The Christian Community

Perspectives

December 2018—February 2019

Glory

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Cover picture:
The fighting Téméraire tugged to her last berth to be broken up, William Turner

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Perspectives

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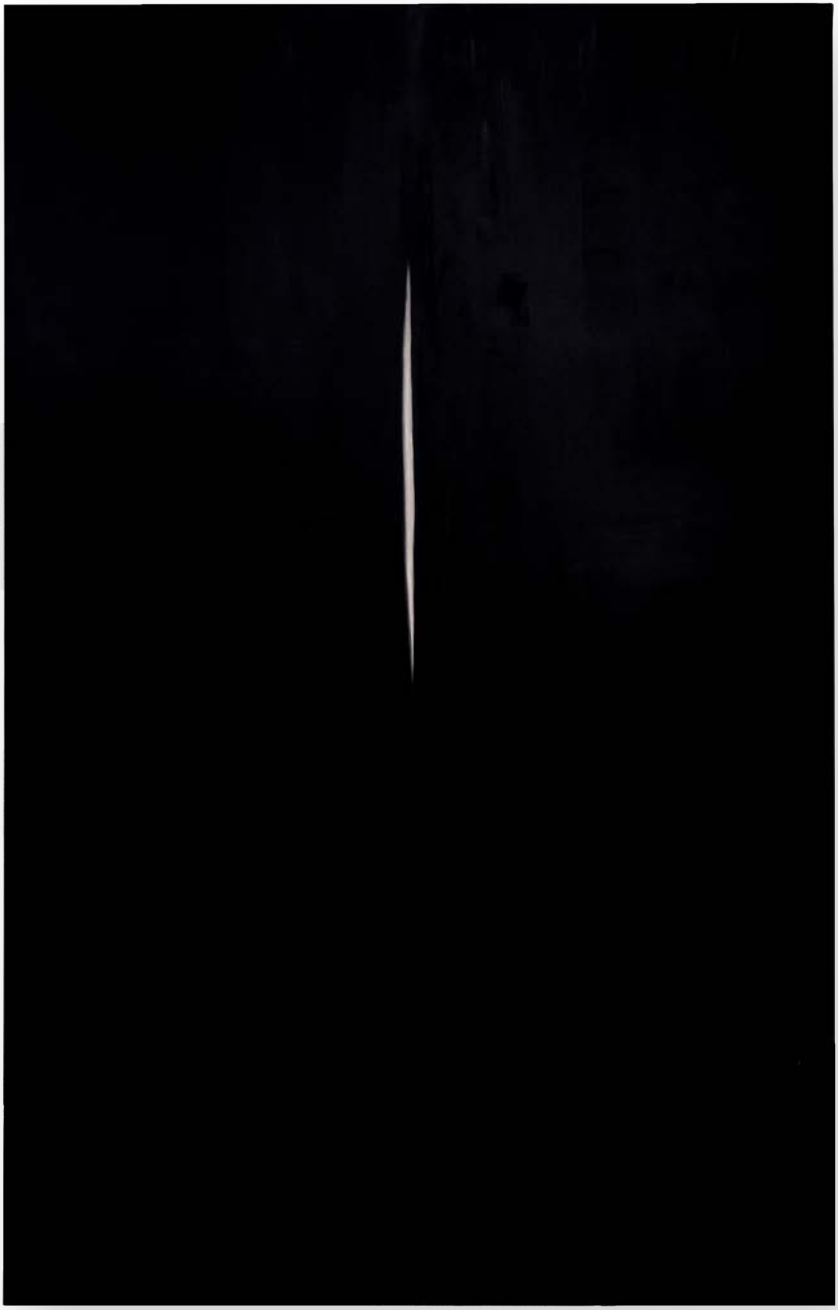
Saint Augustine used the analogy of a candle for the Trinity: the solid wax is the Father; it gives the candle its solidity and is also the fuel for the flame. The Son is the flame itself, bringing the solid substance into movement and transformation. The Spirit is the radiance of the light. In recent times, both within and beyond the confines of Christian theology, the insight has grown: the fulfilment of God's glory comes when it is perceived by human beings.

This is one side; the other side is the glory that we create ourselves. Just as there is a wisdom that is bestowed on us as a gift, and a wisdom that we need to work at for ourselves, there is glory that we perceive and glory that we create. Something of this shines out of the Epiphany prayers, where we are called not only to bathe in the light of grace, but to develop our own light within our hearts. Ultimately, these are two aspects of one reality: glory perceived is glory bestowed; the glory we give is the result of the gift.

We hope that our readers will find the many different perspectives that this issue brings on such a central topic as enriching to read as we did when we were editing them.

Tom Ravetz
for the editorial team



Here they passed, I, Alexandra Karakashian (2018)

Grey – the colour of the threshold

Peter van Breda

> *The color gray is no one's color. It is the color of cubicles and winter camouflage, of sullage, of inscrutable complexity, of compromise. It is the perfect intermediate, an emissary for both black and white. It lingers, incognito, in this saturated world. It is the color of soldiers and battleships, despite its dullness.*
>
> 'Ode to Gray' by Meghan Flaherty

In these words, Meghan Flaherty captures something of the mystery of grey, which can seem artless and often unsettling as a colour. It hardly springs up and meets you with life and vibrancy. Cloudy weather makes a day feel bleak and bland. A sense of doom haunts the air when the world is grey. We long instead especially in our time for dazzling colour, for bright and often superficial Kodachrome colours that shout a powerful message. Grey, on the other hand, is taciturn; it seems in a mysterious way to be the sound of silence. Pondering more deeply on this often-overlooked colour, we notice that grey wants nothing from us; it does not shout or obtrude; it is merely there. Some people feel a sense of tranquillity if grey is about them. Paul Klee once said: 'For a painter grey is the richest colour, the one that makes all the others speak'. The colours of the rainbow come about through the meeting of darkness and light. There is though, always a transition before a particular colour can fully manifest itself and that is the in-between realm of grey. The morning sun rises out of a misty grey as much as the sunset also has a phase of grey before it vanishes. Grey as a colour is neutral, balanced, dignified, endlessly deep. It is the pool where all other colours are in a holding position before they begin to express their own particular radiance and that expresses their being.

Two experiences of grey show us how it is connected to the threshold between this world and the next: first, when we immerse ourselves in the manifold colours of the rainbow and ponder how the vibrancy of colour arises as the resulting wounds in the battle between light and darkness; second, when we consider that at

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the edges of both light and darkness we encounter grey in all kinds of shades. The world we live in comes into being between light and darkness and each expression of creation has its own colour and identity. Grey, though, is the stepping stone that lies in-between, the threshold from one expression of colour to another.

In our daily lives we are constantly moving from one event, one encounter, one mood, one challenge to another. Each of the happenings of our lives carries a particular colour and intention. We know that to make sense of life we need to stop for a moment and take stock. We need to review again and again what is happening in our lives; we have to decide what is relevant and what is not so important, in order to discern the new that wants to unfold within us. To achieve the state of soul in which we can contemplate the particular colour expressions of our lives we have to withdraw into ourselves. The inner place to which we withdraw, where light and darkness hold each other in balance, is a realm which has a protective grey ambience. We may experience that our inner world has at its edges that which we can describe as the threshold realm of grey. This is the realm out of which we awaken in the morning and into which we fall asleep at night. It is the interval, the pause, the taking in of a new breath, the threshold of what is to come; it is a pre-birth stage. Life only makes sense because we have these intervals before we break into colourful action and deed. In the positive grey threshold world, where all colour resides, waiting to be born anew, the creative forces of the spirit have their home. Christ lives in the interval, in the embryonic realm of all true becoming. He creates in us—our creating is his creating.

Thus the world grey, which is very often considered to be depressing and bland, has an essential nature which carries within it a promise of a new becoming, both inwardly and outwardly. The colour quality and expression that is born out of the threshold world in us is usually individual in character. We create to a large extent our own colours and pictures. Our innermost soul can, however, begin to take on the hue and promise of Christ. Emerging from the edges of our innermost being, Christ waits for our recognition, calling us to paint the world again with new living true colour and promise.

True health

Ute König

To be healthy in body and soul is surely every individual's desire and longing. This begs the question: what does it actually mean to be healthy? Probably everyone has their own idea of health. But if someone else is sick, we all really want to help, as we hear in the story of the Roman officer (Matthew 8:5–13). In fact, behind his desire to help, a secret is hidden, which we all share, whether we are aware of it or not.

This secret has to do with the youngest part of the human being, the ego, the 'I am'. This most precious part of us becomes sick through egotism, pride and materialistic thinking; it can sometimes be unteachable. It is truly in need of help to become healthy, to manifest its highest aspect. But to do that, we need more than good will; it is also necessary to know how to do it.

One could think that the Roman officer had to overcome different worries: Would he be rejected, because he was a foreigner, or ask the wrong question, or not be worthy enough? The fact that he could overcome all these worries demonstrates his faith. It was through his own authentic activity that he could heal and help.

Today it is relatively easy to recognize the unhealthy condition of others. Yet when we recognize the weakness of our own youngest part, we might wonder whether we have enough to deal with in our unhealthy condition. How then can we help others? Yet every healing has two aspects. There is one who wants to help and tries to be healthy themselves, and the other who wants healing and accepts the healing medicine. The medicine that makes whole already exists in the world, yet healing remains a very individual path, which can only be followed by each one for themselves. And yet we can help each other by trying to find the stranger, the unknown, the youngest part in the other one and trying to love it.

Ute König is a priest of The Christian Community in the Republic of Ireland.

