
The Christian Community
Perspectives
June–August 2018
Inner Activism

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Cover picture by Richard Heys
We Stand Behind the Sky
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Our networked world confronts us with a challenge: we are informed about many things which lie beyond the scope of what we can apparently change. Stephen Covey identified this problem in his book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (Rosetta Books, 2013). We have a 'circle of concern', which contains all the things we feel we would like to be able to change. Our 'circle of influence' contains everything that we can actually change. Ideally, these two circles should coincide; otherwise we will spend time worrying about things that are beyond our capacity to affect. Even if we tried to equip ourselves to address the first disaster or challenge that we heard about on the morning news, we would soon have to down tools to help with the next one. We may avoid the news altogether, but we might find that we feel cut off from the world; on the other hand, if we become the slaves of the news agenda, we may become depressed.

I once had a conversation with a young woman who had grown up in the Catholic Church. She had left the church and embarked on a long journey of spiritual exploration. She told me that she could never return to a church that dictated to her what she was supposed to believe and how she was supposed to behave. Nevertheless, in all the various workshops and retreats that she had attended, she said that she had never experienced a power comparable to what happened in the Mass, which she described as a group of people all aligned in prayer. She felt that

this had the power to change the world in a way that she longed to find again.

In the fascinating work that has been done on human needs in the last few decades, shelter, food and warmth form the base of a pyramid that has a number of layers. These progress up through social concerns—belonging, recognition and respect—through to self-actualization and, in some pictures, self-transcendence. Just as we cannot thrive if we are constantly worried about whether we can find food and shelter for ourselves and our families, neither can we thrive without making a contribution that is unique to us, which transcends our narrow concerns.

One revolutionary aspect of the life and theology of The Christian Community is that it seeks to overcome the divide between purely religious or spiritual concerns and practical outer life. This is reflected in the relatively small number of professionals (priests, administrators) who are employed to sustain the life of the church. This is not a symptom of exclusivity; rather, it reflects the fact that the point of our worship at the altar is not that we create an alternative to the world and find refuge from its troubles, but that we find the nourishment and strength that we need to meet those needs all the more powerfully. With time the experience grows that what we do at the altar has a radiance that goes far beyond our narrow concerns and far beyond what we can achieve on our own. We hope that the articles in this issue serve to deepen this experience.

The new format of *Perspectives*

After printing the last issue of Perspectives, our printer confronted us at short notice with a 20% price increase, which would have made production uneconomic. We were unable to find a competitive price from any of the other printers we consulted. One factor in this was the non-standard page size that *Perspectives* has been using for a number of years. We had to take a speedy decision to change to A5 format. The new method of printing has one advantage, namely that we can print in colour throughout.

Tom Ravetz

A question of faith Luke 7:1–10

Douglas Thackray

'I tell you, nowhere in Israel have I found such a power of trust.' These words spoken by Christ refer to the Centurion, commander of the Roman garrison at Capernaum, after the healing of his servant. As this is the only time in his whole ministry that he speaks of a person in this way we can be curious to know what lies behind this.

The scene opens when members of the Jewish community approach Jesus and ask him to heal the Centurion's servant who has a high fever that threatens his life. They do this out of their sense of gratitude to the Centurion who had built them their local synagogue. From this we gather that he was no ordinary person, as no Roman soldier would normally go to such trouble to help a nation under occupation from Roman rule.

A possible explanation can be found in *Plutarch's Lives* where we are told that the senior commanding officers of the Roman Empire would have knowledge of the ancient mysteries and their practice of the worship of Janus, the god of war. In addition to this, Plutarch also defines a good man as one who does great and notable deeds, has leadership and the spirit of truth. We may well conclude from this that the Centurion's practice of meditation and prayer was the wellspring of his faith in life. He was a man of sensitivity, and compassion far beyond that of the norm. Simone Weil reflects upon this rare capacity by saying, 'The man who sees someone in affliction and projects into him his own being brings to birth in him through love, at least for a moment, an existence apart from his affliction.'[1] It can be said that the fever of his servant created a moment of crisis which gave the Centurion the power to speak with such faith and authority that Christ's healing grace was called forth.

As Jesus is on his way to his house, the Centurion is overcome with a sense of unworthiness and sends his servants back with the message, 'Lord do not trouble yourself, I am not worthy to have you enter my house and therefore I also do not presume to come to you

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myself. Speak only a word then my boy will be healed. I too am a man subject to higher authority and I, in turn, have soldiers under me and when I say to one 'Go', then he goes, and to another 'Come', then he comes, and when I say to my servant 'Do this', then he does it.' When the messengers returned to the house they found the servant well. It was then that Christ said, 'Nowhere in Israel have I found such a power of trust.'

In St. Luke's account of this healing there is no mention that the Christ ever met with the Centurion, yet the importance of their encounter is enshrined in the Catholic mass where in the Communion are spoken the words three times in sequence: 'Lord , I am not worthy that you should come under my roof, but only say the word and my soul will be healed'. In the The Act of Consecration there is a similar gesture in the Communion part when we hear with the words: 'Sick is the dwelling into which thou enterest but through thy Word my soul becomes whole.' We can observe an evolution from the first form to the second: from saying 'do not approach' to the Catholic version, in the Act of Consecration, where despite our sickness of sin, we call upon the Christ to enter into our dwelling as our healer. The body of Christ is our true nourishment.

Becoming whole is receiving the bread of life from Christ who nourishes us with his sacred body.

We can reflect, as we sit waiting for the Act of Consecration to begin, that we are at the start of our evolving, and when we see the candles at the altar being lit one by one we know, like the Centurion before us, that Christ is drawing near. Hope is enkindled in our hearts through his presence in the sacrament — in his healing word that speaks to us.

Outer works, inner deeds

Luke Barr

I met a traveller from an antique land,
Who said—'Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert…Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal, these words appear:
My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.'

Ozymandias by Percy Shelley

Shelley wrote *Ozymandias* as a meditation on the transience of human achievement and power. He referred to an antique land, but knew that his own time and 'land' would soon be antique, just as every epoch must become. His particular time saw huge technological advances in industry. Since then, time has marched on. Shelley's time is already for us an 'antique land'.

The Romantics sank into melancholy when they pondered the ephemeral vista of human existence and achievement ('that colossal wreck, boundless and bare'). But it also inspired them to revolution and the fiery will to change. They easily saw through the artifice of established beliefs and philosophies. They saw the certainty with which empires ruled, the opportunity for success and wealth that industrialism presented, the complacent dogmas of worldly religions, and they scorned them. They knew that nothing would remain of such *ozymandian* works.

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Shelley famously wrote in his *A Defence of Poetry* that it was poets and artists who were the 'unacknowledged legislators of the world'. This meant that the creative processes of artists were the real life of the world—not the sham dogmas, politics, and works of institutions, or the limited paradigms of current thinking. No, it was *the creating principle* that bore and ordered the world's life—the Son-God principle. In this sense, the Romantics were the true Christians of their time.

It was not human *works* that were important, but the creating, the *working* from Christ that was essential.

The Romantic philosophy rejected the materialistic rationalism of the Enlightenment. Out of it came the tender shoots of Coleridge's philosophical musings on the power of imagination as a spiritual force. In central Europe, Goethe quietly developed a human-centred form of science, beyond the limits of materialism.

Their 'works' too have almost disappeared from human culture—but not quite. They have continued to flow as a source of life for the human spirit in the modern world, a world which is full of the 'lifeless things' of which Shelley writes the empty and crumbling edifices of much of our mainstream culture. One might say that modern culture is like the pedestal that Shelley describes. It boasts much, but there is nothing actually there.

The central lines that I would like to concentrate upon here are those of the long-forgotten King Ozymandias: *Look on my Works, Ye Mighty, and despair.* These words resound in an otherwise dead landscape.

They are narcissistic words, of a soul caught up in itself. The words return, empty, to themselves. They eradicate life around them. They offer no way forward. Nothing can live when such words are spoken. The 'lone and level sands' are testimony to that.

What if we were to say, 'Look on my Works'? What would we refer to if we did so? What body of work could we point to? Would we perceive some coherence in its patterns? If we addressed it to 'Ye Mighty' then we would not mean the ephemeral might of earthly sovereigns, but perhaps the spiritual world. Would they despair? Only at our myopia and hubris.

All of our works eventually recede in memory. Everything that we do is swallowed up into life. Our successes and our failures, our originality and genius, our sufferings and torments. We pour ourselves into life—

and eventually we are poured out and emptied. Everything passes, and quiet inevitably descends upon even the most cacophonous of lives. Paradoxically, the transience of human existence is intransient.

