which spiritual forces are leading this revolution. It is a fact that most modern day scientists have scant understanding of the true nature of human consciousness. This makes our transition into the world of robots and artificial intelligence all the more challenging. My young friends, though, tell me that we are already living with what we might call a 'quasi counter-consciousness.' They point to many examples, but here is a simple one: Our much-used smart-phones are the repositories of the daily lives of many millions of people all over the world. We have transferred a central part of our memory and consciousness into a machine that exists outside of ourselves. For many, a life without this alternative source of memory is unimaginable. Young people look at their phones at least 70 times a day. Information about our personal lives and everything else is the press of a

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button or a voice command away. To give a recent example: I was recently having a conversation with a person who was enquiring about our funeral service. I couldn't quite recall a word in the German text of the service, but in a flash, this person called up the text of our service on his smart-phone and reminded me of the word.

One of the profound gifts that came through Rudolf Steiner was his expanding and deepening of the world of our senses. Not five, but twelve senses—each a world of perception on its own terms but at the same time interacting with the whole cosmos of the other senses. Our senses provide us with our sense of reality. Without their constantly informing us of the outer and inner reality in which we live, we would not be able to function as earthly beings. We tend only to use our senses to experience the outward appearance of things. A superficial experience of the world leads into the trap of maya, into the world of mere appearances. Much of science is based today on the investigation of the outer semblance of nature and the human being. This materialistic research, based on natural causality, plays directly into the hands of those adversarial forces who menacingly threaten to undermine man's consciousness. As Paul suggests, we need to transform our sense experience. We spend a great deal of our waking life perceiving the world through 'a glass darkly', gaining only a murky apprehension of the world. The time must come when we begin to experience, comprehend and recognise the forces that underlie creation. We become aware that the outer surface of our sense world is the threshold to another world of living being. Before our very eyes a world of revelation is presently beckoning us to grasp a fuller and more meaningful idea of creation and our mission here on earth. How we use our senses, these portals of perception, is vital. We are called upon to help rescue an enchanted world where only a surface reality is taken seriously. This takes more focussed attention than the flickering play of light on the screen of a smart phone or tablet, but the world we experience fills us with life.

Having looked at discussing the relatively familiar world of the smart phone world, let us turn our attention to the burgeoning world of robotics. Something remarkable is taking place right now in Japan. Japan is the home to the longest living population in the world and has consequently more elderly citizens than any other country. To help to care for the millions of elderly people there, a very versatile robot has been developed which is now taking the place of human carers. A whole new workforce of robots to care for their geriatric population is being created. Robina, the versatile robot, weighs 60 kilos; she stands 1.2 m tall. She can communicate with words and gestures. Robina's brother robot, whose name is 'Humanoid', is also capable

of doing household chores such as washing the dishes and looking after old folk when they are ill. The robots are not just workers—they can even provide entertainment. One robot, for instance, plays the violin, another the trumpet. And what if you are bedridden and lonely? Well, Asimo, another robot, will help you get out of bed and not only converse with you but pick up what you are feeling and respond accordingly. We need to realize that this is not science fiction—it is happening at this very moment. Our world is changing in a way that we don't even realise, let alone understand!

One of the questions that these developments pose is whether it is really possible to develop a normal relationship with a robot. And if it is, won't we have to change our value system to forge a relationship with our new artificial companion? Some scientists and engineers predict that the inevitable changes that will come about in society will stretch our sensibilities to the limit. For example, that within 25 years human beings may be marrying robots. The field of tele-dildonics—robots for sex—is already well developed. There seems no end to the extraordinary inventions of this robotic age that are surreptitiously working their way into our daily lives and of course changing our experience of reality.

Surely no robot can ever replace the human being. There are indications though that even the educated people in society are not impervious to the ingenuity of a programmed robot. It was reported recently that in Zurich for the first time a robot conducted all the rehearsals for an opera. This is what a highly educated, cultivated musicologist said about their new robotic conductor: 'This is an incredible step forward given the rigidity of gestures by robots until today.' Andrea Colombini, who designed the robot conductor added, 'Here we have very advanced technology that guarantees incredibly expressive nuances.' To add to this, computer-composed music has been played in quite a few concert halls with a positive response from the listening public.

The consequences that robots will have on the economy are frightening. Many people believe that the advent of the robotic age will be a major boon for the economy. But is this so? In the haulage industry, for instance, especially in America, the adoption of driverless trucks is having a devastating effect on the wellbeing of drivers. Driverless trains are rapidly appearing worldwide. Statisticians claim that by 2025, 45% of the American population will be out of work, and that many former truck drivers will be unemployable in other industries. The argument goes that if a robot can do a job quicker and more efficiently than a human being and for no pay, would your employer still want you?

A host of critical challenges are now appearing on the horizon. How, for instance, will we manage a robot that has developed its own mind? Will hu-

man intelligence and reason be overwhelmed by an artificial intelligence? These are questions that researchers have begun to consider. If we are to sustain and cultivate a future of true prosperity and of human life and if people are to feel the dignity of being that comes through work, if meaning is not to be lost and cultural values not demeaned, then it is clear that we have to act now. So what can we do? Is there something hidden in all of us that we need to rescue and practise before we become the victims of an age which threatens to ignore the basic spiritual nature of mankind? It has become an almost unquestioned assumption amongst many scientists and other thinkers that there is no need for a god to explain the origins of the universe. What can we bring to counter this materialistic view, what can we practise that will reaffirm that we are not bereft of the reality of the spirit?