The glory of the revelation of God

Louise Madsen

If we were to look directly into the sun we would severely damage our eyes; even when there is an eclipse, we still need to ensure that our eyes are properly protected before we look at it. But it is that very light, made visible by all that it touches, that is the glory of the sun: its radiance, its warmth, its life-giving power, its healing properties and its capacity for lifting our spirits.

How, then, can we ever dream of seeing the face, the revelation and glory, of God? As the Bible says, 'No one has ever seen God…' (John 1:18) and again in his letter John says, 'No man has ever seen God' (1 John 4:12). And long before him Moses asks the Lord, 'O Lord, let me see your glory'. And the Lord replies, 'But it is not possible for you to see my face, for no man may see me and still go on living.' 'And the Lord said, "See, there is a place near me, and you may take your place on the rock: And when my glory goes by, I will put you in a hole in the rock, covering you with my hand till I have gone past: Then I will take away my hand, and you will see my back: but my face is not to be seen."' (Exodus 33:18, 20–23)

Since the Incarnation, however, we can look upon him—in the form of Christ. At the end of his Prologue, John completes the sentence quoted above by saying 'the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.' We are 'allowed' to create a picture of Christ, of his death and resurrection, for he has entered into physical existence; he made himself available to human scrutiny by means of our bodily senses; human beings have seen, heard and touched him. He became part of our earthly world and so it is possible for us to depict him to the best of our ability out of the resources of our imagination.

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Above each altar of The Christian Community, throughout the year, there hangs such a picture which

depicts the crucifixion and the resurrected Christ. But at Christmas, something more is added: for the season of the twelve Holy Nights, above the picture and below, on the altar antependium, there appears writing—in gold lettering: *'The Glory of God in the Heights'* or *'God be revealed in the Heights'* (alternatives used in the English-speaking Christian Community Regions), and on the antependium, *'and Peace on Earth to Men of good will'* or *'Human beings of good will.'* There is no extra picture; there is a message. In former times God the Father was often depicted as an old man with a long white beard. Today that seems to us rather absurd, even laughable. We experience such an all-too-human heavenly father as woefully inadequate and inappropriate, as a parody of what he ought to be; but when we have discarded it, what are we left with? In the gospel we read of the 'Glory to God in the Heights' in the message sent by the angels to the shepherds when announcing to them the birth of the Christ Child. In their message, they praise the glory of God as it appeared in the *heights.* But in the writing above the altar it is not so straightforward, for there is a proviso: *below* on the antependium the message continues, 'and Peace on Earth to Men of good will/Human Beings *of good will.*' The 'glory' is not available just like that; the message now is: the peace that it heralds is only accessible to those who truly carry goodwill in their hearts. God does not merely draw near to human beings of his own accord; rather he awaits their initiative, to which he *may* (through grace) respond.

From those higher spheres his divine radiance possibly can shine into our lives, or, by taking those words into our prayers, we can pray that his glory *may* shine into our lives—through the Son.

At Christmas, the mood of the festival draws us much closer to this other dimension. The gold lettering appears during the twelve Holy Nights, the time 'between the years', which corresponds to the difference between the year of the moon and that of the sun, between the Christmas night (when we look to what has been) and Epiphany, the Appearance (when we look forward to what is to come). In this in-between time something more shines through to us: the world of the Father draws closer. For this brief span of time the sphere out of which the Christmas light is born reveals a little more of itself. The shepherds in the fields were able to experience this directly when the glory of

the Lord shone about them. But scenes like that have long since been closed off to human experience. Today, though, the Christmas message encourages us to direct our longing and intention towards the spirit light that shines into our darkness. We may well sense that this other world is seeking to respond to us. When in the dark moment of the Midnight Hour of the year the Midnight Christmas Mass is celebrated, our offering may meet the light of the mysteries of the Christmas events to bring to birth a new Christian year.

InI, in Beatrice

All that we have
Is capable of higher transformation
To Spirit Self
The hatreds we had and found as others hardened
To us can be as cider – 'suck it up!'
So shows the outer world by inner pain a path to kindness
The softness of she, or he, who loved us so tenderly
Will be forever with me as a gift
A faculty, but can be more than that
Allowed to leave us in its flight
Aflame forever in its own true freedom
Our inner lover toddles to its feet
Unsteady, fumbling yet, but ready for the next step
'I am I. In InI we meet.'

John Roy

Note: A legacy of slave days, colloquial Jamaican speech used 'me' where standard English used 'I'; slaves had been taught to see themselves as objects rather than subjects even in their own speech. The Rastafarian movement, realising this, began using 'I' in every possible context. In particular, Rastas use 'InI' (i.e. I and I) where English uses 'we,' a coining that shows exactly the relation of the humans we are seeking to grow into, in the age of the consciousness soul.

The glory in the heights of our Christmas altar

Aaron Mirkin

For Christmas and the twelve Holy Nights in The Christian Community we mount three large, golden letters high up on the wall above the altar picture. They are the letters C M B. In German-speaking congregations and in some English-speaking countries the letters are K M B. According to the original indications for the Christmas altar given to us by Rudolf Steiner at the time of the founding of The Christian Community, these letters are the initials of the currently accepted names of the three kings; Caspar (Kaspar in German), Melchior and Balthazar. This answer in fact gives rise to at least one very important question: why do the letters appear on the night of the holy birth on December 25, only to disappear again before January 6, the very day that the three kings traditionally appear with their gifts? Are we to imagine that the kings are approaching the altar in the spiritual world during the Holy Nights and that their arrival on Earth on January 6 means they no longer need to be named? Another question is why these letters should appear above the other words, written in gold above the Christmas altar: 'Glory to God in the heights', or, to follow the translation into German, which Rudolf Steiner gave: 'God be revealed in the heights.' It seems that these three letters, being at the highest point of the altar wall, are somehow connected with the glory and revelation of God in the heights. What could this mean? Do these initials somehow represent the glory of God that reveals itself in the heights? How might this relate to the gifts of the kings?

It is wonderful to ponder such questions, which become even more interesting when one considers further indications from Rudolf Steiner that the Jesus child born on January 6 and visited by the three kings is not the same child as that born on Christmas day. (Hopefully this idea is not entirely new to the reader. A comparison of

Aaron Mirkin is a priest of The Christian Community in Stroud.

the birth stories from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke reveal many fundamental differences that can only be explained by this idea.) Could these three golden letters in the heights also be connected to the child born on Christmas Day?

These three letters: C, M and B are worth dwelling on. Each has a special quality of its own and yet relates to the other two in a wonderful way, especially if we allow ourselves to speak the C with the sound of K, as we do with the name Caspar. The C/K is produced in the back of the mouth and is sharp. The M is produced in the mouth and nasal cavity with considerable breath and is warm and gentle. The B is produced as a plosive sound from the front of the mouth. So we see already an interesting threefoldness being expressed which embraces the wholeness of our speech organs.

One can say the C/K has more the quality of a focussed inner place or point, the B more of an outward quality with a direction into the periphery and the M more of a harmonising middle breathing place. (Those who know the eurythmy gestures for these three sounds will recognise how they bring these sound qualities to expression.) It is perhaps now not too great a stretch of the imagination to recognize how these three qualities relate to the threefold nature of the human being. The C/K embodies the point-like thinking focussed in the head; the B, the gestures of the limb system connecting through the will directed outwards towards the periphery, and the M, which harmonizes the work of the heart and lung, which breathe and feel in the middle of the human being.

From this point of view we can say we have a picture of the human soul expressed through the essence of thinking, feeling and willing in the heights of the Christmas altar. However, we are concerned here not just with any human soul. The essential substance of the powers of our soul was once a pure and unsullied wholeness which was at work as the divinely bestowed archetype of our own soul lives. Our souls are made in the image of the soul of God. Through the Fall, however, our incarnated human soul qualities have become separated from this original soul archetype, which has led to endless imperfections that require self-knowledge and self-management to be transformed into the free and fully mastered thinking, feeling and willing.

The stigmatised nun Anna Katharina Emmerich (1774–1824) describes in one of her ecstatic visions how she sees Adam before the Fall as one surrounded by a radiant glory which is then taken up into the heavens by God just as Adam is about to eat of the forbidden fruit. Rudolf Steiner describes something similar in the fourth lecture of his cycle on the Gospel of St Luke (1909). A part of Adam's soul was taken up to the 'Mother Lodge' of humanity to be protected from the consequences of the Fall. Rudolf Steiner calls this pre-Fall soul of *Adam Kadmon*, a being known also in the Kabbalistic teachings as the primordial, cosmic human being made in the image of God. What is not known elsewhere, however, is the moving revelation in the same lecture by Rudolf Steiner that it is this same unsullied Adam Kadmon soul that enters into the Jesus child described in the Luke Gospel: the child born on December 25.

Could it be that the glory of God that is revealed in the heights of the Christmas altar is nothing other than the glory of the unsullied human soul of healing and redemption which was made in the image of God and is represented through the three archetypal sounds of C M B? One might then say that the twelve Holy Nights are the festival of Adam Kadmon, of our own highest spiritual origins, which have been returned to humanity as counterbalance to the Fall.

In light of this, it seems significant that in our nativity gospel reading, Luke traces the genealogy of Jesus all the way back to 'Adam who was of God' (Luke 3:38). We can be deeply stirred to realise then that the glory that was once separated from Adam has now returned to his own genealogical descendant. What was apart has been made whole. The separation of the Fall is overcome.