Our external works will all pass away. But that which lived in the soul, as we 'worked', that will surely remain. Did we work with joy, love, imagination, freedom? Were we 'working from Christ?' I would like to draw a clear distinction here between two aspects of human working. Let us call them 'works' and 'deeds'. 'Works' are everything that we put out into the world. They are the sum of all our outer activity. One may think of a 'body of works'; also our daily work and livelihoods. All of this will be no more, just as the everyday life of ancient Egyptians in their 'antique land' is lost to us. Work is subject to the forces of transience and will pass away when 'heaven and earth pass away'.

Let us call 'deed' that which lives in our work. This is not *what* we did, but *how* we did our work. Deed is the mood and gesture of our activity. It is the manner in which we applied our will. 'Deed' is the enduring life of the will. 'When heaven and earth pass away, my words remain'. Such are our deeds, like words spoken into the eternal. It is *the deed* which gives meaning to our work.

Our work will not remain. But our deeds do. Our will is inscribed through our deeds, however slightly, into the earth. In the 8th chapter of St. John, there is the scene of the woman caught committing adultery. This scene captures the imagination almost like no other, because something powerful happens here: Christ inscribes his will into the earth. A *deed* is written into it. The quiet deed causes the extraordinary turnabout. What remains is an unforgettable picture, sublime, simple and profound.

There is a moment towards the end of the Transubstantiation where we acknowledge that before the Father God, we can do no works. Without wishing to pin down an interpretation, or take it out of the context of the living liturgy, it may be helpful to consider a perspective on this.

Our 'works' often have an egotistical character. We invest so much in our earthly works that we can become proud of them. We want to bring something good into the world. But inevitably, there is a degree of self-gratification involved. And there is also the intractable web of karma that we become further entangled in, when we bring our work into the world.

What the Act of Consecration asks us to concentrate on again and again is not our work, but our 'offering'. This is the will-life at its most religious. 'Offering' is more inward, more spiritual than our 'work'. Everything that is true and serving in our works—our will's deeds—has an offering gesture; and this is what can flow onwards and evolve through all cycles of time yet to come. At the very beginning of the Act of Consecration, we invoke our own powers to be mindful of the *deed* of Christ; that is, to enter into the *mood of sacrifice* that concentrates around the mystery of Golgotha, not the external events of 'the life of Christ' and Golgotha. And so we come to the crux of our existence. For it is not *our works* upon which the Mighty ('Before Thee…') should look, but our deeds. And we hear soon enough what the inner dynamic of these deeds is: the overcoming of sin.

This is what we *would do*. This is the mystery and deepest desire of our will. What lives in our will is a desire to overcome sin. Sin sunders our Self from itself. It has a deathly grip on the human being, causing a *sickness unto death* in our being itself. All our works should be directed to this purpose: joining with the deed of Christ that overcame death—and thereby also overcame the dynamics of sin.

Let us return the scene in John 8. The death of the 'adulteress'* was practically inevitable. This is because she was ensnared in sin. In this sense, whatever her 'crime' was, is irrelevant. Her fundamental tragedy (her sin), is that she is sundered from her true self; she is living inauthentically. She is caught in externals ('works') and is sundered from her will—God's will. And it soon becomes clear to her accusers that they all share in this ensnarement—and they are not alone in this: we are all in the same boat.

It was no longer enough merely to keep the Law. Our outer works could do that. But now it was being shown that the Law had been covering a deep underlying sickness. Christ's sojourn on earth provided a diagnosis of this sickness. The deed on Golgotha begins the healing process.

Faced with the accusers, Jesus doesn't try to reason with the mob, which would catch him in their intended trap. Instead, he allows the Christ in him to *work*. He is working from Christ. Externally, he *does* little—outwardly a few words are spoken and the hand writes into the dust. But this allows Christ's will to work all the more powerfully. Jesus

makes himself a vessel through which Christ can write *a deed of freedom* into the dying earth existence, thereby re-enlivening it. The deed of Christ Jesus in this episode *already overcomes* the forces of *death*. Everyone becomes potentially more free. It is with *this* that we would join. In this way, we would *overcome sin*. For we are all adulterating souls. We all *join ourselves* too much with what we do (our works), often at the expense of our relationship to what we might call *God's will*. So it is that the adulterating soul is told to 'go—and sin no more'.

'Go—and sin no more'. We could express this thus: Go on your life's path—and learn to receive your will. For when we learn to truly listen to our will, then we receive our will, like a longed for guest.

The scene with the 'adulteress' is an exemplary picture of freedom, a deed which frees her and us from the iron consequences of the Law, of karma. It shines like a light in our imaginations. It is what a human Self—an 'I am'—can do. Therefore, '(the) I am (is) the Light of the World' (John 8:12).

If we failed to learn this *working from Christ*, we would enmesh the earth further in our works until finally it would no longer breathe and live—and become a dead being ('boundless and bare, The lone and level sands stretch far away.') And the human being would then become merely a 'colossal wreck' in the cosmos.

Finding a relationship to our inner life of deeds, as opposed to our outer works, involves a fundamental acceptance of our status as spiritual beings. It asks us to learn to know *who* we truly are: that we are not protagonists of the project of earthly permanence. It is not 'Look on my Works, ye Mighty', that we should stamp on the life of the soul, but rather, 'before the Almighty, no works can be done'. Otherwise, the heart feeds upon the purblind vanity, and becomes sick. To 'see' our life of deeds, our will, requires a completely different attitude of soul: a modesty and an ability to put our lives into true proportion. *That* is our work. In this way, we find our true *place* in life. All this contributes to the overcoming of the sickness of sin.

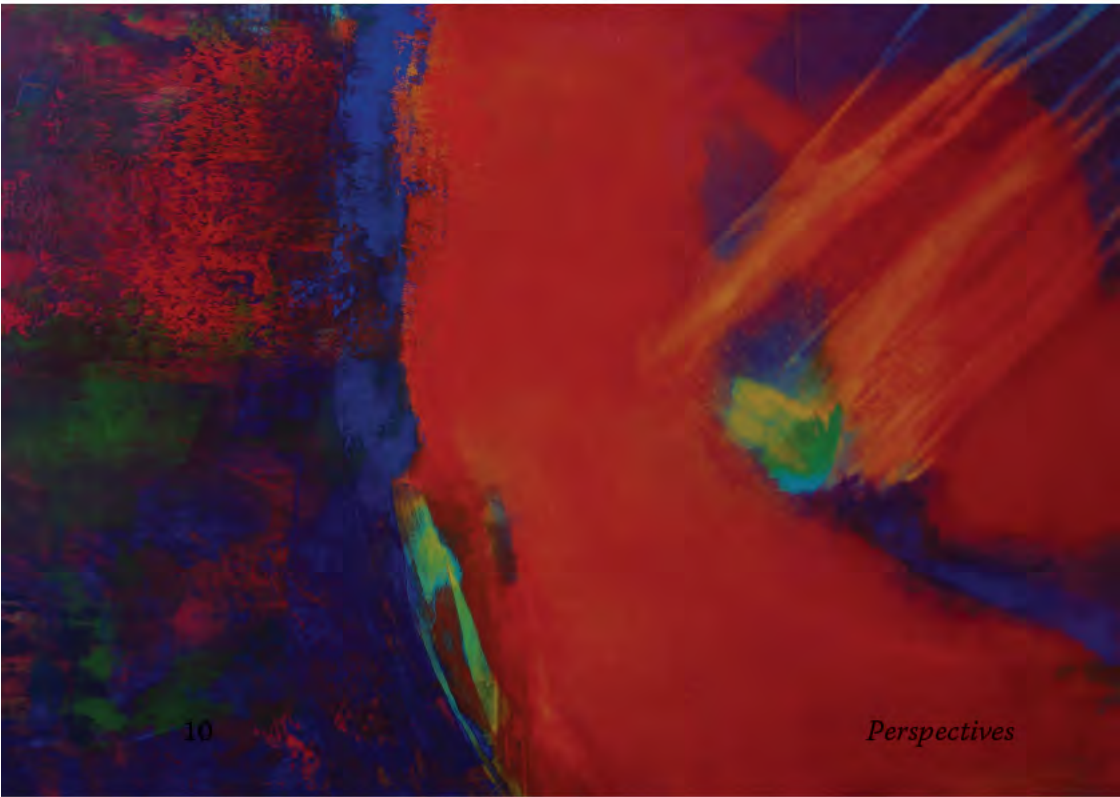
When our outer work can begin to be informed by such thoughts, then perhaps we can approach the mystery of our own will—that mysterious force within, which causes so much chaos in the world-harmony. It is so sensitive and embryonic that it can easily be swayed by adversarial might. Can we learn to see beyond the work of the adversar-

ies in our souls? Can we begin to get to know the will's unique dynamic, and align ourselves with it? Can we learn to receive this will? If so, then perhaps we begin to live into those words of the Lord's Prayer which calls for the will of the Father—which is our deepest will—to be *done* as deeds on earth, as it lives in the heavens.

