

The Christian Community

Perspectives

December 2022 – February 2023



Becoming aware of Christ

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In December 1922, T. S. Eliot published 'The Waste Land' in book form for the first time. This poem spoke for a generation about the dissolution of an old order with its old certainties, which had come to an end on the battlefields of the first world war. The poem's kaleidoscope of voices all seem to pose the same question: what will succeed the old, the 'unreal city'? Will its passing turn out to leave nothing but rubble, where nothing can take root? Even the biblical Son of Man is at a loss: he only knows 'a heap of broken images'.

Although it is generally seen as pessimistic, in tune with the mood of its times, the poem contains hints of a new experience: Eliot draws on Ernest Shackleton's famous description of the stranger whose shadow he saw on the snow in front of him and his men, as they struggled in desperate circumstances to complete their Antarctic expedition. The very extremity of the circumstances creates the setting for a new kind of encounter. Years later, in his poem 'Little Gidding', Eliot returns to the experience of an unknown stranger. Now, the poet can do more than merely ask

who this might be. He speaks to the stranger, discovering as he does so that this encounter is different to any other he has known: he realises that the one who seems to be there quite independently of him, needs his recognition if he is to become manifest.

The Christian Community was founded in the world of 'The Waste Land', in anticipation of the experience of the coming one. Its founders shared with Eliot the perception that the old world had come to an end. They experienced at the founding of the new church that a new connection to Christ was possible, in part because the old one had been shattered. Such a world-historic moment is not over in a matter of years or decades. Much that has sustained humanity over centuries lies in pieces. Our challenge after 100 years is still to create places within the tumult of the world where we can cultivate the new experience of Christ, the familiar stranger.

TOM RAVETZ

Advent

Ioanna Panagiotopoulos

Once, the bright star of the night sky was our compass. To be caught out at sea in a storm, the starlight obscured by clouds, meant losing our way. Our direction was guided by the mercy of sky and sea.

Today we are seafarers of a different kind; the sea is within. Our soul is the vessel, and its course is still guided by a star—the star of destiny.

Now, our inner storms are the forces that threaten to obscure our way; for when the guiding light of our deeper purpose is lost amid the clouds of crisis and doubt, and the weight of our burdens tosses us this way and that, we must, for a time, endure the darkening of our world.

But hope is sparked in the most unlikely places. For sometimes, what causes us to lose our way is the very thing that helps us truly to find it anew.

Did Mary herself not stand, secluded in the folds of her mantle, deep in contemplation, in the midst of a world grown dark?

In her world, as in ours, the disquiet of an uncertain future moved beneath the surface until, through that very surface, the spiritual world broke through with a message of destiny. The power of this message streams to us still as a guiding light, caught in fragments until we grasp it, conceive it anew; our highest destiny, like hers, is to become bearers of something that in itself will become the ground of humanity renewed; the source out of which all love flows.

Still she is there, though now she has made a journey, from her place as the star of heaven, to the inner folds of our heart. In many icons she shows us this secret, with the star inscribed on both forehead and heart. From head to heart, from heaven to earth. Here, in us, she is still listening, conceiving the birth of a higher star, the brightest star, the star-sun—in us. It grows in us, and its light breaks through the storm of our soul.

The festival of Advent begins in such a mood: the ship is about to set sail in the storm of our world.

But the compass lies in our heart, directing us through the storm as bearers of something great, guiding our way, illuminating the waves of our becoming.

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David Jones

Deborah Ravetz

The first of a series of articles about artists and their relationship to Christ.

It is both a blessing and a curse to feel everything so very deeply.

David Jones

During the first world war the twenty-year-old fledgling artist David Jones came across a group of soldiers gathered in the doorway of a barn. It was dusk and he could see them reverently gathered in candlelight receiving the sacrament. The reality of the event so moved him that at the end of the war he became involved with a group of artists and makers living in the village of Ditchling under the leadership of the sculptor Eric Gill. It was their intention to live a religious life inspired by the work of Thomas Aquinas. There he added engraving and woodcutting to his visual language as well as working as a painter and calligrapher.

He believed that an artist was a bridge from the old abandoned folk memory of the past to modern times. For him this folk memory encompassed Arthurian, Welsh, Roman and Greek mythology. While serving on the front he refused promotion because he so loved and identified with his fellow tommies. He felt the common soldiers on both sides of the conflict were the instruments of powers beyond their control. They were anonymous and unknown. Men like them had sailed to Troy, fought at Philippi and Agincourt, were desert rats. He saw them as part of a brave and suffering lineage that went back three thousand years.