In this way, human beings are given the possibility of working once again from their divine archetype into the fallen life of their souls. In this way, they can raise up their own fallen soul life of thinking, feeling and willing. And where do we see the best image for this? In the gifts of the three kings! The gold of raised up thinking; the frankincense of raised up feeling; the myrrh of the raised up strength of will; now not held back in some protected 'heavenly Mother-lodge of mankind', but come to full expression through human beings on Earth. These are the gifts of humanity to the gods.

So, yes, one might well say that that which appears in the heights of the Christmas altar really does incarnate into Earth existence through the three kings on Three Kings Day—and what an extraordinarily moving gift we receive each year with the divine glory of the C M B in the heights of our the altar before which we gather at Christmas and through the Holy Nights. The glory of God is on its journey to become the glory of mankind.

Quest-I-on

Who is it, She, who comes with dawn?
Or is it He who flies among these stars?
And is it One who answered from the depths?
Or is it They who whispered in my breath?
I know that when I scramble up wet stones
Or when I smell the grave-scent in a wood
There is a silent space inside my ear
In which I know a listening.

Pure the cauled snaw
White the wilted winds
Friendship that's burning in a fire
Last year's deaths in this earth's flowering.
There is in flowers,
In the leaves on elms
Another listening.

John Roy

Glory in everyday life – an exploration

Deborah Ravetz

I run courses which help people of all ages to find their vocation. One of the most common things that people say when embarking on this work is that they want to do something that makes a difference in the world. It doesn't matter whether they are younger or older, or what their background or status may be; they all share a longing to get up in the morning for a purpose greater than oneself.

Perceiving this need in so many different human beings fills me with optimism. I see it as a force that can break through our culture, which seems to reduce everything to its monetary rather than its inner value. If our work is about making a difference and we see money not as an end in itself but as something that makes things possible, then we cease to be governed only by necessity. Instead, we can find our freedom even within the confines of necessity.

Rudolf Steiner rendered the biblical word glory in a dynamic way: *Offenbarungsglanz*, or 'shining revelation'. The glory of God is the shining light of his revelation. Where do we find this revelation in our lives and has it something to do with the work that we do both in the world and on ourselves?

When I was a student, I became aware of the American poet, Adrienne Rich. She believed that the personal is political. Even the names of her books inspired me. Two in particular: *The Dream of a Common Language* and *A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far* had a profound effect on my life. Both her poetry and her essays concentrated on the difference we can make in the here and now with those people with whom we find ourselves. For her, freedom was not a glittering glamorous thing; rather it was what she called: 'daily duty, prose-bound, routine remembering.' That person is free who

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turns up and takes responsibility, faithfully taking the tiny steps needed to learn a skill; that makes the effort to sort out difficulties in the communities of work, friendship and family. All these efforts were for Rich a response to the struggles and pain of the world; they may seem humble, but they play a part in what she called 'reconstituting the world.'

In every group to which we belong there are dynamics which can undermine or support what we are trying to achieve together. For Adrienne Rich, any group can be the starting point of our effectiveness, the training ground of learning the common language she was so interested in finding, whether it be large or small. She also saw it as a building brick in the wider structure of our social life. By attending to our personal challenges, we were doing the work that would prepare us for the great challenges, such as we experience in times of war or natural disaster.

I recently attended a performance of *Othello* at The Globe. Iago, the villain of the play, destroys not only Othello's innocent wife, Desdemona, and the brave and beautiful Othello himself; he also destroys several other innocent people. He strips them of their humanity and makes them into the instruments that he needs to achieve his terrible ends. When asked by Othello at the end of the play why he has done these things, Iago gives him no answer. Only when we remember his words from the very beginning of the play do we realise what drove him to behave in this way. There, he describes how he hates Othello not because of his weaknesses but because he is brave and beautiful and because of the recognition that he has received. Iago's darkness has been conjured up not by Othello's weaknesses but by Othello's strengths, by his radiance. He uses his feelings of jealousy to stoke a bitter and destructive hatred.

There is another possible response to the dark sides of ourselves such as jealousy. This step involves facing these feelings and transforming them into organs of perception—into teachers. Iago is jealous of Othello's self-realisation. Had he been able to admit this to himself and face it, he could have learned that he did not hate Othello, but that he too longed for self-realisation.

We are all aware of the existence of the seven deadly sins. *Othello* is an image of the destructive consequences of one person's failure to

master and transform the darker parts of his soul. Iago's unchecked jealousy causes chaos. As we watch the devastation unfold, we start to see the importance of our work on ourselves. Adrienne Rich celebrated the value of working on the smallest scale. *Othello* shows us that we can only do this work if we are prepared to work on ourselves first. Our small community endeavours are building blocks for the wider community; they rest in turn on the foundations that we lay within ourselves.

At the end of her great novel *Middlemarch*, George Eliot describes the fate of the heroine, Dorothea. Although she had longed to do something great with her life, she ends up leading a quiet existence supporting her husband and having nothing to do with the dizzy world of fame. Eliot says about her, however, that she belongs to that group of people who, although unknown and buried in unvisited graves, have left the world a better place through the conduct of their lives.

This patient work of self-transformation is an image of God's revelation: it embodies the glory of God. Every day we are confronted with the challenges of life. Bad health may lay us low; we may be overwhelmed with fear about our future; we may face temptation like Iago or have to cope with destructive workmates, friends or family members. Every time someone takes one of these challenges as an opportunity to redeem or transform a difficult situation, they are asserting their freedom in the face of necessity as well as playing their part in realising their potential.

The German philosopher Hannah Arendt attended the trial of Adolf Eichmann. Because he had played such a significant part in the destruction of the Jews she was expecting to meet a satanic monster. Instead she met someone so devoid of selfhood that she coined the phrase 'the banality of evil'. She came to see that if we are to become truly human, we need to think, to be prepared to have a conversation with ourselves about what we were doing and how we were living. It was a failure to do this that meant that Eichmann was ghostlike. It was this void that made it possible for him to become the instrument of evil.

Hannah Arendt's understanding of the significance of becoming a self, a person who can make judgements about how they wish to behave, has lessons for us now. Our challenges ask us to endure and to find meaning. In doing this, we build selfhood; we build character.

All our encounters become opportunities for this work of self-transformation and of building community. I find this an empowering thought in the face of the problems that beset us on the national and international stage.

Martin Buber described how the early disciples of the Master of the Good Name—the Hasidim—would dance, beating the earth with their feet in order to release the spirit that was entombed in matter. Perhaps the effort towards selfhood and community is another form of spirit-releasing dance. When we start to see the work we do on ourselves and with each other in this light, it changes how we experience everyday existence. We are not ordinary, nor are those around ordinary; what we do or neglect to do has significance. Most importantly, everyday life can be irradiated with meaning and God's revelation. We are never deprived of the opportunity to do what we seem most to long for: to make a difference with our lives.

Early Morning, Samuel Palmer

Our witness to the glory of God

Douglas Thackray

And in that neighbourhood there were shepherds in the field. They guarded and protected their flocks through the night. All at once, the angel of the Lord stood before them, and the light of the revelation of God shone about them. Great fear came upon them, but the angel said: 'Have no fear. See, I proclaim a great joy to you, which shall be for all mankind. Today the bringer of healing is born to you in the town of David: Christ, the Lord.' And suddenly the fullness of the heavenly, angelic choirs was around the angel; their song of praise sounded forth to the highest God:

God be revealed in the heights
And peace on earth to men of Good Will

Luke 2:8–14

At Christmas time we hear through the gospel how the angels proclaim to the shepherds the birth of the Christ Child. Further away, in distant lands, the Magi receive a premonition: looking into the night sky they find the promised star of grace. Perhaps the shepherds and the Magi were the sort of people described in the Beatitudes: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'

We—less exalted though we may be—may seek at Christmas to follow in their footsteps. The angels on this occasion seem to have a very prominent role but in reality we know very little about them other than that they are the messengers of God.

In former times it was a fairly common thought that children had their guardian angel to protect them. Although nowadays this idea may be given little credence, something of this reality still lingers on, albeit in a transformed way. Looking back on his or her life, an elderly person may sometimes refer to a special occasion when something unexpected happened that changed the course of his or her life. We could say that such events are guided by the hidden hand of their angel.

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This grace works in many different ways, as I found out when visiting a patient at the local hospital. Her name was Laura. She was about fifty five years of age and had a round face. She was propped up in her bed, with lots of cushions behind her. Her lovely smile drew me to her bed side. As she told me her story, my amazement grew ever greater. At the age of twenty-three she was told that she had breast cancer. She went into shock and could not believe that such a thing could have happened to her. She felt that after surgery, no self-respecting man would want a mutilated woman. Furthermore, she feared that the chemotherapy that would follow would do away with her lovely hair so that she would be like a rose in full bloom that was shedding its petals in the wind. All she wanted now was to curl up in a ball and sleep for ever. Cancer for her was like the mark of Cain separating her from everything that was beautiful and from all her hope for the future. And in the background there lingered the thought that she could actually die from this.

It was only when she had reached the 'bottom of the pit' from which there seemed to be no escape that she woke up to the light within. 'It was the most miraculous moment of my life,' she continued, 'for in a dream I saw my mother and father and all my family and friends in a circle around my bed holding hands and looking at me lovingly. That morning I woke up knowing that the spell of loneliness and fear had been broken. I had been restored to myself again albeit in a different way. For now I had the certainty that those in the circle of love had not left me but were in me, as I was in them. This insight would never leave me as I knew in my heart that I had been touched by the grace of God in that dream.'