We *were* inhabitants of an 'antique land'—an earth which was constantly passing away, dying, subject to transience. The Law had covered up this fact. Then an 'unacknowledged legislator' came and made us the new executors of the Father's will. Such are our deeds. It is these which gradually lay the foundation [can a basis unfold?] for the preservation of our life, destined for eternity.

* We will call her this without implying judgement, and take it as an allegorical picture of the state of the soul.

Richard Heys, *We Stand Behind the Sky II*



The Act of Consecration – working with the hierarchies

Tom Ravetz

The first words of the Act of Consecration proclaim our will as a community to perform the Act of Consecration. When we first experience it, it can seem a little strange that the celebrant stands with her back to the congregation. Over time, the experience can grow that this does not exclude the congregation but involves us all, because we are all looking in the same direction. The community is the listening space out of which the celebrant speaks. Her speaking comes from a deep listening. Many members who have been attending for a long time describe how the words resound in them as they listen; their outer listening is complemented by inner speaking.

When we dedicate ourselves to a common goal, we become a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Whenever we experience this, we can have the picture that a spiritual being has joined us. In the Act of Consecration, the congregation addresses this being eight times with the words: 'And may he fill thy spirit.' In these moments, the inner speaking of the congregation becomes an outer, audible word, and the circle is closed.

In the course of the Act of Consecration we can experience the circle of people who are involved expanding. The Creed speaks of a church that encompasses different communities that experience Christ and his healing power. At the beginning of the Offering, the circle widens further to include the 'true Christians' and the dead. In preparation for the Act of Consecration, we can ask ourselves where these true Christians are to be found: this may include people who do not know the name of Christ but who act out of his spirit. Which souls of those who were connected to the community do we remember? Which people, even from bygone times, could join in and help us from beyond the threshold?

The opening words are at the same time a prayer: allow us to perform this deed worthily! To whom might this prayer be addressed? On the twelve days of Christmas, a window is opened on the reality that our prayer in the Act of Consecra-

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tion joins with the sacrificial hymn of the heavenly hierarchies. These are the mighty beings that were created as the beginning of creation itself. They range from the angels, who are closely involved in human destinies, to the Seraphim, beings so elevated that their fire seems to merge with that of the holy Trinity. Every seasonal prayer reveals something that is valid throughout the year, just as much as it comes close to us in a special way during this time of the year. Whenever we celebrate the Act of Consecration, we stand before a world of spiritual beings, praying that they will take our deed of consecration up into their great work.

To begin with, we can imagine those beings whose work is closely linked to the destinies of individuals and human communities. In the challenges and crises of our destiny, we can sense the consciousness of the angels, whose gaze encompasses the destinies of individual human beings. We can imagine the consciousness of these beings, as we have glimpses of it ourselves in those moments in our lives when we feel close to our true self: moments of great decision or crisis, perhaps, or when we are recovering from illness. Reflecting on such times, we might realise that in such moments, we touch fleetingly a sphere of consciousness of which we have only a partial glimpse; if we extrapolate from this, we can imagine the mind of the angel that embraces the whole without interruption. Once we have an image of this consciousness, we can question it, asking ourselves how it might look upon events in our lives that from our limited perspective seem to be a blow of destiny or even a mistake. Even framing such questions can be a source of great comfort.

When we think of the groups and communities in which we are involved, we can imagine the more embracing consciousness of the Archangels. What are we going through as a community? What are the concerns of those spirits whose consciousness embraces whole nations and peoples? Once again, there may be moments when we glimpse the purposes of our communities and perceive what lies behind the challenges we face. We may sense how spiritual beings bring the aims of all the individuals involved in a community into harmony, which underlies the secret of the whole becoming greater than the sum of the parts. If we can imagine such beings, we can consult them in turn. We may find through such questioning that we are given guiding images of what wants to happen in our communities.

As a next step, we can consider the destiny of the whole of humanity. What are the challenges that we face, which from our narrow perspective

seem to be disasters? How does the Spirit of the Age look upon them? Where does he see opportunities for new learning, new creativity?

When we make the three crosses in the Act of Consecration we call upon the Holy Spirit as the source of enlightenment: our limited mind is to become united with the Spirit's consciousness. The beings of the third hierarchy work for this enlightenment in individual destinies, in community destinies and in the destiny of our time.

One of Rudolf Steiner's gifts to humanity was the new clarity that he brought about the spiritual hierarchies. He revealed new names for the beings of the second hierarchy, which allow us to understand their respective ways of working in creation. Form, development and meaningful direction, summarized in the names Spirits of Form, Spirits of Movement and Spirits of Wisdom, are the preconditions for all creation. When we become creative, these beings are involved in what we create. This also applies to the Act of Consecration, which embodies the forces of form, movement and purpose. The Son God is at work supremely through the beings of the second hierarchy; when we make the three crosses, we pray that he may create in us.

It is difficult for us to imagine the aspect of reality that is even deeper than becoming, growing and aging. If we try to imagine that everything that changes and develops has been removed, we come in the end to being itself. Before there can be any becoming, there must be a foundation on which it can rest and from which it can spring forth. How does being begin? Was there a world before our world that was of a different nature, or is there only an endless chain of cause and effect? The beings of the first hierarchy and their sacrificial deeds make it possible that we can see being not as a brute fact, but as the result of sacrifices of highest beings and their devotion to the intentions of the divine Father himself.

At the beginning of the Act of Consecration, we feel our strength as a community when we announce our intention worthily to perform the great act. At the same time, we call on the beings of the spiritual world to allow this to take place. As we prepare for the Act of Consecration, we can send our consciousness up the heavenly ladder of the hierarchies. We may not manage this all at once; over time, we can feel the reality of the beings who are responsible for human destinies; of those who are at work in creation and in all our creating; and of those whose deeds underlie being itself. Why should they look upon our intention to celebrate the Act of Consecration with favour? This is connected to the fact that the Act of Consecration

continues and makes ever more real the deed of Christ, who wrested life from death and restored to the earth its purpose. Just as the crucifixion and resurrection could only have happened on the earth, in the midst of radical evil and human freedom, the Act of Consecration can only be held by human beings here on the earth. When we extend our consciousness to the highest heights, the Act of Consecration can become an eye through which the hierarchies can see. When we open ourselves for the hierarchies as we celebrate together, our deed can merge more and more with their deeds.

Here it can be a help to notice that the three ranks of the hierarchies are particularly addressed in each of the first three parts of the Act of Consecration. In the Gospel reading, we can think of the third hierarchy, through whom the Holy Spirit works to make the spiritual world come alive in our consciousness. Our response in the Creed, which can be seen as our answer to what we have heard in the gospel, is the corollary of this. The Offering takes us on a journey through the whole of creation, the realm of the second hierarchy; this is reflected in a passage through the elements, starting with the earth and ending in the sacrificial fire. In the Transubstantiation, we come into the sphere of being, the realm of the first hierarchy, where we witness the change in the bread and the wine, which reaches into the level of being itself. The communion is focussed on the human being, sometimes called the tenth hierarchy, after the three ranks of the other three. Everything that has gone before serves to make possible the consecration of the human being. That this is no narrow concern of human beings becomes clear in Paul's famous words:

> *We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to son-ship, the redemption of our bodies.* (Romans 8:22–23)

With all this in mind, the old division between inner and outer activism falls away. Whatever experiences and insights we gather through our activities in the world will inform what we bring into the Act of Consecration; what we experience there will change our attitude to our work in the world, as we realise ever more that the beings of the spiritual world wish to work with us and through us for its redemption.

Bursts of light in the darkness

Violence in the light of anthroposophy

Michael Chase

While working as a psychotherapist with violent prisoners in the Democratic Therapeutic Community (DTC) at HMP Grendon I have accompanied a number of men in what I can only refer to as their lightning flashes of insight. Following these experiences the person has always taken bold steps into new regions of their being. I would like to acknowledge the extraordinary bravery of these particular individuals who have been able to overcome not only the horrors of their own offences arising from the debilitating circumstances of their childhood but also have been able to transform the lives of others. The DTC practice was started by a number of enlightened psychiatrists in 1947 to support soldiers returning from the war with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). These communities were established in a variety of contexts including domestic abuse centres, mental health trusts, prisons and addiction groups in order to support people having undergone extreme conditions of adversity to recover together. HMP Grendon was established in 1962 and is considered a flagship in its field.