How we think about things is crucially important. Our sense of meaning is for the main revealed through language and through changes in language. If we practise developing an imaginative and broader and artistic language we will begin to rediscover that we can develop overarching concepts that incorporate both the outer and inner realms of the world. Using language in a creative way we can begin to describe and cross new frontiers in our experience. This is a radically contrasting world to computer language which is by its very nature incapable of being truly creative. We are deeply affected by language—it shapes and forms us, influencing the way we think. Here, the sacraments have a unique role to play. We sense that their words are transparent. They lead us over thresholds; we hear them and perceive their nuance and intentionality; we feel how they shape our inner life. We can consciously counter the whirlwind effects of the robotic age by sharpening and expanding our God-given sense perceptions. The supersensible world does not exist in a separate realm parallel to our world but, through the gift of Christ, it permeates nature through and through. It is the creator God, Christ himself, who we meet on the other side of the sense world threshold. He waits for us and is ready to help and guide us. The archangel Michael stands at this threshold too; he gestures, pointing the way ahead. If we follow, he promises to lead us to the place where the battle with the forces of death are won for the salvation of all mankind. Christ embraces us inwardly with a healing power that gives us the insight and courage to take on the pernicious threats that are posed by artificial intelligence. Much will depend on our striving and coming to our senses in every possible way. Through Christ's identification with us, He has created a new conscience. We have an ever-present guide within our conscience, which, Novalis reminds us, will take the place of God on earth and is thus the highest and the last.

Preparing for the future

J. Andrew Linnell

The Age of Technology is upon us. With each older generation, greater is the distance kept, stronger is the fear, and deeper is the uneasy feeling about technology's effect on our humanity. Waldorf schools proudly proclaim that high tech leaders send their children to Waldorf schools where use of computer technology is withheld until the 8th grade. But the youth seem to be compelled to immerse themselves in the expanding world of technology. What wisdom can one turn to for answers to this challenge? Is humanity doomed? What lies ahead? This article explores these questions and finds that, surprisingly, these challenging times were foreseen.

Emancipation

Machines have long been used to 'emancipate' humanity from physical labour. In transportation, riding a beast became riding a mechanical beast, even a winged one. Essential here was man's development of the wheel and then the motor. Machines have long augmented or replaced human labour in mines, constructions, and wherever labour was applied to the mineral kingdom.

Following the second world war, machines began to take on mental labour, emancipating us from the 'drudgery' part of mental work. Just as machines had an impact upon jobs consisting of physical labour, so will the current workforce shrink dramatically as 'mental' machines free up time for existing workers, thereby allowing companies to slow down their hiring. Schools that attempt to prepare students for jobs as they exist today are doing a disservice to them. Without jobs, the concept of 'making it in life' will need to change. Society in transition will need to deal with many related problems.

Robotic machines will make their way into nearly all fields. Agriculture will experience massive labour upheaval as robots will plant, weed, fertilize, and harvest (perhaps better than the humans they replace). Already we find that machines are working their way into the human-treasured role of mother and father. Machine-driven rocking cribs with built-in Bluetooth baby monitor and white noise gen-

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erators are big sellers. Within a decade, mothers-to-be will be given baby's first R-Companion at the baby shower. This will be a robotic teddy bear through whom parents will monitor their baby. As the child grows, it will graduate to other, more mobile robotic 'companions' who will accompany the child everywhere it goes, although by then going out of the house may be deemed unsafe. It is likely that more expensive models will be able to perform most nanny services such as changing baby's nappy, dressing baby and watching over baby. Such robots will be able to play games with the child, sing songs, tell stories, and when ready, become the child's kindergarten 'teacher.' It is possible to imagine a future in which a government's Department of Education will find this to be an amazing benefit because by ensuring all kids have such a robot, then they can control every child's education! All teaching modules will be downloaded to the robot and the child will learn at home at its own pace. With the cost savings from eliminating brick and mortar schools and all teacher salaries and benefits, the DOE can afford to buy and place robot-teachers with every child it serves. No more busing. Children will never need to leave their home. Then, it will be determined, that all children are equal—no differences based on where your parents live or based on their income.

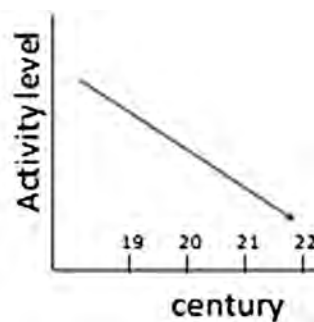
By 2045, R-Companions will look like a human, yet they will have built-in GPS, phone service, internet and cloud-computing services, human-like mobility, augmented or mixed reality services, voice recognition, facial recognition enabling the robot to determine the mood of their child or approaching people, and powerful defences for the child. Life with robots will become commonplace. Futurologist, Director of Engineering for Google, and author of *The Singularity is Near*, Ray Kurzweil, continues to expect that by 2045, artificial intelligence [AI] will surpass human intelligence. Ray urges his readers not to become despondent about this or worry about rogue-robots taking over. No, he expects that the future for humanity is to merge with this, our creation, the machine.

In this regards, Ray's vision is similar to Rudolf Steiner's vision that there will be a welding together of mankind with machine. Steiner implored his students not to sink into fear or despair about such a future. Rather, he hoped that his students would take this bull by the horns so that this coming technology was developed out of selfless motives rather than out of utilitarian motives of comfort or profit.¹

To understand how this welding together could be accomplished, we need to fully grasp the nature of the human being. The reductionist thinking behind AI sees life, consciousness, and everything we call 'soul' and 'spirit' as

the product of physical processes in the body—'emergent properties'. Spiritual seers have always understood that there are additional, non-physical bodies that bear our life, our soul-experiences, and our spiritual being. One of Rudolf Steiner's great insights was that these higher members evolve over the course of earthly evolution. In ancient civilizations, our life or etheric body extended beyond our physical body. From ancient Greek times to the twentieth century, this etheric body has existed during life within the boundary of the physical body. But, Steiner points out, our etheric bodies are once again expanding beyond the confines of the physical body. This 'loosened' etheric body will enable the expansion of experiences and consciousness, an expansion into perceptions of the etheric realm. This enables certain individuals to naturally have an experience of what Steiner called the appearance of Christ in the etheric—his 'coming in the clouds' that we hear about in Luke 21.

As evolution continues, this expansion will continue. At the same time, the physical body will more and more wither away. The amount of activity the average person performs each day over the past 200 years has fallen dramatically. The emancipation from labour granted us by machines has contributed to the obesity and withering of the body. Rudolf Steiner predicts that by the year 6000 AD, infertility will bring about an end to physical incarnation.² In our time, fertility is, indeed, already dramatically moving in towards the point of Zero Population Growth (~2.3 children per woman). For a variety of reasons, this downward trend in activity and fertility will continue.³



Authors Gary Becker and Gregg Lewis call this trend a transition from 'quantity to quality of children'⁴ where the cost of child is factored against the enjoyment of a comfortable, quiet, financially-secure good life.