Laura told me how the story had gone on over the next twenty years, in which she had suffered diabetes and the amputation of her leg, followed by kidney failure and dialysis. She said that at no time since she had the cancer had the presence of the circle of love left her; far from it, it seemed to have grown in strength with every problem that she had to face.

Having said goodbye, I reflected on her message and I came to the conclusion that if we can accept whatever befalls us as God's will for us, then he will bless us too. However, to accept God's will is not necessarily an easy matter. For many of us it may be too painful to bear. It is

only when we can overcome our feeling of separation from God's grace and let go of our wretchedness that it can begin to work for us. This is echoed in the Act of Consecration of Man when we acknowledge that we can do nothing, no 'works' that would bring about our salvation; in the same breath, we state that we would overcome sin 'through Christ'. In our helplessness we can pray to him to become the bridge to unite us with the healing grace of God. As I came away from Laura I felt as though I too had been touched by his grace as I could feel the light of the resurrection in the circle of love that surrounded her.

At Christmas and the twelve Holy Nights we are given an opportunity to look again and reflect on what we may have previously denied as God's will. Could it be that he is still waiting for us to accept this, and until we do, we put ourselves outside the door that leads to the reality of life?

In the Act of Consecration of Man during Christmas and the Holy Nights our prayers receive a special blessing when we feel the nearness of the angelic host which proclaims the healing power of Christ. Joining in with their song of sacrifice we may be lifted up to receive the peace that is promised to all men of good will, just as the shepherds were.

The valley thick with corn, Samuel Palmer

Three glories

Luke Barr

> *For indeed, they loved the respect of men more than the Glory of God.* John 12:43

We live in an age when a momentous shift in language is occurring. Philosophy since the twentieth century has focussed itself upon how language affects our thinking and perception. A sensitivity for language is arising in human souls.

This sensitivity may tell us that words are spiritual beings. They are potent, and can be used for harm or good. One may imagine them as alike to the spirit Ariel in *The Tempest*. Their being is elemental. They possess a creative power and an enlightening power. It is no coincidence that the liberation of Ariel occurs parallel to Prospero's discarding of his book of power. Prospero, the magician, no longer uses words for his own ends. He frees them from their servitude to him and consequently he becomes more human.

If this emerging sensitivity to the word were to unfold in us in a healthy way, then we would probably delight in the beauty of words and the infinite possibilities of expression. We would no longer use words only for our own ends, but treat them with love. We would love the glory of God in words. We would explore words' depths; and be enriched by their living powers.

However, we are not quite easy before the Word. And so we diminish our vocabulary; and analyse or ostracise our words, putting them 'on the rack' or exiling them in ignominy.

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Let us befriend words again. Let us allow *them* to speak. Let us sit in awe as we hear their biographies; and what lives as their highest ideal in their being. What is it that they wish to manifest and reveal?

One word that has always been central to the Bible is 'glory'. It is a holy word. We can find many examples of it, in both the Old and the New Testament. It is not

a word commonly used today; if it is used, then with a touch of irony, as in the phrase to cover oneself in glory. It is as if we shrink before the full revelation of such a word. How may we approach a word like this and make it a living reality once more?

I would like to suggest that there are three aspects to glory. Let us walk awhile with this word and clothe it in the splendid garments of those qualities which we attribute to the Trinity: being, creating and enlightening.

Being

There is a fundamental glory. This is the world-as-it-is. The world that is given to our senses is the original glory. It is this which awakens the feeling of reverence within us. We gaze at the phenomena of nature, and something ineffable overwhelms us. We are in the presence of something so unspeakably beautiful, so glorious, that we could weep. But why? All sorts of thoughts too large for us sweep us up and elevate us to a realm that feels like home. The world is our home, and it is glorious. But such moments also reveal to us that it is a maya, an appearance which hints at the glory of our true home. This home is hidden from our everyday awareness and only revealed in such moments. We may experience ourselves at such times as truly alive, as replenished. We stand upon the true ground of existence. We may feel that we are in the flow of being. We can contemplate in 'the bliss of solitude' as Wordsworth famously put it, the glory of daffodils, of nature, of existence, and of human being. Indeed, the great Romantic nature poets are the voices of this glory. This glory, *the glory of being,* is the first glory.

This glory is a given. It is the foundation of all existence—'the ground of all being'. Like a ground, it provides us with our basis. We can depend upon it, trust in it. However, like ground, we often take it for granted. We 'see' it all the time—so much so that we no longer see it. There is a Zen experience called 'sunyata' which refers to the feeling of the ground being swept away beneath one's feet. This is an unspeakably terrifying moment; but also a potentially liberating one. For we are not to become indifferent to it. Nor are we to remain 'in thrall' to this glory. This is a danger with the first glory. We cannot

remain pagans, worshipping nature—or the ground of being as it has manifest, for that matter. Our religion is Christianity. For this, a different glory has entered existence. This is the glory of something active in the human being: our creativity.

Creating

'All children are artists,' said Picasso. We are all born with the eye that creates. It is our birthright. Only with puberty does something change in us. It is that crucial time when we either find and develop our unique creative genius, or we fall further from grace, from the grace of that natural spiritual creativity of childhood. To be creative in any given situation is to bring our uniqueness to that situation. It means revealing ourselves, 'making the difference', 'thinking outside of the box', if the box represents the particular forms which have hitherto existed. It is non-conforming, yet provides a potential for true community. This glory is a gift. It is 'in us' as the Act of Consecration affirms, but it must be continually exercised, otherwise it withers. To experience human creativity in art, or in social situations, is to glimpse a new revelation of glory, equal in wonder and beauty to the Creation itself.

When we behold the world through our senses, we always remain somewhat 'on the surface' of things. When we are creative, we dive into the world; we are within the original life of the creating principle itself.

It is a glory however, that is not without danger of contamination. Our creativity can become egotistical—for 'our own glory'! What can help us transcend this?

Enlightening

The third glory can balance this out. Indeed, all three glories need to live in harmony with each other, checking, balancing, supporting, enhancing and nourishing each other. The third glory is that of love. Love is the task of the human being. It is uniquely ours to give to the cosmos. Love is a power strong enough to awaken the slumbering world, the 'ground of all existence'. We behold, we treat the world with love—and it changes. 'God is love,' we say. But it is we who manifest

God when we love, and who are awakening and evolving Him with our journey into love. Love possesses the qualities that Paul describes in the famous passage in the First Letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 13:4–7). These selfless empathetic qualities direct the soul's innate creativity and channel it to the good. Love is 'only/once begotten': A truly loving deed is a unique, unrepeatable, quiet but potent event in the universe. It is not a given, like the first glory. It cannot be exercised repeatedly, like the second. It can only truly unfold in the moment. But it can do so only if we live with a genuine gratitude and acknowledgement of the first and a commitment to exercising the second.

Three glories: The glory of being; the glory of creating; the glory of loving. We could call this third glory an 'enlightening' power. For are we not truly 'enlightened' a little whenever we have loved correctly, perfectly?

Love enlightens. It is a light that shines into the world. When love is present, the world becomes less obscured. Potential paths light up, and ways become open. Things become *revealed* as never before. When love is truly present, we understand ourselves and the world a little better.

Therefore, each time we cross ourselves in the Act of Consecration, in acknowledgment of the Trinity, we speak of their glory 'in us'. To do so, is to say that the power of the Holy Trinity is concentrated into the one being, the human being. The human being is the bearer of the Trinity. We are the microcosmic three-in-one. This is our great responsibility. Can we bear to carry and reveal their glory?

An example of Glory in the New Testament

The glory of the Son of Man is revealed (John 12:23)

The New Testament reveals a new glory that had entered into being: the glory of the Son, a creating glory. It is a complete cosmic and earthly revolution. Furthermore, this divine activity, creating, is now to become a human virtue. John's very first verses in the Prologue point to this creating element that has now entered existence.

In John, chapter 12, *the Greeks* appear. It is a decisive moment. They are a people of the incipient western cultures. They have developed the way of thinking and perceiving that are at the roots of our modern consciousness today. Through the power of their unique language

and subsequent thinking and perception, they will be able to witness Christ. They will be able to see the new glory of the creating Son-God. Jesus greets their arrival with the words: 'The hour has come when *the glory* of the Son of Man is revealed' (John 12:23). The appearance of the Greeks marks a significant moment in the turning point of time, when a new Trinity of glories ('the glory of the Son of Man') will become manifest. It is the moment when God's glory becomes tripartite and accessible.

And now something extraordinary happens. Just as at the Baptism, there sounds 'a voice from heaven' (12:28). The arrival of the Greeks (that is, of *the Greek spirit*) precipitates this supersensible event, of equal import to the Baptism. The Greek spirit is the future being called to witness this moment. The voice is the voice of Being, an *elemental* voice—'like thunder'. Being is the original glory, the ground of all existence. It is as if the hitherto mute world speaks at last. It is always speaking, of course, only we no longer have the ears to hear it. The voice says: 'I have glorified, and again I will glorify.' This voice of the glory of being speaks of two further glories. What are they?

At the Baptism, a glory was revealed. It was the entry into the world of Christ and his primal gift of creativity. It is a creativity different to all that had gone before it. Through Golgotha, a new glory will be able to enter the world, the glory of enlightenment, the glory of the Spirit. It is the glory of love, but love which is yet to develop into something greater than we perhaps currently may feel. This is the love which is at the heart of the conversation between Peter and the Risen One in the final chapter of John.

The voice that sounds in Chapter 12 might therefore be understood to say: 'I have revealed the glory (of creativity) through the Baptism and I will reveal the glory again (in enlightenment) through Golgotha.'