Today out of the 86,000 prisoners across the 140 prisons in the prison estate in England and Wales men can volunteer to come to Grendon in order to break the cycles of offending, of violence and of abuse that they've been caught in for years. A multidisciplinary team works together with the prisoners in order to support insight, catharsis and, grace permitting, to bring about transformation.

What is the darkness in which the light flashes? Gordon (not his real name) was sent to prison for murdering his sister's boyfriend in a psychotic, drug-induced fury. Together, we explored his history of violence. At the age of 24, having been in different mainstream prisons for six years, Gordon was dealing drugs when he got into a fight in his cell. In a bout of rage he knocked out his cell mate and picked

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up a can of energy drink to pound into his head. His hand stopped in mid air. He described how the world around him went quiet and how for a strange and unusual moment he had a choice. He wondered why he wanted to kill this man, how long he would have to stay in prison for double homicide, how long he would have to keep going like this before he would be killed.

This was the beginning of his journey into breaking the cycle that led to his application to HMP Grendon. After three and a half years this led to him awakening to his deeper inner core and becoming a mentor on the wing who could support others in their process of change.

How can we understand the transition from such evil to becoming such a force for good? Psychological explanations have their value, but we may sense that something deeper is at work. I found it remarkable to discover that Rudolf Steiner had described this territory in relation to spiritual development, when he described how we all bear with us images from the life before birth—the noble spiritual aims of our future life. If these aims are blocked, they can turn into counter-images which are their perverted opposite: 'the noblest intentions of sacrifice can turn into the desire to kill.' He goes as far as to say that a person may feel a kind of relief when committing the crime, because it tears away the shell that has surrounded them and lays foundations for new karma. *(The Effects of Esoteric Development)*. By murdering his victim was Gordon trying to kill himself? If murder is a result of 'repressed suicide and violent behaviour as repressed self-aggression' (Ruf, 2013, p 10), by not murdering the second man, was he saving his own life, and in so doing the lives of others?

Gordon's flash of insight as he raised his hand to kill brought him to Grendon. Having spent three years looking into his biography and coming to terms with the chronic physical, emotional and sexual abuse that had traumatised his life, at the age of thirty five he was able to get in touch with something deep within himself. He now teaches meditation to other prisoners. By working with Gordon I came to understand how breaking the cycle of violence and abuse made it possible for him to achieve a kind of redemption, something which otherwise would have had to wait for his life after death.

Using two more stories, I would like to explore how trauma can annihilate the experience of the Self, and how evil deeds can stem from

a misplaced longing for the light. Gary was recalled to prison at the age of twenty-four for holding up a taxi driver at knife point. He was sentenced to eight years for stealing his cab and money. He had only been out of prison five weeks and wanted to buy his son a birthday present but was too proud to ask for money. Gary claimed that there was nothing threatening in his behaviour and that the taxi driver was exaggerating in court. After six months in therapy Gary insisted on exploring his offence in psychodrama using action methods including role play. I was reluctant at first, but knowing how this intervention can help when people are cut off from feelings of empathy towards self and others, I agreed to his request. In the role of his victim Gary experienced the knife at his throat and began to tremble. In tears he realised how much he had terrified his victim and probably changed his life forever. He began to wonder how his victim's family would feel. He wondered how the victim would wake up at night screaming. He wondered whether his victim still had a job.

Having found a new way of relating to his victim inwardly, Gary wondered how he could have committed this offence and all his crimes. At the age of fourteen, he had been taken hostage by a gang in a rival estate for having hit his girlfriend, a cousin of the hostage taker. He had been stripped naked, dragged around the house, stabbed and violated for most of the day. No one came to his rescue.

Research into the effects of trauma on children indicates that severe trauma in early childhood almost always disrupts the development of the child's individuality. The child's 'I' is damaged. As a consequence, the child's capacity for empathy, for establishing relationships, for developing self-trust and trust in others is impaired and destroyed. (Ruf 2013, p 21)

In the therapy room, fifteen years after being taken hostage, we began to look at repairing Gary's relationship to his 'I' in some way. My strategy was to give Gary the experience of justice being done in order to reincorporate his younger self that had got split off, into his consciousness. Could we create conditions safe and stable enough for his 'I' to return? We created what is called 'a surplus reality scene' in which his five abusers were put 'on trial'. Gary took the role of the jury, representing his adult thinking; he took the role of his 'enough' mother, his adult feeling, as well as the 'enough' father, the adult willing. And most significantly Gary took the role of the judge, the 'I' within the

system of roles. With this team of developing 'soul forces and higher ego', he sentenced his abusers to prison, putting 'wrong to right' and began establishing order within the kingdom of his soul. A month after doing this work, Gary was able to come to a quiet calm place within himself where he was not running from 'high to high', frightened and angry, but could begin to learn to parent himself.

By paying attention to his 'inner child' and by listening and responding to his subtle needs, Gary was able to develop empathy for himself and other people. When a person's daily life is driven by trauma, they can get caught in displacing the abuse they have suffered onto others, as a normal way of behaving. Moving into the light and letting that go can be a shocking and painful journey.

Dwaine came in to HMP Grendon with tough body armour. He was a hulk of a man braced for any eventuality. He was defended against a world that for him was so hostile that he had become like a two dimensional superhero. He imposed his vigilante aggression on all those who dared to misunderstand, misinterpret or take advantage of him or anyone under his protection.

Dwaine had been a gang leader and was in prison for murdering a drug dealer. A month after he was sentenced to twenty-three years for murder, his son was born.

In order to get to the source of this behaviour, we mapped out his life, with other group members taking many roles over the course of his life. When, at the age of four, his father violently removed him and his brother from his mother's home, the resulting grief and loss became replaced by fear and anger. At the age of six a local gangster on the run from the police asked Dwaine to bury a gun in the garden. This gave him an adrenalin rush and a feeling of power and agency which his father had all but beaten out of him. By the age of twelve, a 'false self' began to emerge as Dwaine learned to relish the power of seeing the fear of people he stole from and of anyone who threatened his world. By sixteen, he had left home, and was living in a gang house. His move into criminality was in full force. He was a high flyer at eighteen enjoying a glamorous life style, which went to his head. His lack of empathy meant his victims were not real; they were only 'bad men selling drugs'. The night of his offence, his foot

soldiers beat a man to death while Dwaine looked the other way, chatting on his phone.

Two and a half years into his therapy, Dwaine reached a turning point. As he looked at what had taken place in his life from early memories to his present time, he slowed down. He chose a mask to represent what he called his demon-self and wrapped it up in a blanket. The realisation began to dawn that without his demon mask, the armoured part of himself, he had feelings that he had never felt before. Feelings flooded into him, sadness for himself and compassion for his victim whose mother he had seen breaking down in the court house. He could see how he had created more victims then he could have imagined: his wife and son, his mother and father, society as a whole. This moved Dwaine to a place of shame, and eventually, to humility. He realised that in order to live with what he had done, he needed to be humble. He learnt to take off his armour, both physical and psychological, to stand down when challenged, to support others even if it meant challenging them to do the right thing.

Once again, it seems that there is a deeper dimension at work that cannot be fully explained by psychology. The armour that Dwaine had acquired has a lot in common with what Steiner calls the double. As we advance on the spiritual path, we become aware of everything that we have not yet understood in ourselves, of everything we have not yet transformed through love. This can become like the thick, dead skin of a snake, waiting to be sloughed off. What is remarkable is that Dwaine, like Gary, was not conscious of being on a path of spiritual development; however, each in their way made steps that belong to such a path.

The last thing Dwaine said to me when we were talking about my including him in this article was, 'I am not the person I used to be. It is as if that part of me is a mask I no longer choose to wear. But it is there to remind me of who I was and where I come from, so I don't forget; it reminds me of what I have to do, and not to do, as I get on with the rest of my life.' Dwaine read a poem at the opening speech of *Breaking the Cycle*, the conference he co-organised for young people, —including his 16 year-old son—on the fringes of the criminal world, wondering about change.

Phoenix by D H Lawrence

Are you willing to be sponged out, erased, cancelled,
made nothing?
Are you willing to be made nothing?
dipped into oblivion?
If not, you will never really change.
The phoenix renews her youth
only when she is burnt, burnt alive, burnt down
to hot and flocculent ash.
Then the small stirring of a new small bub in the nest
with strands of down like floating ash
shows that she is renewing her youth like the eagle,
immortal bird.

A friend asked me how I can keep doing this work. On the one hand, I am aware of the fine line between some of my own experiences growing up in South Africa in the 60s and 70s, and experiences of some of the men we work with. Additionally, it is always deeply moving to witness the profound nature of suffering and change people can go through.