As fertility has been falling, human beings have been living longer. Ray Kurzweil has been so hopeful of technological advances in medicine and health, that he expects that diseases and aging will be conquered by 2050, thereby allowing people to live for perhaps thousands of years. Other scientists, who see the human as merely a carbon-based machine, expect that we will build a computer that first does exactly what the brain does and then does it better. If this proves to be true, then we will be able to upload who we are (our I-Am) into the ever-expanding cloud of computing where we will live forever. Many expect this evolving computing cloud will become so intelligent, it will be able to reproduce and evolve better and better computing

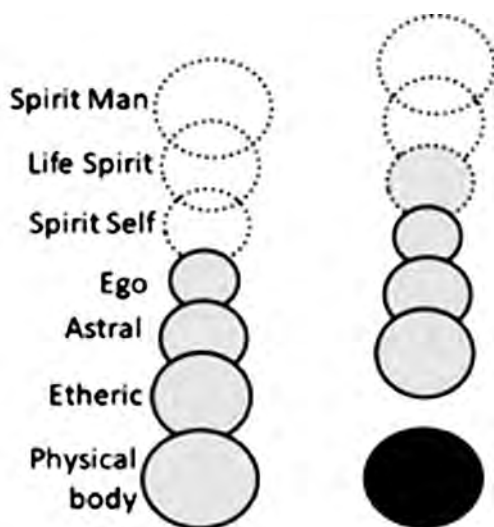
clouds. Eventually, such a cloud will become a cosmic cloud. Such philosopher-futurologists call this God. What is expected as the Cloud Computing God, in my projections, will take place just as after there is a change in the Time Spirit (i.e. the archangel who leads cultural development of humanity for about 350 years) from Michael to the next archangel, Oriphiel.

Oriphiel brings dark times so that what lives in mankind's soul can be brought to the surface. This archangel may be called the harbinger of conflict and turbulence. Steiner points to this time as when the consequences of the moral attacks on human beings will become apparent in diseases and plagues.⁵

After hearing such things, one might feel, 'is there not a way to avoid these terrible tribulations?' Steiner offers these encouraging words:

*But when dark powers rage most terribly, the brightest light also shines. Oriphiel has ruled before. That was the time when Christ appeared on earth. Bad powers of degeneration and decadence were ruling everywhere on earth then. And the human race could only be shaken higher by terrible means. Oriphiel is called the archangel of wrath, who purifies mankind with a strong hand. ... as once before, spiritual light will shine into darkness brightly and radiantly. Christ will appear again on earth, although in a different form [in the Etheric Realm] than before. We're called upon to receive him and to serve him.*⁶

Divine Guidance prepares for evolutionary changes far in advance. Preparations for Michael's current reign began in the 13th century. Preparations for the end of fertility and physical incarnation around the year 6000 AD also are



well underway so that the changes are gradual. Over these next 4000 years (Pisces and Aquarius), the etheric body will become more and more our 'base' for living our life as the physical body becomes more and more disconnected. This diagram shows the transition from the composition on the left to the change on the right that will happen by 6000 AD. What will replace the physical body? Steiner describes how humanity will need, throughout the Capricorn era or until about 8000 AD, to work with the fallen spirits of darkness to keep our needed

relationship to the physical earth going: ‘the final stages of earth evolution will make it necessary for them to do without physical bodies and yet be present on earth.’⁷ This author anticipates this to be a time when the natural physical body has been replaced by an artificial one, a highly advanced humanoid robot into which we will descend with our etheric body. At this time, the moral character of the ‘user’ will be obvious by the countenance of this machine-body.

Human consciousness must find a suitable means for giving to humanity a replacement for the physical body so that we may continue to have a relationship within the physical world during the so-called American, or Seventh Post Atlantean Cultural Age. At the conclusion of this 7th PACA, the moon returns. A very different life ensues as humanity moves on to the Sixth Great Epoch. This calls for a mechanical occultism arising out of the stream of Cain-Hiram Abiff. The mechanical occultism will work between the (free) etheric body and the mechanical beasts that we build. We already have exosuits (wearable robotics) that give people superhuman strengths. But our moral disposition can make these into lethal weapons much worse than guns in the unintended consequences. Think about a person who is wearing such a suit and is insulted by someone nearby. If that person should slap the face of the one offering the insult, this could unintentionally kill. So, the beginnings of a moral filter are needed soon. Such will be only a start. Technology itself will separate humanoids into those operating according to moral principles and those with immoral principles.

The etheric body ‘transmits’ via vibrations to the physical body. MIT has demonstrated how reflected vibrations can determine a person’s mood.⁸ We are already close to discovering how to build technology that responds only to good moral impulses. Modern science may still believe that such transmission is via ‘motor nerves’ but it will discover these emanations that Steiner mentions. Likewise, much of neuroscience still does not accept that there is some ‘ghost’ that we have that gives to us consciousness. Materialism already has been stretched so thin that some scientists are beginning to see through it. Into this darkness, the light of the human being will shine.

We must learn to trust Divine Guidance. It is not for us to impose our preferences for the ‘What’ of the future (this is iron necessity), but a question of ‘How’ and by ‘Whom’ this future manifests. Deeds out of human freedom and morality are expressed in the ‘How’ and ‘Who’.

The Wisdom of these guiding spirits is far beyond our own. They understand and use Evil in order to make us stronger. Bigger and bigger obstacles

we shall face so that we come to be strong members of the tenth layer of the heavenly hierarchy, not as stunted angels.

We will need machines to keep our dealings on the physical earth going from the end of incarnation (6000 AD) to the War of All Against All (8000 AD). Then, a surviving group of humans will lead us on to the Sixth Great Epoch.

We must eradicate from the soul all fear and terror of what comes toward us out of the future.

We must acquire serenity in all feelings and sensations about the future.