'The glory of the Son of Man is revealed.' This is repeated each time we say that the Father 'be in us', the Son 'create in us', the Spirit 'enlighten us'. We love the glory of God more than the respect of men when this glory of the Son of Man is revealed.

For *we* are the Son of Man when we bear and unify the glory of being, the glory of creating and the glory of enlightening—in our own being; in our own creating; through our own loving.

Creativity and spirituality are dancing partners

Peter Howe

In the beginning, art and religion were one. Temples, dramas, dance and song, arose out of people's in-built desire to connect with the creative powers of the universe.

Over time, they diverged, developing separate, sometimes opposing identities. In present times, when everything is 'soul-sized' and the great issue of the day is the story of each individual human being, more and more people find their own ways to allow these two primal springs that rise within them—creativity and spirituality—to work together.

The following thoughts have arisen from my attempts to be part of this activity, both personally and in working with others.

Perfect love drives out all fear (Paul's First Letter to John 4:18)

We are born full of perfect love. It does not go away, but it gets buried, forgotten, taught to fight, fly or freeze in the face of the terrors of the world. It is always there, underneath, needing to come to expression, and never, our whole life long, keeping quiet, until we lead it into the light.

Gratitude is the beginning of love. If the mind and the heart are filled with thankfulness—for people, for things, life itself—then there is not room for anxieties and fear; they simply cannot exist in the same space.

It is a daily practice to try to maintain this: calling to mind the thousand ways in which one has been helped, and the ten thousand gifts life has given, instead of obsessing over the problem—the loss, the symptom, the debt, the hurt—that is overwhelming. Even when troubles pile up they can be borne. Anxieties are dispersed, not once and for all, but for moments of connection with what could be called the greater self.

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Gratitude establishes an affirmative, loving ground, where the nascent self finds a home. From this safe place, we can go on the never-ending journey of finding out who we are, what is our direction, what we really want to do and how to do it.

Artistic media are for many people a good means of transport for this journey, because they are 'spiritual-physical', a threshold-activity between one world and the other.

Ask and it will be given to you. (Matt. 7:7)

In taking the first steps, our aims can seem impossible to achieve, and actually frightening; a world of freedom and opportunity opens up, which is exciting but intimidating. Our deepest desires are rarely convenient and comfortable; they are always challenges. Additionally, for older generations, and for many in faith communities, it goes against the grain to 'express yourself', other than in prescribed forms. It's all too easy to find reasons not to go there, and when we do, we will need help. we already need help:

One of the clichés of the modern era is that prayer doesn't work, that it is merely wishful thinking for the soft-headed. On the contrary, I find it works to such an extent that one can be awed by its power and realise that one must, as that other cliché goes, be careful what you wish for.

When we ask for help, the will has to be active and committed from the start. If we expect to lie back and get help, we're going to prove the point that prayer doesn't work. Already in the asking, there has to be a readiness to put ourselves on the line: this is my priority, I don't know how I will do it, I am afraid and I need help, but I am going to make it happen.

When you ask, clearly, something will often happen the very next day—an idea comes to you; something arises in a conversation; an event occurs. You have to notice it, of course. If you're set on finding a river, you may miss the trickle of water high on the mountain: the watershed.

Loving the self

The popular book by Julia Cameron, *The Artist's Way*, is primarily about 'unblocking,' enabling our true self to emerge and find its voice. We are all, to varying degrees and in a variety of ways, cut off from ourselves.

Those who seem to be in touch and to 'flow', are probably working very hard at it. Cameron herself speaks honestly of her constant fears and the need to ask 'the creative powers' for help. The work-book is full of exercises, which are liberating and great fun but also extremely daunting, because the process throws up great amounts of knowledge about our self. Issues surface which we will actually have to deal with.

When we ask, then the creative, spiritual world responds immediately, but it can take time for human beings and the natural world to offer their 'answers'. Often it seems as if nothing is happening. Much of *The Artist's Way* is concerned with this period of limbo, which is when your demons crawl back: 'This is impossible. Things like this never happen for me. I've no imagination. My output is worthless…'

Few artists, whether professional or hobbyist, successful or unknown, have not suffered from loss of belief; it is common to give up. Yet, few speak of it and it's certainly not mentioned in art school.

A typical exercise: On one side of a double page, list your doubts, hesitations, fears, all the things that are hindering you. On the other page, write opposite each one, an 'affirmation,' ie, a positive response. When I do this, I discover that the left-hand page is essentially a list of anxieties and imaginings, while the right-hand page is a corresponding list of concrete facts, events and figures. The hindrances and blockages have little basis in reality; they are spectres that haunt the soul. Those that are real, practical issues can find practical solutions. The affirmations, although much more difficult to summon up, are grounded in fact.

Fear remains real and debilitating, but again and again, it can be 'cast out.' The positive thoughts are not hopeful self-persuasion but are built upon a foundation of facts and experience.

On the other hand, the most dangerous times can be when you find yourself saying, 'I don't have anxieties. My work is fine; I never doubt it.' When you fall in love with your own creations, then you are most out of touch and your output, however prolific and successful, is probably of little real value. Fear and doubt may be unpleasant travelling companions but they let you know you're on the right road.

To maintain belief in your chosen direction is an ongoing demand of both artistic and devotional paths: both stem from cultivation of faith in yourself and the powers that guide you. Like gratitude, faithfulness

is connective. Because loving the greater self means dealing with the everyday self, the spiritual-creative path takes in all of life, leading you towards other people, the times you live in, the many beings who accompany you.

Becoming open for the will

After the waiting, whether for many months or just overnight, receiving what you have asked for is not the easy bit, but a whole process in itself. The answer is often not at all what, or where, you were expecting it to be. I once woke from sleep with the fully-formed idea of a solo performance for an art course I was doing, that expressed my anxiety, loneliness and sexual desire, and involved being stripped to the waist (it could have been worse!). I groaned and thought, 'Really? Do I have to put myself—and everyone else—through this?' It may not have been a comfortable 15 minutes for the audience, though I did eventually enjoy it, but it was a crucial needle's eye in my artistic and personal journey that, once squeezed through, led to a more authentic self.

Julia Cameron calls it 'acting on the first thoughts of the wild mind,' and it should be done in a spirit of service. This is wild, not in the sense of crazy and random (against which she warns) but wild, I believe, in the way of John the Baptist, who recognised and welcomed the appearance of the new 'I am' into the world. He called people to renew themselves, to be open to the new self emerging within them. It demands courage, honesty, and the willingness to be open to different ideas: to 'change your ways.' When you stay safe and remain in habitual thought forms, you gradually fall out of your time—a danger in the ageing process, but it can happen at any time of life, even in youth.

But when you get it right and manage to embrace the future that clamours to come to birth within you, it's the best thing in the world.

I want to see your creations

'Creativity and spirituality are dancing partners,' says Julia Cameron. 'If you do one, you discover the other.' Creativity is not a practice-ground for life; it is life itself. It is a gateway into reality because it brings us into direct communication with the wild, creative energy of the divine. This is a force which works through spiritual laws and offers us, always,

without fail, what our deepest spirit longs for, and what those who love us want for us, too.

I imagine that when the history of art comes to be written for the present time, it will not be about great geniuses, as in the past, but it will recognise the time when ordinary people started to express themselves in utterly personal, original ways, sometimes inventing media that would best embody their purposes. This is a global phenomenon that has never happened before in the history of humanity.

One of the privileges of running creativity groups is that you see how each person has their distinctive voice and style,that puts a unique stamp on everything they undertake. Once, struggling with my own work, I said to a friend, 'Why write poetry? There are already too many poems in the world.' He replied, 'But I want to read your poems.' I imagine God says this to each one of us every day: 'I want to see your drawings, your songs and dances, your inventions and imaginings, your initiatives; for I am that which you long to bring forth from within yourself.' The Trinity prayer of the Act of Consecration describes this in the beautiful, rhythmical section about our co-creativity with the Holy Spirit. Through making our inner being visible and letting our unique voice sound in the world, we give birth to the divine spirit itself, which can only come into the world through us—if only we have the energy and the courage to let it.

A Hundred Years of The Christian Community (I)

What can we gain for the future by looking back in time?

Ulrich Meier in conversation with the author Prof. Peter Selg and Rev. Vicke von Behr, Erzoberlenker of The Christian Community

Ulrich Meier | Professor Selg, I understand that you have agreed to write a biography of Friedrich Rittelmeyer, Emil Bock and Rudolf Frieling in the context of the centenary. From today's perspective, how does The Christian Community relate its own founding to anthroposophy and to the anthroposophical movement?

Vicke von Behr | Our relationship to Rudolf Steiner is of primary importance; without it, we cannot ask about our relationship to anthroposophy or, indeed, about the nature of anthroposophy itself. Today, the relationship that the priests have to Rudolf Steiner cannot be compared with what was possible at the time of the founding. Then, Rudolf Steiner took these relatively young people by the hand, along with a few older ones, to bring about what the spiritual world hoped and expected for the development of church Christianity.

I believe that the relationship to Rudolf Steiner is a solid, grounded and trusting one for all priests working today. However, the relationship with anthroposophy is becoming a challenge, in my view. For some years, we have had an ever-improving relationship with the Executive Council of the Anthroposophical Society, with whom we also reflect on these topics. But at the same time, the question arises over and again: How does the circle of priests stand in relation to the anthroposophical movement and to the Anthroposophical Society? Over ninety percent of priests are members of the School of Spiritual Science; the priesthood could not do its work without its living source in anthroposophy. At the same time, it is an esoteric circle of its own. The question of how we can preserve and expand this existential relationship as our centenary approaches, will be decisive for our future.