When psychologist Gobodo-Madikizela was first interviewing Eugene de Kock, the serial murderer in the Apartheid regime in South Africa, she asked him how, during the Truth and Reconciliation procedures, he had felt meeting the wives of men he had murdered. In tears he said, '…I wish I could do much more than say I'm sorry. I wish there was a way of bringing their bodies back alive…but unfortunately…I have to live with it.' (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2006. p 32) Surprising even herself, Gobodo-Madikizela reached out and touched his hand. When people who have done terrible things get in touch with their humanity and feel for their victims, without defending their deeds or rationalising their behaviour, my heart crosses the line, and I trust I am in the right place.

Bernd Ruf, 2013: *Educating Traumatised Children*. Lindisfarne Books, MA

Gobodo-Madikizela, 2006. *A Human Being Died That Night: Forgiving Apartheid's Chief Killer*. Portobello Books Ltd, London UK

Outer activism begins with inner contemplation

Alex Florschutz

Outer activism is usually provoked by life experiences that have motivated one's desire to make a difference in the world but before this can happen, there needs to be a time of inner contemplation.

When I was around six years old I would contemplate the universe, what lay beyond its boundaries and why was I here. I was raised with the notion of karma but instinctually felt it could often be used as an excuse for not taking responsibility because our surroundings also have a significant effect on our development. In recent years scientists have realised that a human being's development is a result of nature and nurture — the idea of epigenetics — but they tend to rule out any connection to a spiritual dimension or karma. I thought it was all relevant.

I have always believed that children come to this earth not only for their own personal journey of self-discovery and service to the world but to teach the previous generations. They invite us to grow beyond what we know and to be better versions of ourselves. They communicate to us from the moment they are conceived, if we are prepared to listen with unprejudiced ears.

Through my art, training in psychotherapy and other forms of therapy and my work, I have witnessed time and again the human struggle to find a sense of self, which is usually caused by childhood experiences. Psychology has always believed that consciousness begins around the age of three, which I used to think was bizarre as surely our birth is our first experience of life! I went on to study birth psychology, gaining insight into my own birth experience and how the gesture of that experience shows up in my life.

Alex is a professional artist and art psychotherapist who has exhibited extensively in the UK and abroad, curating many personal and community exhibitions. She lives and works in Forest Row with her son.

At the age of thirty, after many adventures, my life seemed to find its path. In 1998 I moved to Bali where I conceived my son, although I gave birth in the UK. This was the catalyst for my major life change. Since then I have explored many aspects of birth, read extensively what leading experts in the field have to say about pre- and perinatal psychology, learned from my practical experience with clients and groups, and healed my own personal birth story.

My research is underpinned by the marriage of two cultures, east and west. It has enabled me to gain a deeper understanding about being a woman in today's world where pregnancy, birth and motherhood are not valued as they once were. Women have all the physical and most of the emotional responsibility for birth, an enormous life-changing task, and yet they receive very little support or validation for this role. In the west, birth is seen as painful, potentially traumatic or even dangerous and, at times, these assumptions become a self-fulfilling prophesy. What I experienced in Bali was the complete opposite of this picture.

In my book *The Art of Birth*, I invite us to consider the possibility that pregnancy, birth and parenting can happen in gentle and conscious ways that can change the world for future generations. Birth is potentially the most sacred, positive and wonderful experience in the world, perhaps in part because it involves our full participation, energy and focus. By harnessing the creative process of pregnancy through expressive art, it is possible to release thoughts and feelings that if buried may hinder the natural flow of pregnancy and birth, allowing them gently to come to the surface and be expressed in a safe, non-judgemental way. I feel strongly about encouraging personal change so we can begin to create a new birth model by raising the consciousness that birth is the most fundamental experience of our lives.

The experience of birth has a profound impact on both mother and baby. It is now recognised that it also affects the father who is of equal importance. Although we may not be consciously aware of how our own birth shapes us, we are certainly influenced by it at cellular and unconscious levels. Birth creates a blueprint for our development. We take in an enormous amount of information during the first days and weeks of life, which in turn has a major effect on the ways in which we experience and respond to circumstances and people in our life. We have a large amount of technical/medical support for pregnancy and

birth, yet offer very little emotional support for an expectant mother and father. Pregnancy is a time of change in all respects, yet it is rarely acknowledged as being anything but a medical procedure. Current research by leading experts indicates that difficult experiences during pregnancy not only affect the neurodevelopment of the foetus but also diminish the mother's wellbeing and ability to give birth. Pregnancy may act as a trigger that recalls difficult life experiences, which can then manifest as emotional obstacles, but there is limited support or outlet for these experiences. Healing our personal stories can have a hugely positive impact on all aspects of our life and how we perform as parents.

My journey to motherhood reawakened my intuitive, instinctual nature and enabled me to become a more conscious human being. This was shaped by two completely different cultures which I could compare and contrast as I sought to create a new way of birthing and parenting.

I was deeply moved by the way pregnancy, birth and children were regarded in Bali. The Balinese feel a spiritual connection which allows them to trust in the process of life. Birth has always been a rite of passage for the mother, as well as the baby. The mother is conscientious about her role as bearer of new life because the Balinese believe babies come from the land of the gods. Women aspire to conceive and are revered by the community. The mother takes it easy, resting a great deal and going about her duties in a slow methodical manner. Mothers look after their health, eat well, avoid stimulants, are mindful of their thoughts and rest as much as they can—even if at work.

Once the baby is born she is constantly held by the mother and later on by members of the family to ensure that she feels safe and attached. The Balinese believe that children are not only raised by the family but the whole community. Until the baby is about seven months old, the family never allow her feet to touch the ground or leave her unattended. The baby sleeps with the parents for many years and is never without physical contact. As the child comes from the spiritual world, her descent onto the earth must be a gradual and respectful one. The mother stays at home (in the first instance for 40 days), being relieved of her household and work duties, nursing the baby and relaxing while the family members look after the mother's needs. The mother enables a secure attachment for the infant, caring for her every whim and the

father and the extended family encircle the mother and infant and look after their needs. This support system ensures no one goes without care and support.

This glimpse of a much more complex system allows us to see why Balinese children are so happy and easy going; they have not had to use their time and energy in self-protective mechanisms in order to survive. Unfortunately this picture is changing as Western practices slowly pollute the old ways. My experience of the old traditions awakened my desire to raise my son along similar lines, by trusting my intuition and not being afraid to give him the attention he required.

The traditional intuitive, secure, conscious way of pregnancy, birth and parenting has just about expired in the West. Pregnancy and birth have been medicalised; parents are encouraged to be more detached, for fear of spoiling the child. Judging by my experiences in Bali, providing a continual attachment does not create a spoilt child, it creates a secure child. Fortunately, there are signs of some shifts in these western attitudes.

It seemed natural that I became pregnant in Bali and felt very safe and secure. I had no tests, interventions or scans as I totally trusted my body and my pregnancy and it never occurred to me that I would need to have a doctor to tell me that everything was 'normal'. I received a 'template' from the Balinese on how I wanted my child to be born and raised. However, events took another turn when my husband and I decided to move back to England when I was six months pregnant. I was met by a force field of negativity which quickly propelled me to seek an alternative picture. I researched a myriad of holistic approaches to pregnancy and birth and was lucky to already have a built-in holistic/spiritual outlook to life based in anthroposophy. However, none of this immunised me from my new found fear of birth. I joined a therapeutic birth preparation class, read many books, explored natural therapies, and found a support network. In Bali, I had passively received an empowering message through the ether that the cycle of life was safe, easy and a cause for celebration even under difficult circumstances. In the UK I needed actively to engage with my inner world of thoughts and feelings in order to overcome my fears and learn to trust my own body's ability to birth my baby safely. In the end, this protected me from the barrage of negative messages about 'what could go wrong' (which of course sometimes it does).

My parenting journey has not been straightforward. If we want to change and do things differently, we often encounter resistance, through which our will to change is tested. I have been dedicated to healing my own shortcomings and being the best parent I could possibly be. My son, who was born at home by candlelight, is now 18 and is a shining example of a child who was raised with a listening ear, his needs being met, and the true meaning of unconditional love (which means he is allowed to be himself whether I approve or not!)

We cannot revert to the passive parenting roles of bygone years; rather, we need to adapt and transform attitudes of cultures like Bali for our time. We need to re-learn our enjoyment of our children and to see the role of the parent as one of the most important jobs in the world. A more balanced work/parenting approach is needed, which could also allow for a greater role for the father. There needs to be a shift in consciousness that values the role of parents and as a result gives them more emotional and financial support. Workplaces too need to be more supportive to parents who want to be with their children.