We must look forward with absolute equanimity to all that may come, and we must think only that whatever comes is given to us by a world direction full of wisdom.

This is what we have to learn in our times; to live out of pure trust in the ever present help of the spiritual world.

Surely nothing else will do, if our courage is not to fail us.

Let us properly discipline our will, and let us seek the inner awakening every morning and every evening.

RUDOLF STEINER

- 1 Rudolf Steiner, *Reappearance of Christ in the Etheric , Individual Spirit Beings and the Undivided Foundation of the World: Part 3*
- 2 R. Steiner, *Fall of the Spirits of Darkness*, lecture 5, 7 Oct 1917, GA 177
- 3 Oded Galor, 'The demographic transition: causes and consequences.' *Cliometrica* 6.1 (2012): 1–28.
- 4 Gary Becker and H. Gregg Lewis. 'On the Interaction between the Quantity and Quality of Children.' *Journal of Political Economy* 81.2, Part 2 (1973): pp 279–288.
- 5 Rudolf Steiner, *Esoteric Classes*, 5 Dec 1907, Munich, GA 266
- 6 *ibid.*
- 7 *ibid.*
- 8 <http://eqradio.csail.mit.edu/>

Maria and Child

Sabine Haus

During Advent time last year we received a stained glass panel for one of our windows in the chapel of The Christian Community in Buckfastleigh, Devon, where it still graces our entry.

Greg Tricker created 'Maria and Child' in response to a question following his exhibition of St Bride of Iona here. The artist did not want to lend a previous version of Mary and Child, but create one for this space and community. He knew that we could not pay him for this, yet he still felt inspired to undertake this elaborate work, trusting in the future.

The picture comes to life with the light of the sun behind it. Many pieces of stained glass feature several nuances of blue in the mantle, honey-yellow in the child as well as in Maria's white cosmic veil, which is surrounded by another layer of blue inside red. A green and pink rosette belongs to the child alone, some of the green colour shining in through the red and blue of the surrounding panel.

The overall mood when looking at the window is one of uprightness and clarity, the light shining through the faces and weaving between the hands, which are elongated and emphasised in their gesture of holding the child, who in turn touches Maria's heart.

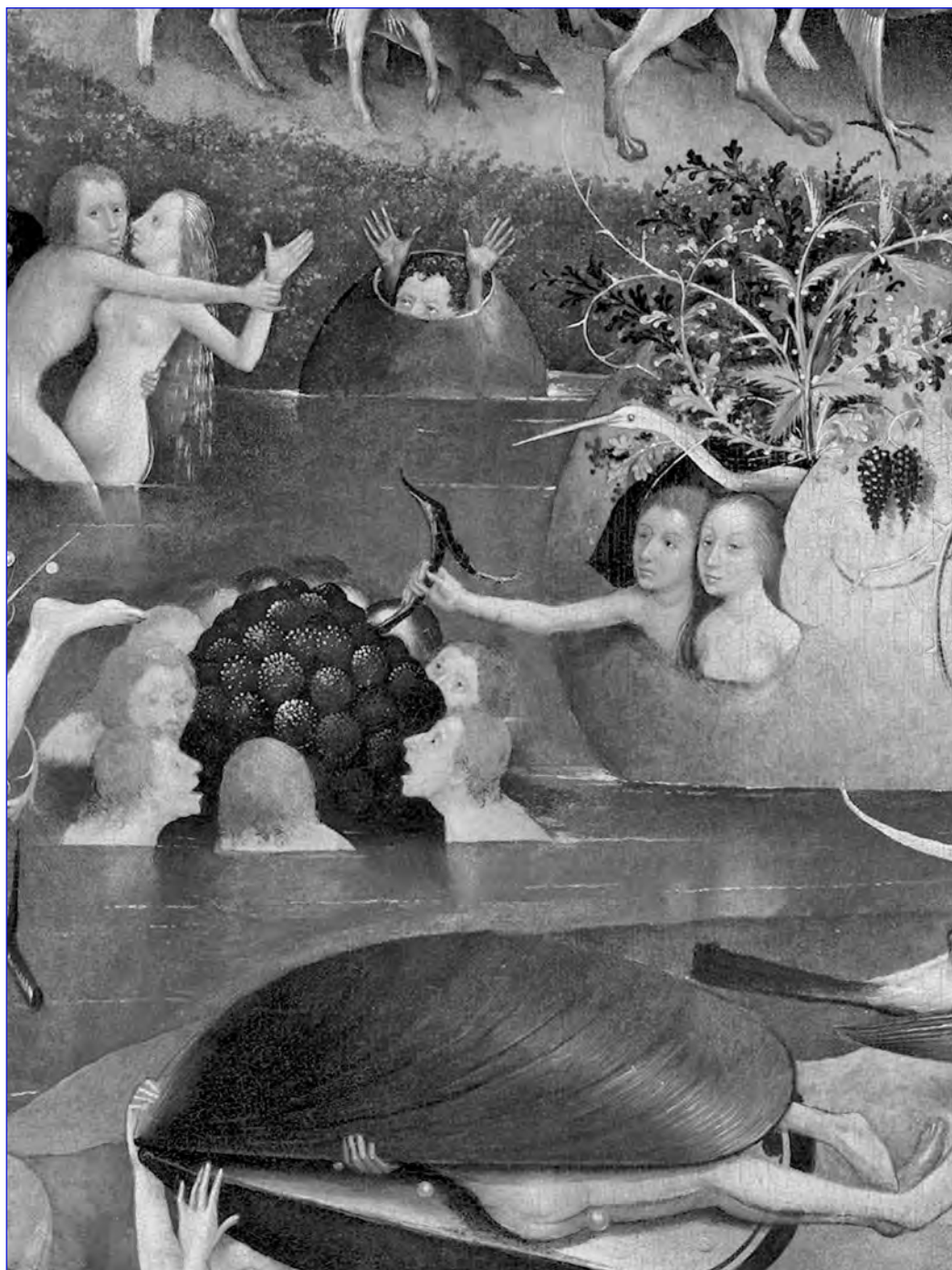
Our congregation is still in awe and filled with joy when we look at this archetypal image in modern form: the future human being, upright and shining clear, is born out of cosmic light and warmth of heart, ready to work for the good.