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Peter Selg | To a certain extent I view The Christian Community from the other side, from Rudolf Steiner's perspective, because I have become ever more concerned with the history of Rudolf Steiner's work and his relation to the various movements founded through anthroposophy. In the case of The Christian Community, the picture has become clearer. On the one hand, there are close parallels with other daughter movements, which means, in my view, that it is mistaken to set The Christian Community apart from other anthroposophical institutions or daughter movements—the gesture of the foundation is very similar. On the other hand, there are of course differences.

Amongst other things, the intensity of Rudolf Steiner's attention for the priests' circle as it embarked on its development impresses me greatly. Of course, he had an intense relationship

with the Stuttgart teachers, with Ita Wegman and other doctors, but in his dealings with these young theologians and priests, Rudolf Steiner is present—sometimes in a more personal way, sometimes more existential—beyond what we see in the histories of the other movements. And the records of the priests' meetings with Dr Steiner are particularly rich.

The relationship to The Christian Community is so special, both with Steiner himself and with the being of anthroposophy, that it has given me much to think about. I believe that these relationships have great potential for the future. Because it does seem to me that the way the priesthood could get to know Rudolf Steiner, in the work that led to the foundation, is missing in the areas of medicine and special education.

On the other hand, there are the shadows, the tremendous tragedy: so many hopes, and then December 30, 1922, even though this date seems to be long ago. For example, one thinks of Rudolf Frieling celebrating with three people in Leipzig at Christmas 1923, where there had been a hundred the year before. This has been deeply engraved in the history of the two movements.

It is definitely not my intention to write a biography of Friedrich Rittelmeyer, Rudolf Frieling and Emil Bock; I wish to examine the question: how did their relationship with Rudolf Steiner and anthroposophy continue after this event? What impact did the situation of the Anthroposophical Society and The Christian Community have on their lives and their work? How did they lead the Christian Community? As the first three Erzoberlenkers, they were of course very close to Rudolf Steiner. I hope to show how their attempt to translate what was initially hard to understand can mean something very productive for the future. In addition, I would like to write a separate piece about the relationship between Rudolf Steiner and Friedrich Rittelmeyer, which is an important chapter in itself.

I think that for seminarists, and for everyone who comes to these things later, it would be illuminating to learn about the first three Erzoberlenkers at the time of the foundation, when they were so close to the spiritual impulse of the movement, and then the tense situation into which they entered.. I don't intend to write a book of five hundred pages, but something easily grasped—that seems important to me.

Ulrich Meier | What you say about Rudolf Steiner's special relationship to the priesthood may be surprising to some historians. After all, there was the other side, namely, that Rudolf Steiner set great emphasis on not being seen in the role of founder of The Christian Community. That is probably the root of some confusion.

Vicke von Behr | Yes, it is indeed mysterious, because on the one hand, Steiner describes the founding of The Christian Community as one of the highlights of his life, and on the other hand he makes clear that he has done this as a private person. From the beginning he had a special relationship with Friedrich Rittelmeyer; indeed, he made it clear that without Rittelmeyer, the foundation would not have been possible. From the very beginning he saw Rittelmeyer as Erzoberlenker, in alignment with the spiritual world. Rittelmeyer hesitated for a long time, until in 1924 he was convinced by Rudolf Steiner that it would be necessary for

the leadership of this religious movement that he accepted the role. Rudolf Steiner had even agreed to be present and take part in the appointment of Rittelmeyer as Erzoberlenker, which he was tragically unable to do. This promise had been a joyful surprise for the founders, especially after the lecture of December 30, 1922. We know that Rittelmeyer agreed with a heavy heart to take on the responsibility of Erzoberlenker. However, he requested that Rudolf Steiner would help him if he should need his help, to which Steiner agreed. He describes in his memoirs that he experienced this as a promise that was honoured after Rudolf Steiner's death.

Ulrich Meier | Perhaps we can take a closer look at the lecture of December 30, 1922. At the beginning of the 1990s I was able to interview someone who had heard the lecture, Crown Prince Georg Moritz von Sachsen-Altenburg. He said, 'Dr Steiner wanted to clear our heads! We all wanted to become priests at that time! He had to make it clear to us that everyone had his own job to do.' Of course, that's only one voice amongst others. The lecture was received very differently by the first generations of anthroposophists, Christian Community priests and members. What kind of picture can we have of this event today?

Peter Selg | I would like to say first that I don't think the lecture is comprehensible unless one looks at Rudolf Steiner's existential struggle with the Anthroposophical Society throughout that year and the following year, 1923: his deep shock over the ineffectiveness, the dearth of manpower and purposefulness of the Anthroposophical Society, his utter dissatisfaction that this Society and its School of Spiritual Science were neglecting their own tasks, and instead running to the rituals of The Christian Community as the culmination of anthroposophy.

I think Steiner is quite right when he says that he gave the lecture primarily for the Anthroposophical Society and not for the priests. On the other hand, there are phrases that he says he had to wring out of himself. They are hard to understand to this day, at least for me.

I understand that the priests felt as though the rug had been pulled out from under their feet, in contrast to what they had heard previously from Rudolf Steiner. Afterwards, as is well known, the lecture was distributed in part and utilized by the then-leadership of the Anthroposophical Society, with all the damage that that caused.

But if I see it correctly, Rudolf Steiner always said to the priests: Don't worry too much about it, do your work, it will all work out. But overall, it was a tragedy—and shortly afterwards, the Goetheanum burned down.

What is it like today? On the one hand, it is certainly much easier to understand the lecture by looking at the history of the Anthroposophical Society. I did this in my book on Rudolf Steiner's work. On the other hand, historians in The Christian Community, such as the Gädeke brothers, make clear how unaware the founding priests were in certain respects: we have to take their exhilaration and a certain conceit into account. I am always amazed at how long the old attitudes continued, how some anthroposophists felt that the destiny of The Christian Community had nothing to do with them.

Vicke von Behr | I think that these are symptoms. As Peter Selg said, for

Rudolf Steiner the most important question was how the anthroposophical movement could survive. He saw the possibility of a further weakening of the already weak Anthroposophical Society through The Christian Community, which had just been founded. I think we have to look more closely at how Rudolf Steiner's relationship to the anthroposophical movement, to which The Christian Community belongs, changed as a result of the Christmas Conference of 1923/24. It is a great riddle: The Christian Community was founded shortly before the Christmas Conference; then with the Christmas Conference came the foundation of the new mysteries, the School of Spiritual Science; and in 1924 Rudolf Steiner said that The Christian Community had the task of helping to shape the new mysteries, indeed to become the bearer of a substantial part of these new mysteries. It can be clearly seen that he entered into a different and much freer relationship with the priesthood after the Christmas Conference.

Another part of the problem that we have with the lecture of December 30, 1922, is that people read what Steiner said then and, as if spellbound, do not take into account the changes that went on after the Christmas Conference. These changes affect the entire anthroposophical movement. We do not yet have sufficient clarity about what happened in the years 1922–1924. What he had in view for The Christian Community around 1921 seemed to be different again in 1922. Something must have happened in the spiritual world too, so that, for example, the ordination of priests which he inaugurated in 1922 is fundamentally different from what he had announced in 1921. When Emil Bock asked him, Steiner said that the form suggested in 1921 was traditional. That means it did not have any relation to the new mysteries. That was, I think, part of Rudolf Steiner's central struggle: How can that be made possible?

And then he took this enormous risk and the founding actually took place. But it was contested. The forces that wanted to obstruct the new mysteries were present, and could use The Christian Community as an instrument. Our founding colleagues worked from the best of their knowledge and conscience, but without realizing it, they were also destructive. This was, I think, what Rudolf Steiner struggled against in order to produce what was successful in 1924, but in 1922/23 it was not at all clear how it could succeed. That is also part of the mystery of the lecture of December 30, 1922.

Peter Selg | But that also affected the other daughter movements. If I see it correctly, Rudolf Steiner emphasized that The Christian Community is a public movement and not a church for anthroposophists. But this also applies to the Waldorf School, which is not a school for the children of anthroposophists. And biodynamic agriculture is there for everyone. All the daughter-movements of anthroposophy seem to me to have a quality connected to Whitsun—they are there for humanity, not just for anthroposophists. Rudolf Steiner did not found any of these initiatives, but he did make them possible. This is their hallmark. To understand that completely, I believe, is also an opportunity available to people who were born later and who can have the development of Steiner's whole work, and contemporary history, in view.

The second part of this interview will be in the next issue.

The Challenge of our Time

Tom Ravetz

> ***In the Shadow of the Machine***
> **by Jeremy Naydler**
> Temple Lodge Press, 2018
> £22.50 $34.00

and

> ***Humanity's Last Stand: The Challenge of Artificial Intelligence—A Spiritual-Scientific Response***
> **by Nicanor Perlas**
> Temple Lodge Press, 2018
> £20.00 $28.00

The day I finished reading Jeremy Naydler's book, I read an article in *The Guardian* by a very thoughtful journalist, John Harris, commenting on the prospect that robots steered by artificial intelligence might replace human beings in the caring professions. He concludes as follows:

> *There is also an overlooked philosophical aspect … the prospect of machines so closely replicating human thinking and behaviour that they provide a huge boost to the kind of desiccated—and fashionable—materialism that would have you believe that thought, consciousness and even emotion are reducible to machine-like processes. Once that school of thought holds sway, the moral questions surrounding robo-care threaten to disappear—for if a machine that happens to be made of flesh and blood is placed in the care of another machine made of casings and processors, what really is the problem?*

I was surprised and delighted to find a journalist in one of the bastions of secular humanism raising this question. As always, the comments 'below the line' were also fascinating. These tend to reflect the liberal, secular, scientific consensus. I was not surprised to read a comment taking issue with John's thoughts about the philosophical problem. The commenter took issue with Harris' description of reductionist materialism:

> *What scientific evidence indicates that [the soul is] anything else? What possible alternative explanation could there be? And as there isn't, why shouldn't AI integration into our society be viewed as just another entirely natural expression of our social evolution?*

John Harris added his own reply:

> *I think you made my point for me.*

What is playing out here? Jeremy Naydler's book is a 'Prehistory of the Computer and the Evolution of Consciousness'. This is a fascinating approach to take: a book all about computers which ends in the 1880s, long before the newly discovered power of electricity had been harnessed in the service of 'machine intelligence'. It traces the development of the thinking that made computers possible, and that has received the kind of boost that John Harris was talking about in his article.