Through my art, my writing and my particular interest in women and children, I was invited to join a committee and to participate in an Art and Science exhibition in the House of Commons in 2016. Its aim was to raise awareness about the importance of the time from conception to the age of two in the life of every human being. There is increasing awareness that too little is being done during this crucial time to promote child health and development. This awareness led to the 1001 Critical Days Cross-Party Manifesto in 2015. The manifesto brings together politicians from across the political spectrum who acknowledge, for the first time, the importance of this period of child development. Interventions at a later stage are often far more costly and less effective than those implemented early.

After the exhibition in the Houses of Parliament, I was asked to take it nationwide. I have created *Zero2 Expo*, a powerful and engaging multimedia exhibition that raises awareness of the period between conception to age two through showcasing artwork, science, experts, talks, films and workshops in a touring exhibition called *Birthing a Better Future*.

This long term project aims to inspire sustainable improvements in the mental and physical health of future generations. Our hope is that

it will contribute indirectly to a reduction in public sector spending at other stages of life, as well as improving mental and physical health and reducing behavioural and emotional disorders throughout life.

As a result of years of contemplation to transform my biography, I found my mission, which is to increase general public awareness of the key issues and importance of the first 1001 critical days and to inspire changes that help to create a world where parents feel supported and every child has the best possible start in life.

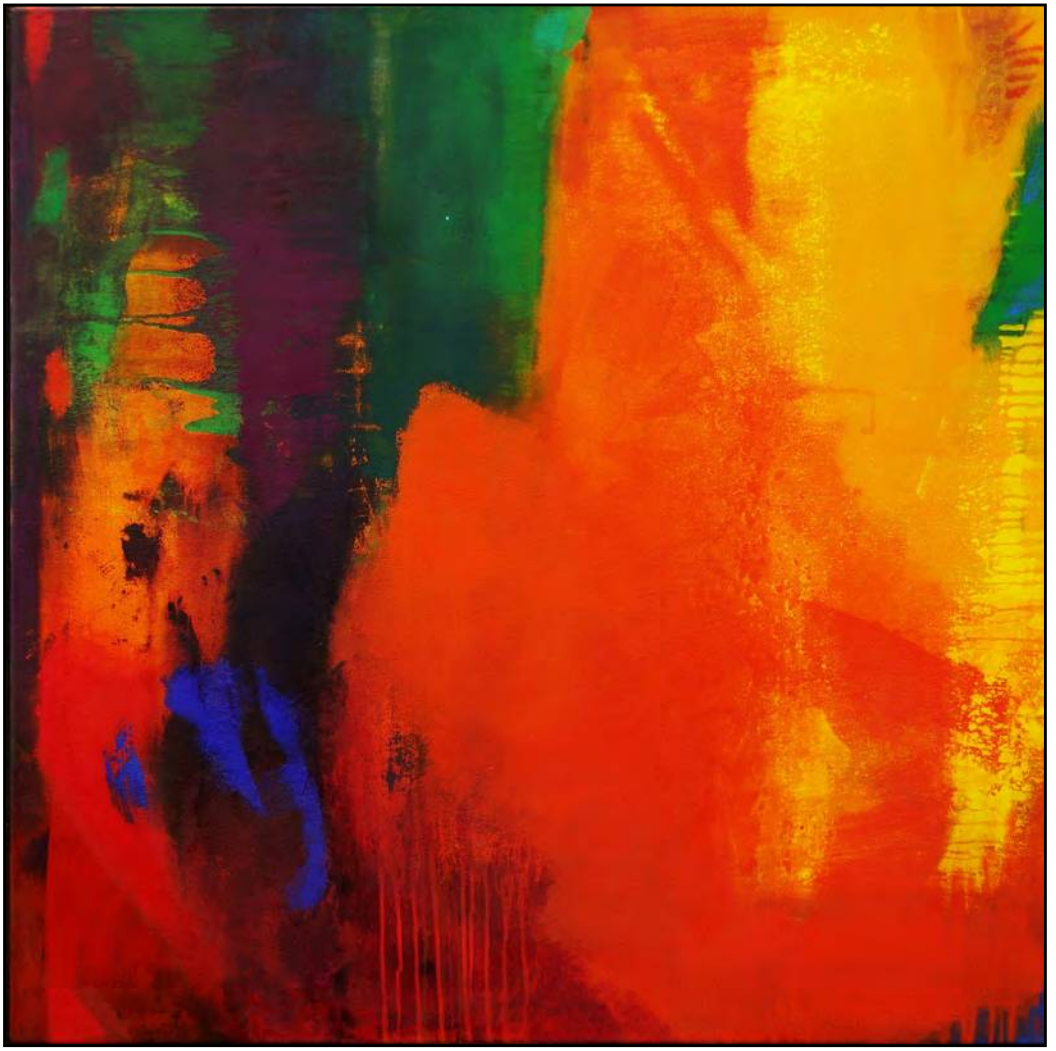
The Art of Birth: Empower Yourself for Conception, Pregnancy and Birth, Engage Press, 2013; http://www.zero2expo.com/

Cover Artist: Richard Heys

Richard is a British abstract artist based in Forest Row in Sussex. He is represented by Ashdown Gallery in Sussex and by Clifton Fine Art, Bristol. He exhibited at Goetheanum, October 2017–January 2018, The Other Art Fair in in Bristol and London in 2016, 2017 & 2018. In 2015 and 2016 his work was selected for the ING Discerning Eye Exhibition, London. In 2017 his work was selected for the Creekside Open and the National Open Art Exhibition. He has upcoming shows in London, Yorkshire and Stuttgart 2018. His work is in collections in the UK, Canada, the USA, Belgium, Italy, Germany and Switzerland. See more of Richard's work at *www.richardianheys.co.uk*

About the cover picture ***We Stand Behind the Sky***

This theme dawned on me one morning, in the first moments of waking. I had been carrying the question of what to do next, into sleep, searching for a new direction and theme for my work. I awoke hearing the words "We Stand Behind the Sky", the answer was very clear. So my painting began again. I knew that I had to work with the waking moment, coming out of dream into the light of day, moving from that lightly veiled space, the loosely painted red violets seemed to resonate nicely as a way into painting, and this is where the painting began, exploring the movement from light to darkness and back again.



Richard Heys, *Summertime*, 1m x 1m, Acrylic on cancas

Reviews

Rudolf Steiner and
The Christian Community
Peter Selg
96 pages, £9.99
Floris Books 2018

Two Reviews

Review by Christopher Cooper

Peter Selg, in writing this book, has navigated his way very skilfully through dozens of statements of Rudolf Steiner regarding sacramental practice. Superficially many of these statements seem contradictory or even confusing; however, Selg knows how to place each statement, some going back to 1905, in its right context so that it becomes part of a coherent narrative. Steiner had a daunting task as he sought to develop the knowledge-based path of anthroposophy whilst acknowledging that new sacramental forms of worship can appear in our times. Again and again, Steiner emphasises that he is not helping in the foundation of an 'anthroposophical church' which the Society members are expected to attend. Much confusion however still existed after the founding events of September 1922. Branches of the Society, especially in Germany, lost all too many members to the 'New Church' and Steiner had to intervene with some very stern words, stressing the different purpose of the Movement for Religious Renewal compared to the main Anthroposophical work.

On the cover of this new publication, we read that this book is a long overdue exploration of Steiner's relationship to the different streams emerging out of anthroposophy. It is very significant that Steiner insisted that the foundation ceremony of The Christian Community and the early ordinations all took place in the First Goetheanum in his presence. This was clearly no minor favour he was doing for a group of mainly young men and women who were seeking ways to renew religious life in the twentieth century. Indeed Steiner himself refers to these days with the newly ordained priests as 'one of the solemn festivals of my life'.

When one reads some of the passages from early lectures that Selg quotes, it seems highly unlikely that Steiner would ever take such a step. In the lecture course *From Jesus to Christ* (1911), we learn that 'the undeveloped Christian can seek his way to Christ through the Holy Communion; the developed Christian, through progressive knowledge of the spirit, has learnt to know the form of the Christ and can raise himself in spirit … to a spiritual communion'. The altars were now within the human spirit. And yet Steiner was always encouraging a new religious deepening even in these years. The early Esoteric School also contained a wealth of ritual material in its lessons.

Long before 1922, Steiner had received words of renewed rituals. Surprisingly he shared a new funeral ritual with a Catholic priest, Hugo Schuster in 1918 and a little while later a partial translation of the Mass with the same priest. In 1919 at the request of parents in the newly founded Waldorf School in Stuttgart, Steiner responded with a text for a Sunday service for children. A protestant pastor, Ruhtenberg, was also given a Christmas service and a Baptism ritual quite a time before the founding of The Christian Community. Neither of

these men became part of the founding circle of priests.