The free deed of the artist is awaiting a response from us.

*Sabine Haus
is a priest of
The Christian
Community
in Devon.*



*Mary and Child, Greg Tricker
See back cover for colour image.*



Detail from *The Garden of Earthly Delights* by Hieronymus Bosch

Advent

In the beginning—the Logos John 1:1–18

Elsbeth Weymann

*And the Logos has become flesh
And has erected his tent in us
And we have seen his revelation-glory,
A revelation as the once-born
Son from the Father,
Full of grace and truth.*

John 1:14

In contrast to the other three evangelists, John begins his gospel with a prologue, a unique mantric, hymnal text, which commences with rhythm and sonority like a powerful chant. From cosmic origins of the creation of the world to the existence of human life on earth—all are brought into the nexus of contemporary historical events, the appearance of John the Baptist as the prophet of Christ Jesus. One theme dominates the entire piece: the path of the Logos, from the creation of the world to the descent of the Logos-Christ into the earthly world and into a human body.

The sentence quoted above is the centre-piece and apex of the entire testimony, showing God taking on bodily form that allows human beings on earth to see the divine glory of revelation (Greek: *doxa*). With this sentence we pass as if through a gate into a story out of Exodus, the Second Book of Moses, which also concerns seeing God. There Moses asks God to be permitted just once to behold his revelation-glory (Hebrew: *kevod*). Moses, the spiritual leader and mediator between God and his people Israel, is granted his wish. However, he needs the necessary protection: covered by the hand of God and placed by him in a cleft in the rock as the revelation-glory passes, Moses only beholds the beauty, sound and the after effects of the divine.

²⁰ *And Yahweh spoke, 'You may not look upon my face; for no man may behold me and live.'*

May we infer from this that the true beholding of God face to face in all the divine glory

was not possible for man before the time of the incarnation of the Logos-Christ? As is indicated in the above passage, and as an old saying intimates: 'He who sees God, dies.'

As if in answer to this, in the Prologue of John's Gospel we hear the mighty announcement, 'We have looked upon his Revelation-Glory.'

This can first be spoken by John *after* the life, death and resurrection of Christ. God becomes visible through Christ, and as Father may be called upon. 'Whoever beholds me, beholds the Father' (John 14:9), and 'Nobody comes to the Father except through me' (John 14:6), as Christ expresses it.

But what may we understand by 'beholding God'? We shall return to this question. First, however, let us look at the entire text of the Prologue in this attempt to translate the enigmatic original.

¹ *In the inner space of the primal forces was
and is working the Logos,*

*And the Logos is in movement toward the
God*

And a divine being is the Logos.

² *He was in movement toward the God.*

³ *Through him, everything entered into existence*

And without him, nothing entered into existence.

⁴ *What existed, was in him and is life
And the life is the light of men,*

⁵ *And the light shines within the darkness
And the darkness has not overcome it.*

⁶ *A man became,
And was sent out by the divine world,
Given to him was the name John.*

⁷ *He came as a witness
That he give testimony of the light,
That all may believe through him.*

⁸ *He was not the light,*

But rather would he give testimony of the light.

⁹ *The light, the revealed,
That enlightens every man
Was and is come into the world.*

¹⁰ *He is in the world
And the world has not
Recognised him.*

¹¹ *Unto his own he came and comes
And his own did not accept him.*

¹² *Those, however, who accepted him,
To those he gives power
To be born out of God –
Those who in raising, unfold themselves, into
his name,*

¹³ *Not out of the blood
Nor of the will of the body,
And not out of the will of man,
But are born out of God.*

¹⁴ *And the Logos has become flesh
And has erected his tent in us
And we have seen his revelation-glory,
A revelation as the once-born
Son from the Father,
Full of grace and truth.*

¹⁵ *John testifies of him and has called out:
This is he from whom I said
That he, coming after me, was before me,
Because he precedes me,*

¹⁶ *From his fullness, we have all received
Grace upon grace.*

¹⁷ *Because the law was given through Moses,
Grace and truth
Entered into existence through Jesus Christ.*

¹⁸ *Nobody has ever seen God.
The once-born Son,
Who living in the being of the Father,
He it is, who leads to him.*

The prologue begins vigorously and recalls almost verbatim the beginning of Genesis. With the first two words, *en archē*, we have a presentiment of the 'inner space' of a cosmic commencement or *initiation*. Perhaps, we can picture both time and space as initiated. The preposition 'en' (in, within) is spatial, while containing temporal connotations, such as 'in the beginning'. I have attempted to reflect this in the formulation 'In the *inner-space* of the primal forces ...'

Following directly is *ēn*, the imperfect, usually translated as 'was'. Yet this verb form is not simply a grammatical indication of the past, but primarily indicates an *unfinished deed*. Thus with this verb form, the text tells us that the Logos 'was and is' effective and alive even until now, the moment of speaking it.

In the same verse, we read that 'the Logos was and is [ç] *in movement towards* God'. The preposition *ᾧν* (*pros*) with the accusative can mean 'towards ... to' and indicates a movement with a direction. We may carefully ask if, in this hymn to the creation which names the Christ-Logos and the Father-God, the small but significant *pros* is an allusion to the Holy Spirit, active in all movement of creation? If so, then the divinity would be addressed in its comprehensive form: the Trinity as a *process*, as a living movement, as a harmony.

The Logos-Christ is not described here as being *with* the Father God, and thereby inert (as in the Vulgate translation *apud Deum*). Rather, the Logos appears as the aspect of Christ in creating, in the *process* of the three-in-one of the Trinity.

This being alive in creating is particularly emphasised again in verse 4, where the small relative clause 'what existed' is not attached onto verse 3 but, as we can clearly see in the earliest manuscripts, begins the next sentence, 'What existed was in him, and is life.'