Marshal McLuhan, the Canadian professor, philosopher, and public intellectual famously said: 'The medium is the message.' By this he meant that no communications technology is neutral: it will shape the message it transmits. In various groups in which I am involved, we have witnessed this in the case of email: the ease with which we can fire off a message and send a copy to many others can be a blessing for some processes, but it has a danger. The lack of the 'friction' provided by having to write something on a piece of paper or arrange a meeting and speak with someone turns out to change the way we communicate. The fact that we can just as easily include our colleagues, our boss, or 10,000 other witnesses as well as the one with whom we are communicating is seductive and can be dangerous. There is a growing awareness in business circles of the dangers of using email as a passive-aggressive tool. In some congregations of The Christian Community, we have had to clarify what email can be used for in the service of the religious life and what subjects we consciously leave for other kinds of communications.

Jeremy Naydler adds a dimension to McLuhan's insight: the discovery of new technologies is not random but is itself the product of evolving consciousness. The human spirit conceives of the technologies which in turn shape the culture in which human beings live and, in the case of information and communication technologies, modify their discourse and their thinking. This in turn affects the discoveries that they will make.

Naydler's book follows three main strands: the rise of logical thinking; the evolution of machines as embodiments of such thinking and the history of humanity's dealings with electricity. This last provides a wonderful thought-experiment to experience the evolution of consciousness. Electricity was known in the ancient world, but there was no drive to harness it. Was this because a 'primitive' humanity had not yet developed the scientific method? Or was it, as Naydler suggests, connected to an awareness that the forces at work in the world are embodiments of spiritual beings and their work? Such an awareness distinguished between the 'higher' or beneficial gods and the 'lower' ones: electricity was located in the latter realm. It could only be experimented with once the awareness of the higher realm had dimmed. It is gripping to read about the early experiments and the excitement that was caused for example by sending a charge through a corpse, which seemed for seconds to revive. Perhaps only an impoverished consciousness could mistake the convulsions of death for a sign of life.

The other strands that Naydler follows are equally fascinating. He demonstrates the transition from a kind of thinking that channelled the revelation of spiritual beings to the reductive, logical thinking that in Leibniz seeks a language utterly divorced from human language with its nuances of feeling and metaphor. This development conditioned and was conditioned in turn by the development of technologies, starting with the simplest cams in watermills. The rotating

spindle could place a peg in one of two positions: in or out, on or off. This in turn gave rise to Bacon's famous programme to strip reasoning of all its contemplative side (what had been called the *intellectus*) and turn it into pure *ratio*:

> *There remains but one course for the recovery of a sound and healthy condition,—namely, that the entire work of the understanding be commenced afresh, and the mind itself be from the very outset not left to take its own course, but guided at every step; and the business be done as if by machinery. (Preface to* Novum Organum*) (my emphasis)*

Naydler points out the epochal impact of this idea:

> *It is in the idea that the human mind can be disciplined to operate like a machine that we find the seed idea of the computer. For if it is really possible, by drilling the mind to think purely mechanistically, to achieve advances in knowledge hitherto unattained, then by implication a machine could in due course be designed that would function like the human mind. (p. 135)*

He traces the development of machine logic through the Jacquard loom and Babbage's doomed Analytical Engine, a purely mechanical attempt to embody logic in a machine. Only when Faraday harnessed the interaction of electricity and magnetism in the dynamo, the technology that underlies every power station today, was the way clear for the marriage of the plutonic power of electricity and the deliberately inhuman logic of the machine. Once Maxwell had located light on the same 'spectrum' as electricity and magnetism, the possibility of distinguishing between the higher and the lower worlds seemed to be lost.

Jeremy Naydler ends the story here. The final chapter points to the challenge of computer intelligence and the resources available to us in the exercise of our freedom as spiritual beings. Nicanor Perlas' book is focussed on the present and future. Its title and tone reflect the fact that Perlas is not an academic but a social activist. It is a clarion call to people who feel a connection to the new science of the spirit which Rudolf Steiner inaugurated, that they might notice the challenge to humanity embodied by artificial intelligence (AI). It often reads as if it had been transcribed from lectures, and in places would have borne with a little more copy-editing.

Perlas outlines the development of AI, which is currently undergoing an accelerating development. We have already passed the first stage of 'narrow' AI, that is 'intelligence' that is focussed on particular tasks. We may be approaching 'Artifical General Intelligence', that is 'intelligence' that can learn. This is exemplified by the successes of computers playing games. In 1996, a computer dedicated to playing chess called Deep Blue became the first computer system to defeat a reigning world champion (Gary Kasparov) in match conditions. The focus then moved on to the game of Go, which has many more possible moves than chess.

Many of the pioneers and proponents of AI share a mindset, which

Perlas summarises as transhumanist. This is based on the image of human intelligence that Naydler describes. Utterly reductionist, it sees personality, the soul, as nothing more than the product of data that is processed and stored by the brain. It foresees the extinction of human beings with equanimity, promising them immortality in a far superior form of existence once their data have been uploaded into computers. It is easy to imagine that a world that is dominated by such thinking will be inimical to human existence. There is even the danger that AI systems will be programmed to protect themselves and may see human activities that they can neither predict nor control as a threat.

Perlas encourages those of us in the anthroposophical movement to take stock honestly and notice the resources that have been given to us and also the relatively small impact that we have had culturally. This may be painful to acknowledge, but he has a hopeful message when he encourages us to attend to developments in science, philosophy and social and political life which are in alignment with the aims of the Archangel Michael. Some of his descriptions of scientific developments are of necessity made with broad brush-strokes and here the picture is if anything rather one-sidedly optimistic. Whilst many things have worked to put elements of the reductionist world-picture of materialism in question, it is by no means a consensus in the scientific community that consciousness is a primary constituent of being, or that quantum entanglement has a relevance beyond the sub-atomic level. I would recommend any reader to take Perlas' ideas here as a stimulus to carry out their own research in these highly complex fields.

One central message emerges: the importance of working with what could be called the 'irreducibly human'. There is a strange parallel here to the situation in the nineteenth century, which developed the theology of the 'God of the gaps'. In response to the advances of the scientific world-picture, some theologians postulated that God was responsible for the 'gaps'—the areas that science had not yet explained. If the theory of evolution explains the developments within the species, then God is responsible for the emergence of the species themselves. The danger with such attempts is that they become hostages to fortune. As science advances, the gaps are filled. The space where God is needed becomes ever smaller.

In the twenty-first century we might have arrived at the human being of the gaps. The first industrial revolution replaced manual labour; AI will gradually take over much that human beings do presently. Much of what a lawyer does can be performed by artificial intelligence. Robots are also increasingly providing care services. If computers can create works of art, music and poems that amaze the most experienced critics, where will be the gaps in which human beings can make their indispensable contribution?

Everything that takes place externally in a religious service could also be done by robots. Such a hor-

rific idea makes it clear that the external movements of the vessels and the sounds of the words by themselves would have no meaning. Even in The Christian Community with its strong ritual forms, the action is not to be understood in a mechanistic way. The indispensable contribution of those gathered at the altar is their inner life: the fact that celebrant and community attach value to the ritual act, value that corresponds to the spiritual reality at work there. I wonder whether with time, altars where true rituals are celebrated may start to feel like refuges for the essentially human. More than this, they are places where we experience another 'intelligence', a greater mind that informs the ritual act and can lead our own mind into greater circles of being.

Many members who have concelebrated for years or decades describe how they gradually realise that we do not celebrate the Act of Consecration alone: the very first words can be heard as a plea to the heavenly hierarchies to allow us to celebrate and to join us in celebrating this act of the hallowing of the truly human. When we open our consciousness to welcome the consciousness of these higher beings with their ever-increasing radii of awareness, we are feeling our way into a cosmic intelligence which is not artificial but real. This is what gives our prayers and our offerings their reality. Books such as Naydler's and Perlas' can help us to be aware of the context in which we perform our service. They can strengthen our resolve to bring the reality that we experience at the altar into our daily lives.

Observing Nature's Secret: Practical Exercises for Perceiving Soul and Spirit

Roger Druitt

Rudolf Steiner Press

Paperback: £11.99 $19.00

Review by Hugh Salvesen

The working title of the draft of Roger Druitt's latest book, which I had the pleasure of reading last year, was 'What can you see?'. The question lives on in the published version, cropping up at various points in the text to remind us that it is at the root of Roger's inquiry of his readers. Unfortunately, however, it did not pass muster when it came to choosing the title of the published work. Instead, Rudolf Steiner Press has opted for *Observing Nature's Secret: Practical Exercises for Perceiving Soul and Spirit.* So be it, but the singular *Secret* is more than a little odd. I have always thought of Nature's secrets as plural and multiple. Indeed, the quotation from *Knowledge of Higher Worlds* cited in the preface uses the plural form.