Selg is a very thorough researcher and he brings some glimpses of Steiner's work which have probably never been in print before. There is a moving description of how Steiner had been working on the investiture ritual for a new Erzoberlenker (the most senior position in the circle of priests). Wachsmuth was asked to collect it from Steiner's sick bed in 1925 to bring to the priests. He writes, 'Only in such exceptional decisive moments have I ever seen Rudolf Steiner so inwardly moved and yet at the same time so filled with joy at a piece of work completed. When he had read aloud the words of the liturgy (in a voice that had become delicate and weak from illness) he said as he handed it to me 'this has been given directly out of the spiritual world'.

Just how intimately the early priests were connected with the being of anthroposophy (even if the two movements walked on different paths) is shown by the fact that Steiner accepted the whole of the priests' circle into the newly formed First Class of the School of Spiritual Science, as he did for the Waldorf teachers and Anthroposophical physicians. In February 1924, Emil Bock, who was in Dornach for the first Karma Lectures and the Lessons, commented on the great change of mood sine the Christmas Conference. 'A powerful wave of transubstantiation floods through the meadows, trees and air (on Dornach hill). One wants to take off one's shoes'.

In the first part of the book, Selg offers some personal reflections on the destiny of The Christian Community and the Anthroposophical Society after Steiner's death in 1925. Not everyone may agree with him but these thoughts will surely repay deep study.

Peter Selg, a leading anthroposophical writer and lecturer has done both movements a really fine service by charting Rudolf Steiner's complex journey that led to the birth of a completely new form of religious renewal, rooted in the sacraments. This book will also help dispel the last residues of feelings of superiority of one movement over the other which still linger on in some circles today. Selg's style of writing is really lucid and eminently readable. This is a book which can be wholeheartedly recommended.

Review by Tom Ravetz:

During my training I visited a Steiner School in Germany, where I met one of the long-established members of staff. He asked me what I was doing and listened politely. At the end of the conversation, he told me that he regretted my choice, as I was leaving the true work of anthroposophy, which was building communities in freedom. In his view, The Christian Community represented a backward step on human beings' path to freedom. Not long after returning to Britain, my wife Deborah and I took on editing *Perspectives*. One of the older members in our congregation used to ring up after each issue came out and tell me how many times Rudolf Steiner's name had appeared. He was of the view that we could quote any other author, but mentioning Rudolf Steiner (without whose help The Christian Community would not exist) should be kept to a minimum.

Where did these attitudes come from? Many of our readers may be fa-

miliar with them; they may even have forged their own relationship with The Christian Community against the backdrop of friends in the Anthroposophical Society who looked with scepticism on their decision. Other readers may be puzzled to hear of such tensions from the past — we can be grateful that it has become less common to hear the old battles being rehearsed. Looked at from a wider perspective, a fascination with what separates us—the so-called narcissism of small differences—can seem like an indulgence in view of the urgent need for what both anthroposophy and The Christian Community have to offer the world's problems. Nevertheless, it is important to understand our history, as without such understanding we will not be able to advance into the future.

In this short book, which is based on a lecture that he held in 2016 for students attending the three seminaries of The Christian Community, Peter Selg performs the great service of shedding light on the relationship between the two movements. His deep connection to both movements as well as his unrivalled knowledge of the history of everything connected with Rudolf Steiner's life and work equip him for this task in a unique way. He draws out the detail of what has at times been a vexed relationship, allowing the various statements made by Steiner to stand alongside each other without the kind of selective editing that has doomed some presentations in the past. From this, the unbiased reader can gain an appreciation of the deep connection and appreciation that Steiner showed for the priests and their work, as well as the help he offered, which went far beyond the Foundation. At the same time, we see the sometimes tragic misunderstandings on the part of some of the priests and anthroposophists in the early days, which led to a blurring of the boundaries that give each movement its earthly identity and task. The Anthroposophical Society was in a time of crisis as The Christian Community was being prepared and founded. Only three months after the Foundation, the Goetheanum burnt down, and the Society entered a period of painful reflection.

One motif that this book brought home very powerfully to me was this mood of crisis in the last years of Steiner's life, and the urgency of the work of founding what became the anthroposophical daughter movements. Peter Selg points out that Rudolf Steiner had already invited those involved in professions such as medicine, pedagogy and theology to explore with him how anthroposophy could fructify their respective fields of activity, once before the First World War and then towards the end of the war. We can only speculate how different our present would be if there had been ears to hear the clear invitations that Steiner issued.

The Christian Community was founded in 1922, two and a half short years before Steiner's death. The work of the priests was hugely graced by the two courses that preceded the Foundation. Additionally, Rudolf Steiner made time in his packed schedule to hold two further courses for the priests, in 1923 and 1924. We can only wonder what riches we would have if we had received ten or fifteen such courses. Peter Selg does a very good job of enjoining us to modesty and a realistic attitude about what was

missed and how far we are from the vision that Steiner had of our work; nevertheless, this book contains much that can inspire us to intensify our efforts.

One question that stayed with me after finishing the book was this: how much more could we be doing to assist each other? We need of course to be aware of the different tasks of the two movements; however, Steiner's example shows that if this awareness is there, we can benefit from each other greatly. I was privileged to be present at a meeting of some of the General Secretaries of the national societies, the Goetheanum leadership group and most of the lenkers of The Christian Community in November, 2017. The group of general secretaries had a whole spectrum of experience of, and connection to, The Christian Community, from members of many years' standing to others who had hardly encountered our services. It was heartening to experience how we could meet in our common source in anthroposophy and look together at how the work that has been carried by the priests and members of The Christian Community represents a rich treasure and a possible resource for the Anthroposophical Society.

Incidentally, the editorial team of *Perspectives* does not count occurrences of Rudolf Steiner's name. We do, however, encourage our authors to remember that our readership is diverse and that they should not assume a prior commitment to Steiner on the part of the readers. Mentioning Steiner is not taboo, but we hope that our authors take their starting point in experiences and questions, rather than offering interpretations of his teaching.

Eco-Alchemy

Dan McKanan

University of California Press, Oakland CA 2017

Review by Vivian Griffiths

The author of *Touching the World: Christian Communities Transforming Society*, Dan McKanan, who is a Harvard Divinity Professor, has written a very important work charting the history of environmentalism from the perspective of anthroposophy and Steiner's Agricultural Course. *Eco-Alchemy* shows the vital importance that the movement inspired by Rudolf Steiner has played in raising consciousness for the care of our planet. He demonstrates its Christian character, showing how the image of healing the dying earth was a central motif for Steiner. McKanan both describes this and places it in an academic framework, using terms such as cosmic holism, social homeopathy and anthropocentrism.

The book is written from a North American perspective. British readers will realise that the Biodynamic Movement that arose from Steiner's work with the land has enjoyed far wider acceptance in other countries than in Britain, where the organic movement is more central. McKanan examines the reasons for this.

The introduction deals with the ecology of environmentalism. The book then uses the growth of the plant for its structure, passing through The Seed (Rudolf Steiner's Holistic Vision), The Root (Biodynamics and The Origins of Organic Agriculture), The Branches (Anthroposophical Initiatives and The Growing Environmental Movement), The Fruit (The Broader Ecology of Camphill) and ends with a summary,

entitled 'Anthroposophy's Gift to The Environmental Movement.'

The contents are rich in storylines of the lives of such biodynamic pioneers as Ehrenfried Pfeiffer who in 1922 set up a laboratory with Rudolf Steiner to test the indications that form the basis of the 1924 Agriculture Course. Pfeiffer's work in Dornach and Holland and his visits to England in the 1930s, a full decade before The Soil Association began in 1945, are charted, demonstrating the widespread knowledge of Biodynamics that existed before the war in both mainland Europe and the UK.

McKanan covers the UK history from the angle of the Biodynamic Agricultural Association, which was set up after the split in the Anthroposophical Society in 1935, which led to the UK Anthroposophical Society along with the Anthroposophical Agricultural Association and the BD Experimental Circle and many practical initiatives being excluded from membership and contact with the broader movement. This meant that when Pfeiffer came to Kent in 1939 to attend the most important Biodynamic Summer School yet at Bettesenger near Deal, most biodynamic practitioners didn't even know it was going on! This section could be expanded to include the Anthroposophical Agricultural Association and it will be supplemented by Bernard Jarman's *History of Biodynamics,* due to be published by Floris Books in the near future.

McKanan focusses on the role played by Lord Northbourne. It was he who invented the term 'organic farming from the farm organism', a key biodynamic concept that is described in Steiner's Agriculture Course. Northbourne saw the biodynamic preparations in the compost heap and on the land as fertility enablers to a rural economy in deep depression. McKanan highlights his 'secular approach': the preparations were to be available in every agricultural merchant or ironmonger and not restricted to those who were working with their background in anthroposophy. The debate around this approach continues today.