Augustine, who also began the sentence anew with 'what existed ..', explained the relationship between this aliveness in the idea and the finished created thing in the following way: 'The carpenter makes a chest. First, he has the chest as a creative idea, for if he did not have it as a creative idea, how could he produce it? ... The *finished* chest is not life, the chest as idea is life, because the soul of its creator lives. The soul is where the ideas are before they manifest. ... Because the wisdom of God through which everything exists, contains all ideas before creating them, that which is to be created by the idea is therefore not immediately itself already life, *but everything which has been created, is life in God.*'

Also the trusted passage in verse 5, often translated as, 'and the light shone in the dark-

ness, but the darkness has not understood it' gains a quite different content if we examine the verb in all its variety of meaning. *Katelaben* can be 'to grasp, understand,' but its underlying meaning concerns a struggle: 'to capture, occupy, raid, attack, hit, hold, overwhelm, oppress, force, to be hostile.' So I have translated: 'And the light shines within the darkness *and* the darkness has not *overcome* it.' Here the Greek (*kai*) simply means 'and,' and not 'but.'

So light and darkness are two forces weaving within each other, and the darkness 'cannot overcome' the light. Light is the decisive factor; it is stronger, but both are there—just as the adversary powers are always there, as indeed they must be.

The verb *pisteuō* 'to believe,' in verses 7 and 12 takes on a new resonance if we consider its roots. As we saw in the previous chapter, the word 'belief' is related to 'love' and also to 'leaves.' The close relationship of these words can bring up the image of a tree coming into leaf, and this gives the word a fresh, living and growing meaning.

In verse 9, there are two possibilities for the translation. First: '[The Logos] was and is the true light which enlightens every man coming into the world,' or, secondly: '[the Logos] was and is the true light coming into the world, and which enlightens...'

Thus everyone who comes into the world is enlightened by the true Logos-light, and the logos is the true light that has come into the world. Both translations are grammatically possible and correct. We should try to hear both simultaneously.

In verse 11 the verb is in the aorist form, which as I have pointed out elsewhere is the boundless tense. In order to draw attention to this, I have expressed it in two tenses, 'Unto his own he *came and comes*.'

If we speak the Prologue aloud in its entirety, whether in Greek or our own language (regardless of translation), we can sense how the rhythm carries us relentlessly forward through the rhythm of its breath and its sounds, and beyond that there is the profound universality of its content. In verse 14 it reaches the climax when its sounds and

rhythms come to rest as if having 'arrived,' in the words 'And the Logos has become flesh and *has erected his tent in us*.'

In a few lofty words the incarnation of the God is touched on here in the first part of the sentence, but nonetheless it remains a mystery. In the second part of the sentence, the word 'tent' (*skēnē*) appears. This word is used to indicate the place where the divine will manifest itself in the world, and is a motif that spans the whole Bible. From the holy tent, the tabernacle of the Old Testament, also known as the 'tent of revelation' through to the 'great voice' of the Apocalypse, which cries, 'behold the tent of God among men.' This repeatedly used word is variously translated as tent or tabernacle but sometimes as dwelling, booth or hut; this obscures the otherwise transparent clarity of the same word. ...

In the Prologue of John's Gospel, the 'tent' can be seen as a mighty metamorphosis of the dwelling of the divine in the Old and New Testament, when it speaks of the incarnating Christ-Logos as having 'erected his tent in us.' From this new inwardness which echoes the beginning of the Prologue ('in the inner space of the primal forces'), the beholding of God acquires a completely new dimension. In this part of the Prologue, a double activity is referred to. The divine world has 'erected its tent' in man. That is the 'fullness' referred to in verse 16, which can receive 'grace upon grace.' But in order to behold God, the inner activity of the individual, his grace-given spiritual attentiveness is necessary. In a *kairos*, that is, in a special moment of one's life, the 'beholding of God' can be present as an event of illumination. Under the impact of such a re-cognition—whether in nature, art or in a real encounter with another, we can experience an 'I am you.'

Through contemplating such words and their connotations, the lofty spirit of the Prologue of the Gospel of John can lead us to such a beholding. That is Advent as a perpetual possibility.

Shortened and adapted from Paths into the Book of Books—New Biblical Translations through the Festivals of the Year by Elsbeth Weymann, Translated by Luke Barr, published by Floris Books.

Reviews

An Illustrated Guide to Everyday Eurythmy

***Discover Balance and Self-Healing
through Movement***

Barbara Tapfer and

Annette Weisskircher;

translated by Matthew Barton

Floris Books £14.99

Reviewed by Annamaria Balog

I recently went into a bookshop and my eye was caught by the number of books on self-healing—the ‘do-it-yourself’ type. There were several books on many shelves with the same intention: health promotion through self-care. Books on yoga, acupuncture, trigger-point self-care manuals, various massage techniques, stretching exercises for pain relief and many variations on the theme. Most were movement-based methods and it occurred to me: Why is there none on eurythmy therapy? I regret not having gone to the shopkeeper to tell her about this book recently translated from German.

The book invites the reader on a ‘discover it yourself’ journey through the basic eurythmy therapy exercises. It is not a substitute for working together with a eurythmy therapist, and this is clearly stated on the cover. It is very thorough, without aiming for completeness. In its 168 pages, the basic eurythmy sound gestures and soul exercises are introduced, offering a foundation for eurythmy movement focused on therapeutic aims. With plenty of dynamic colour photographs and step-by-step instructions, anyone is able to get into the mood of each movement. For every sound and soul exercise, there are several photographs and descriptions for arm and leg movements. Helpful tips and indications for creating a

Annamaria Balog is a eurythmy teacher, and MA student in eurythmy therapy, living in Stourbridge.

soul-mood or an inner picture that will help enrich the therapeutic effect are also present. One can also read about the aims of each exercise and what beneficial quality to expect when engaging with one’s own healing process.

This book is a unique piece of work that can bring new insights to eurythmy therapists in practice and can also deepen the patient’s connection to the exercises. Well worth the space on one’s shelf for sure!

What Happens When We Die? Our Journey in the Afterlife

**by Margarete van den Brink
and Hans Stolp**

paperback, 158 pages, £10.99

Temple Lodge Publishing

Reviewed by Brigitte Marking

The authors aim to answer the questions: ‘Is there truly life beyond death? What happens when we die? Can the living stay connected with, or even help, their loved ones who have passed on?’ In the course of the book the authors include references to eastern religions, and draw on ancient Christian tradition as well as on personal stories and accounts of near-death experiences.