Roger makes clear elsewhere in the preface that he does not want to call his work 'Goethean Observation', because the term is often misconstrued as no more than phenomenology, neglecting the thinking with which Goethe imbued his seeing. Instead he prefers to call his method 'anthroposophical phenomenology'. As the book unfolds, the reader is consequently taken on a journey which is even more challenging than what one might call the Goetheanum approach to observation, represented for instance

in Margaret Colquhoun's and Axel Ewald's *New Eyes for Plants* (1996), which I had just revisited in the aftermath of Margaret's death when Roger's draft reached me. Roger goes beyond the classical four modes of observation represented by Earth, Water, Air and Fire to consider the parts played in creative metamorphosis by the spiritual hierarchies active in the planetary system and the laws of Nature.

It follows that this is not a book for beginners. My review copy (or at least its first half) had been extensively annotated by a previous reader who evidently found the argument too condensed. I see this reader's point to a degree: if indeed you have never heard of the Exousiai or the Kyriotetes, or don't know your sylphs from your salamanders, this book is not for you. But then you are unlikely to be reading this review either. On the other hand, if you are willing to embark on an unfamiliar journey and be confronted with ideas you may never have thought of, Roger is the best companion you could wish for.

The book is also notable for not confining itself to plants. In its second half, Roger applies his method to rocks, bees and colour. Roger is a highly experienced anthroposophical beekeeper (if he will pardon the term), but the chapter on bees was an afterthought, and in a way it shows. Conversely, his discussion of rocks is fascinating, and contains some of the most thrilling sentences in the book ('the mineral world […] is imprisoned in the earth and yet reveals linear forms and structures that appear to sparkle with remembered starlight'). There are other wonderful passages in the chapter on 'Glimpsing the Ether' about the way water can appear to flow upstream and the so-called velocity of the light that we see from the stars.

The chapter on colour is one where the matter of the book's illustrations presents itself most forcibly. These are frankly feeble. No doubt the profit margins in anthroposophical publishing are exiguous. But I would have wished for more generous images. In the chapter on metamorphosis there is a picture of a leaf sequence which is so small and fuzzy as to be almost unintelligible. Roger makes a heroic attempt to explain the term 'the sphere of the Sun' by asking the reader to imagine the path of the sun's journey around the ecliptic, reminding me of the occasion years ago when I saw him do that with the aid of a blackboard: an image helps! The flower diagram which is supposed to explain Goethe's terminology (all those compound nouns ending in *-Blatt*) doesn't. Later we find a drawing of a plant which does at least occupy a whole page, but whose annotations are pretty baffling. There is a key on the following page referring the reader to relevant writings by Steiner and Goethe, but it is not really adequate. Otherwise, source references to quotations in the text are only intermittent. There is no index and no bibliography.

Roger explicitly singles out as the most important point in his book what he calls working with 'impression-expression'. This theme is introduced, strikingly, by a quotation from Eliot's *Four Quartets*: 'for the roses had the look of flowers that are looked at'. If we really see some-

thing, the something seen is thereby changed, and moreover its change is perceptible to a subsequent viewer. The flower—or leaf, or rock, or star—that impresses us does so because it is expressing something of itself. 'We have an impression; we read an expression from it; we infer a being that is making the expression, a being whose expression it is'.

Margaret Colquhoun used to invite her students, on seeing a plant, to ask the question 'Who are you?'. This was not of course merely interrogative. The point was to start a process of achieving a connection with the plant in which the viewer's subjectivity is deployed in order to achieve perception of a new objectivity. The ultimate purpose of this 'impression-expression' exercise, for both parties, is redemptive. Roger addresses this important point in his concluding chapters. The spiritual beings which populate the cosmos, he writes, 'from the lofty to the elemental, have placed us in this creative potential so that the cosmos will not go on out of the same order but be recreated in a new way by us human beings. Every time we observe the world in the existing ways described, we make a modest contribution to this'. Or, as Margaret used to say, 'evolution can no longer happen by itself.'

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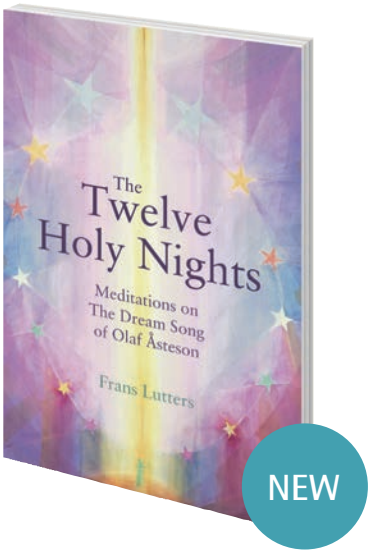

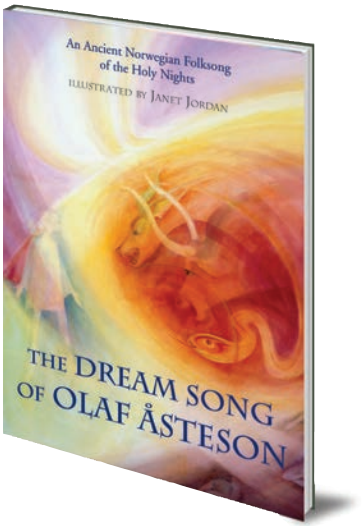

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Gospel Readings 2018–2019

Advent
Sunday, December 2 ..... Luke 21:25–36
Sunday, December 9 ..... Luke 21:25–36
Sunday, December 16 ..... Luke 21:25–36
Sunday, December 23 ..... Luke 21:25–36

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

Epiphany
Sunday, January 6 ..... Matthew 2:1–12
Sunday, January 13 ..... Luke 2:41–52
Sunday, January 20 ..... John 2:1–11
Sunday, January 27 ..... John 5:17–26

Sunday, February 3 ..... Luke 13:10–17
Sunday, February 10 ..... Matthew 8:5–13
Sunday, February 17 ..... Matthew 20:1–16
Sunday, February 24 ..... Luke 8:1–18
Sunday, March 3 ..... Luke 18:18–34
Sunday, March 10 ..... Matthew 4:1–11
Sunday, March 17 ..... Matthew 17:1–13

Passiontide
Sunday, March 24 ..... Luke 11:14–36
Sunday, March 31 ..... John 6:1–15
Sunday, April 7 ..... John 8:1–12

Holy Week
Palm Sunday, April 14 ..... Matthew 21:1–11
Thursday, April 18 ..... Luke 23:13–32
Friday, April 19 ..... John 19:1–15
Saturday, April 20 ..... John 19:16–42

Easter
Sunday, April 21 ..... Mark 16:1–8
Sunday, April 28 ..... John 20:19–31
Sunday, May 5 ..... John 10:1–16
Sunday, May 12 ..... John 15:1–27
Sunday, May 19 ..... John 16:1–33
Sunday, May 26 ..... John 14:1–31

Ascension
Thursday, May 30 ..... John 16:24–33
Sunday, June 2 ..... John 16:24–33

Whitsun
Sunday, June 9 ..... John 14:23–31

Wednesday, June 12 ..... Romans 8: 5–17
Sunday, June 16 ..... Romans 8: 5–17
Sunday, June 23 ..... John 3:1–21

St Johns Tide
Monday, June 24 ..... Mark 1:1–11
Sunday, June 30 ..... Mark 1:1–11
Sunday, July 7 ..... Matthew 3:1–12
Sunday, July 14 ..... John 1:19–28
Sunday, July 21 ..... Mark 8:27–37

Sunday, July 28 ..... Matthew 7:1–14
Sunday, August 4 ..... Luke 15:11–32
Sunday, August 11 ..... Luke 9:1–17
Sunday, August 18 ..... Luke 18:35–43
Sunday, August 25 ..... Mark 7:31–37
Sunday, September 1 ..... Luke 10:1–20
Sunday, September 8 ..... Luke 17:5–24
Sunday, September 15 .. Matthew 6:19–34
Sunday, September 22 ..... Luke 7:11–17

Michaelmas
Sunday September 29 ..... Matthew 22:1–14
Sunday, October 6 ..... Matt 25: 1–13
Sunday, October 13 ..... Ephesians 6:10–20
Sunday, October 20 ..... Revelation 12:1–12

Sunday, October 27 ..... Revelation 19:11–16
Sunday, November 3 ..... Revelation 4:1–11
Sunday, November 10 ..... Revelation 7:9–17
Sunday, November 17 ..... Revelation 14:1–13
Sunday, November 24 ..... Revelation 21:1–8

Advent
Sunday, December 1 ..... Luke 21:25–36

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

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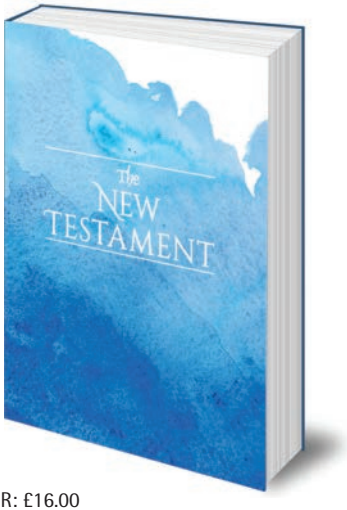

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There is a quiet secluded garden. Most rooms look out over this large and sheltered garden. Two rooms look out over the front courtyard and garden.

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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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.

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Further information and reservations:
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