McKanan examines the struggles that the environmental movement had as a whole to liberate itself from the taint of fascist interest and the patronage of right-wing, reactionary forces in the 1920s and 1930s. He handles this difficult period well with honesty and clarity and gives the background for the analysis first aired by Philip Conford in *The Organic Movement.* Conford demonstrated that this reactionary drive was largely spent by the 1950s and it was the turn of 'left-leaning' young people—the so-called baby boomers—to take up the environmental cause from the 1960s onwards in communities, communes and new social housing initiatives, community garden and city farm projects, as well as land regeneration and renewal projects.

The central section of the book examines the explosion in community supported agriculture and its idea of sharing produce on an equable system, itself an ideal born out of Steiner's picture of the threefold commonwealth. He highlights the unique contribution made by Camphill with its schools, colleges and village communities with those with special needs, which brought many young people on to the land to help.

This book is a gift for anyone interested in the influence of anthroposophy

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Floris Books

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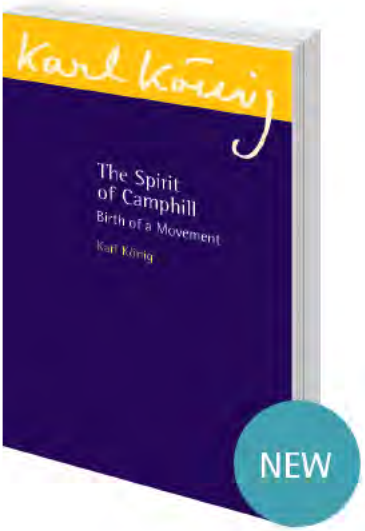
Seven of Karl König's essays are gathered here to give a unique insight into the founding principles behind the worldwide Camphill Movement. Through König's own words readers can gain a deeper understanding of the inner motivations that drove the founders to persevere. Furthermore, it explores how they succeeded in building a network that now numbers over one hundred communities in twenty countries worldwide. Includes extensive diary excerpts, documents and photographs from the Karl König Archive.



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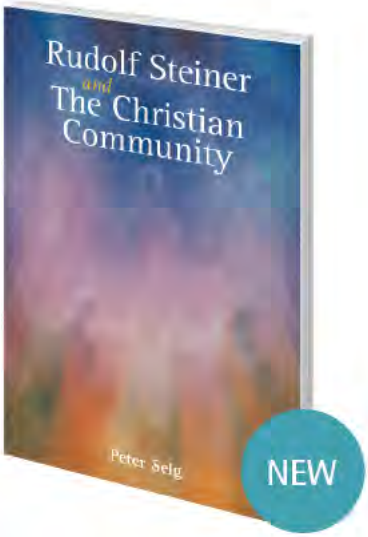

Developing understanding and reconciliation . . .

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in the wider world. It is very well researched, set up in sections over three periods of time from the 1920s to the present day. There are 'evangelists' like Pfeiffer, 'translators' of the work to the wider world like Northbourne and 'allies' like Lady Eve Balfour, the Soil Association founder, and JJ Rodale, an organic writer in the USA. We learn about the wider influence of Steiner's work, for example in the fact that much of the data that formed the background of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962 was supplied by Marjorie Spock, who demonstrated the effects of the compulsory spraying of DDT on a Long Island garden.

Many people, both old and young, have been disillusioned by the suspicion on the part of established churches of the environmental movement, perhaps due to worries about pantheism. They have found a home in the Christian spiritual ideals in anthroposophy, for example as gardeners in Camphill Communities. McKanan celebrates this gift made to the environment movement from the Steiner movement, where practical work complements spiritual practice. He has very high regard for Camphill Communities even in their current state of flux.

There is a special moment towards the end of the book when a Christian Community priest who had been a Camphill co-worker is describing how both the person with special needs and the co-worker find their true humanity by working practically in community. Thus the care of our planet stems from the Christian spiritual journey of those who were rejected as refugees or outsiders in society. Their brokenness inspires them to heal the broken ecosystem and perform a kind of alchemy, where the rejected scraps are turned to gold.

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Reincarnation is a concept usually associated with eastern philosophies rather than Christianity. Yet in this fascinating book Friedrich Rittelmeyer explores reincarnation from a Christian perspective.

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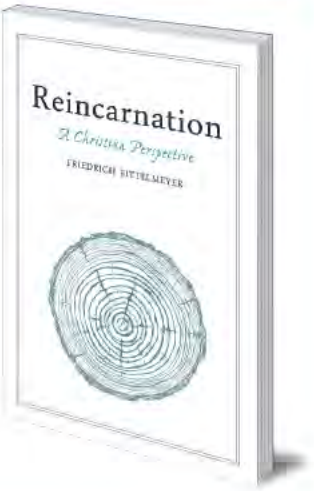

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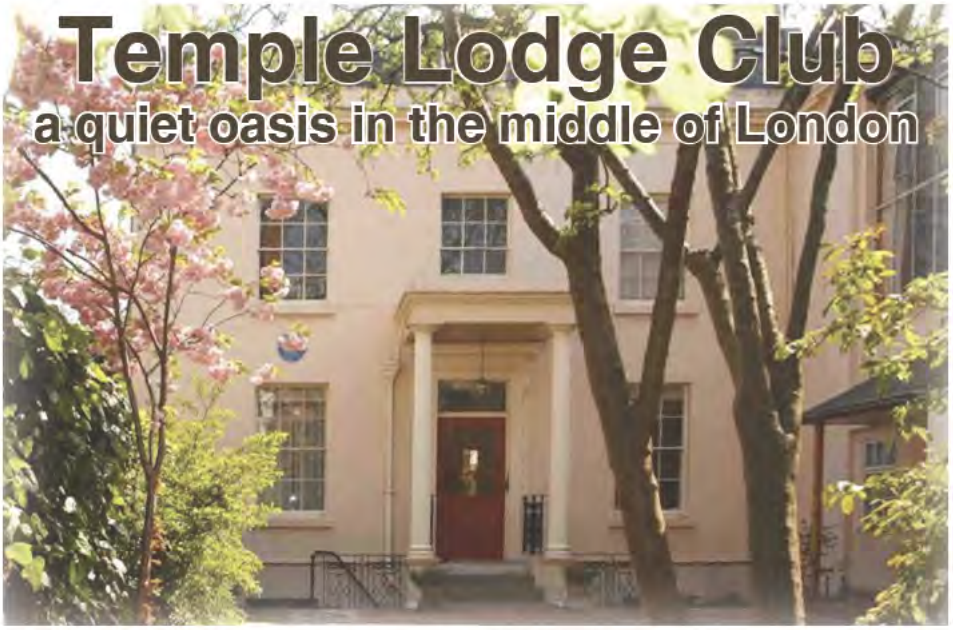
Temple Lodge Club

a quiet oasis in the middle of London



Temple Lodge—a Georgian Listed Building in the middle of Hammersmith—was once the home of the artist Sir Frank Brangwyn. Whilst his studio has been converted into a chapel with a **vegetarian restaurant** on its former mezzanine floor, the house itself is given over to accommodating bed and breakfast visitors. They come from four corners of the world to enjoy the quietness and tranquillity of the house. Many have described it as a really peaceful haven, despite being a stone's throw from the centre of Hammersmith and its busy traffic interchange. The absence of a television in the house and rooms adds to this atmosphere.

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

Upon becoming members of the **Temple Lodge Club** (£1.00 annual membership) visitors seeking Bed & Breakfast accommodation may share in all the facilities the house has to offer. Breakfast is served in the ground floor Dining Room looking out over the quiet, secluded garden. A library provides a space for relaxation or quiet reading. All the rooms are well appointed and comfortably furnished, the two double rooms being deluxe rooms.

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For any further information or to make a booking, contact:

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Tel: 020 8748 8388

e-mail:
info@templelodgeclub.com

www.templelodgeclub.com

Guest Rooms

The Christian Community, 23 Chapel Street, Buckfastleigh TQ11 0AQ

The Christian Community in Devon is situated in Buckfastleigh, halfway between Exeter and Plymouth. It is located on the edge of Dartmoor and is 40 minutes drive from the coast and South West Coastal Path. The attractions of Cornwall, including Tintagel & the Eden Project, are within 1 to 2 hours away by car.

There are four small guest rooms at the top of the building. Three of the guest rooms have a wash basin; toilets and shower are separate. There is a kitchen for self-catering needs.

Unfortunately we do not have disabled access and there are steps and stairs inside and outside the building.

Suggested contribution
at £20 to £25 per person per night.

Further information and reservations:
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