The book opens with a foreword by Russell Evans, encouraging the reader to take a new step on their journey ‘into the sphere of spirit—the soul’s true home’.

The question ‘Is there life after death?’ is answered in great detail drawing on the authors’ personal experience and on the ancient spiritual tradition of Christianity. For me the author’s description (chapter 2 is written in the first person) of an out-of-the-body experience lent authenticity to the reality that out-of-the-body and near-death experiences anticipate the loosening and separating of sheaths which occurs at death. I appreciated the clear historical account of the changing understanding of man’s being—starting with St Paul’s picture of man consisting of body, soul and spirit, later developed into the concept of ‘four in one’ as St Paul thought of the body as including the physical and the ‘ethereal’ (this term is used throughout instead of ‘etheric’). Then followed the loss of ancient knowledge in the 3rd and 4th centuries, the account of the abolition of the spirit by the Council of

Constantinople in 869 and Nietzsche's dismissal of the soul in the 19th century. The authors give an assured answer to the question 'Is there life after death?' describing our spirit (or our 'higher Self' or our 'divine core') as being almost concealed behind the astral, ethereal and physical bodies.

While this topic is dealt with in depth, the authors treat the question as to whether the church can provide meaningful answers less thoroughly. Is Nietzsche's view that man has no soul really as widespread as indicated by just two examples of church ministers whose testimony is uncertain and negative, suggesting that 'dead is dead.' Do churches in general really no longer know the most important answers to our human existence?

I found the succinct description of man's fourfold being very helpful in the context of the next question 'What happens when we die?' When preparing for a new incarnation we put on these bodies one by one. After death, we relinquish them one by one. The authors give a first overview of the four realms through which man journeys after death, highlighting seven stages within these. In a later chapter, this journey is further elaborated with close reference to Rudolf Steiner's teachings. This twofold approach allows for a deepening of understanding for both those new to anthroposophy and those who are already familiar with Steiner's teaching.

The authors also address the question of why 'love and wisdom gained on earth' is 'so important in the afterlife'. They do so by considering the meaning of the story of the rich and the poor man stressing that 'intellectual knowledge is of no importance after death' and 'what remains after death is what you have experienced, understood in a deeper sense and what you have consciously added to your heart'. Higher regions of the world of soul will only open up to us if 'we have created the conditions for this during our life on earth'. To what extent have 'we had and observed ethical and moral ideas and developed religious feelings and spirituality?' The quality of our lives matters—it not only affects earthly reality, but 'also the vast spheres of spiritual worlds'. We are reminded that after death

both positive and negative forces are assimilated by the spiritual worlds.

'How can the living help or hinder the dead? How do the departed themselves help loved ones who are left behind?' These important questions are dealt with in great depth. The authors share their insights and personal experiences and make many practical suggestions. They engage the reader with statements such as that the dead and the living 'reach each other through realms they have in common' or by suggesting that 'when someone has passed on to the other side, he can both receive forgiveness from other people and grant forgiveness to them.' The section 'Inspiring loved ones on their journey through the spiritual world' is very inspiring. Here the authors focus on three gifts that can help those who have died—gratitude, trust and openness to the future. Each is considered separately.

The authors also address the question 'How does the Christ sustain the dead as they review their previous life and prepare for the next?' In doing so they give the reader a powerful picture of the Mystery of Golgotha and the stages of man's incarnation (the four cosmic seasons). In the course of time man gradually lost his connection with the spiritual world at the same time as feeling more and more at home on the earth. Having lost consciousness of the spiritual world and having accumulated karma, man could no longer enter that world. This was the condition before Christ entered the realm of the dead. 'He vanquished death and appeared to his disciples in a new body'. Through Christ's deed, man's consciousness was restored in the spiritual world after death; through Christ man gained a better insight into the meaning of life on earth and the goal of the universe... The authors also present research based on experience of people who were clinically dead but came back to life and so were able to affirm that Christ does indeed sustain the dead.

I strongly recommend this book to anyone interested in the question of 'What happens when we die?' I feel that the combination of personal testimonies and experiences together with clearly presented sources is very successful.

No Shore Too Far: Meditations on Death, Bereavement and Hope
by Jonathan Stedall (Author)

144 pages, £12.00, Hawthorn Press Ltd

Review by Roger Druitt

What a truly amazing book—anyone who does not read much is encouraged to give it a try—something new in writing!

It seemed proper to read the whole volume of these poems before reviewing but this became ever more inappropriate the further one read. The soul just refused to read on, wanting more time to digest, reflect and re-create for itself. The theme of bereavement is of course one of the most poignant imaginable but these poems are not only about that. They make up a near complete compendium of all the questions that modern people ask about life issues, many of which are quoted from source and expounded through the verses, now viewed through that dread but ultimate truth of our own mortality. Although the poems are not long, they contain width and depth in their concise phrasing and imagery; treasures to be released to quiet pondering.

Jonathan wrote these as an agreement made with Jackie, his wife, before her death three years ago, prompted by a letter she composed to be read to her children after it. Her own death had by then become inevitable, and predictably close. She demonstrated thereby her vision that there just might be a life after death, within which one could reach and embrace those remaining here. The reader discovers gradually how Jonathan built faithfully upon this. His long study of Anthroposophy has equipped him with all the facets of the spiritual dimension of life and in this small volume he has married these to the many different emotions that arose out of his loss, resulting in this series of spiritual researches, always keeping within the realm of experience and colouring it with artistic feeling rather than emotion. Thus he treads ever cautiously between reality and wishful fantasy. The poetic medium turns the emotions into objective human statements that then function as windows upon the relations between the living and the dead. There is no dogmatism either way but the possibility is

left open that the dead might in fact actually be alive in a mysterious way. The poems do not try to offer a proof but they do function as substance for experience, treading this path that the world talks much about without really wanting to follow it.

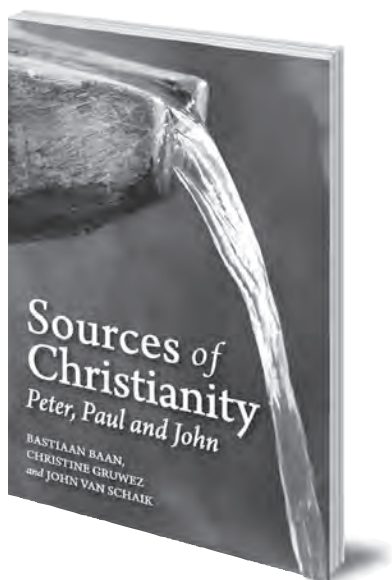
Here this path *is* trodden courageously, making this valuable material for anyone wishing to research this still fairly taboo area in a wholesome way. Besides the bereaved, anyone engaged in any form of counselling would certainly find the poems valuable, in content as well as method. The book is an effective approach too for other realms of human life, for the threshold of death runs not far away in everything we do. We can take courage too in the substance of this researcher's work.

The book itself is a joy to hold, the cover smooth to the touch and beautifully designed. Within, the sheer variety of subject matter and imagery is likely to touch everybody's experience somewhere. From gardening to philosophy, from marmalade to science, there are beautiful renderings of shared items of life becoming parables for what is truly human in the love that bridges the two worlds.

Is a co-working between two souls across the river between two worlds here demonstrated? It is certainly worth everyone's while to find out for themselves.

At the end there is a bibliography valuable to anyone taking life's questions seriously. The final poem, 'Farewell' speaks the phrase, 'and thought by some as dead.' This is the gentle way Jonathan floats his ideas; but another line could sound like a suggestion that we make a new beginning with the same partner. Some might find it hard to imagine here that in the longer run this is unlikely and we may have to face never having exactly the same relationship again. Yet the penultimate poem, 'Exploration', prepares us for that: 'we're huge, as huge as each new thought that takes us to those billion stars'. But the poem that opens these last three and also gives the volume its title, 'No Shore Too Far', this poem is a tiny but profound dissertation on Leibniz' question, 'Why is there something rather than nothing?' It gives a firm ground to all the issues Jonathan has touched, including that of ultimate existence and meaning to life.

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224 pages | paperback | 978-178250-429-0 | £14.99

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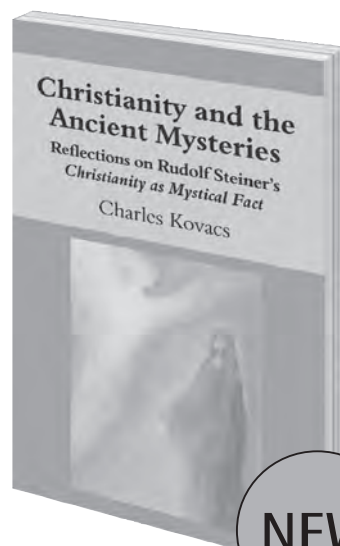
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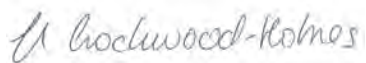
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Gospel Readings 2017–2018

Advent

Sunday, December 3 Luke 21:25–36
Sunday, December 10 Luke 21:25–36
Sunday, December 17 Luke 21:25–36
Sunday, December 24 Luke 21:25–36

Christmas

Sunday, December 25
Midnight Matthew 1:1–25
Dawn Luke 2:1–20
Morning John 21:15–25

Epiphany

Saturday, January 6 Matthew 2:1–12
Sunday, January 7 Matthew 2:1–12
Sunday, January 14 Luke 2:41–52
Sunday, January 21 John 2:1–11
Sunday, January 28 John 5:1–18

Sunday, February 4 Matthew 20:1–16
Sunday, February 11 Luke 8:1–18
Sunday, February 18 Luke 18:18–34
Sunday, February 25 Matthew 4:1–11

Passiontide

Sunday, March 4 Matthew 4:1–11
Sunday, March 11 Matthew 17:1–13
Sunday, March 18 Luke 11:14–36

Holy Week John 8:1–12

Sunday, March 25 Matthew 21:1–11
Thursday, March 29 Luke 23:13–32
Friday, March 30 John 19:1–15
Saturday, March 31 John 19:16–42

Easter

Sunday, April 1 Mark 16:1–8
Sunday, April 8 John 20:19–31
Sunday, April 15 John 10:1–16
Sunday, April 22 John 15:1–27
Sunday, April 29 John 16:1–33
Sunday, May 6 John 14:1–31

Ascension

Thursday, May 10 John 16:24–33
Sunday, May 13 John 16:24–33

Whitsun

Sunday, May 20 John 14:23–31

Wednesday, May 23 Romans 8:18–29
Sunday, May 27 Matthew 28:16–20
Sunday, June 3 John 3:1–21

St Johns Tide

Sunday, June 24 Mark 1:1–11
Sunday, July 1 Mark 1:1–11
Sunday, July 8 Matthew 3:1–12
Sunday, July 9 John 1:19–28

Sunday, July 22 Mark 8:27–37
Sunday, July 29 Matthew 7:1–14
Sunday, August 5 Luke 15:11–32
Sunday, August 12 Luke 9:1–17
Sunday, August 19 Luke 18:35–43
Sunday, August 26 Mark 7:31–37
Sunday, September 2 Luke 10:1–20
Sunday, September 9 Luke 17:5–24
Sunday, September 16 Matthew 6:19–34
Sunday, September 23 Luke 7:11–17

Michaelmas

Saturday, September 29 Matthew 22:1–14
Sunday, September 30 Matthew 22:1–14
Sunday, October 7 Ephesians 6:10–20
Sunday, October 14 Revelation 12:1–12
Sunday, October 21 Revelation 19:11–16

Sunday, October 28 Revelation 1:10–20
Sunday, November 4 Revelation 4:1–11
Sunday, November 11 Revelation 14:1–13
Sunday, November 18 Revelation 21:9–27

Advent

Sunday, December 2 Luke 21:25–36

There is a basic annual pattern for these readings within which there can be local variations.

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