He was to write a poem about this experience called 'In Parenthesis'. The frontispiece of the book is an image of the soldier. He stands with hands outstretched as if crucified. His helmet has slipped so that the strap suggests a halo. His uniform appears to be a painful burden he must don to meet his fate. The

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Opposite page: *In Parenthesis* David Jones

tailpiece of the poem is the image of a sheep caught in barbed wire and pierced through with a spear. Both images are set in a war-torn landscape of destroyed trees that are black and burned and reminiscent of the cross.

Jones was to suffer two nervous breakdowns in his lifetime. He said this was not only a result of his wartime memories but also as a result of his struggle to make contemporary work in the face of the modern technological age. 'In Parenthesis' is the incomparable fruit of that struggle. The poem was to be lauded by every poet of significance of his time. Those who praised it and had been in the war said of it that it had described exactly what it had been like to be there. At the same time they said it was not limited to time and place but that it lifted the experience up to every time and every place. Auden said he had done for Germany and Britain what Homer had done for the Greeks and Trojans.

David Jones described the human being as the only living creature who takes the things of the earth and turns them into a *signum*, a sign. He describes how, for example, we take roses and make garlands that become offerings. He said the animals cannot do this, not even the angels can do it. For this reason he loved the embodied world because it is only man who is able to turn everything, whether trivial, sacred or profane into a signum or sacrament.

In the early 1950s Jones began a series of still lives made before a door or an open window. Using this seemingly conventional subject he takes us on a journey to a deeper reality. He makes his own signs and sacraments. The paintings intentionally live between two worlds, both literally and imaginatively. Often the open window and its filmy curtains appear to be blowing as if Jones is experiencing the presence of the Holy Spirit.

In the image called 'Flora in Calix Light', three chalice-like vases are placed on a table in front of the window of David Jones' room. The larger middle chalice is filled with water and holds flowers and briars. The table suggests an altar and is scattered with petals as if in remembrance. The three containers placed as they are suggest the trinity, and the water in the chalice the water of life. To the left of this image the wooden frame of the window suggests the form of the cross. In the distance on the far right corner of the image is a tree suggesting the tree of life. Accompanying the everyday world there is always the longing for another reality which gives life meaning.



Flora in Calix Light, David Jones

David Jones experienced both of the great wars of his time. He even lived in London during the blitz. He appears to be a frail person. Still he had great strength of soul, asking himself in words and images how could he understand what happened, how could he face and work with these painful and important events and the memories they evoked.

When a person asks themselves the important questions their life has thrown up, when they bear those questions and turn the fruits of that process into art or some kind of insight, the personal becomes universal. They become a human being who offers their life to the world so that they find themselves saying, 'I am not alone'.

The author's more in-depth lecture about David Jones can be viewed on Youtube: <https://youtu.be/FIAjQMBCMT4>



The Scapegoat, David Jones

The working of the angelic powers in our conscience

Douglas Thackray

I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the Seraphim, each had six wings, with two he covered his face and with two he covered his feet and with two he flew. And one called to another and said 'Holy Holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory' and the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke, and said 'Woe is me for I (Isaiah) am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!'

Then flew one of the Seraphim to me, having in his hand a burning coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And touched my mouth and said 'Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven.' And I heard the voice of the Lord saying 'Who shall I send and who will go for us?' Then I said 'Here am I! Send me.' And he said 'Go and say this...'

Isaiah 6:1–9

One of the many lessons of this text is that revelations of this kind are reserved for those who will fulfil a specific purpose that has been laid out by the spiritual world. In the case of Isaiah, this purpose was that he would become God's prophet, who would lead his people to righteousness.

Since the deed of Golgotha, our connection to God has radically changed. Christ came to be:

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‘The way, the truth and the life,’ for the whole of humanity. ‘No one comes to the Father except through me,’ he said at the Last Supper. He offers the bread and wine, which he offered to his disciples as his sacred body and blood, as the pathway to God. This communion then becomes the basis of faith and a source of revelation for those who seek Christ. Christ, who is the truth, reflects to us what we need to know about ourselves.

Isaiah’s account of his vision in heaven recounts how he is troubled by his conscience when he says: ‘I am a man of unclean lips.’ This experience of our unworthiness echoes on in the opening words of the Offering, spoken by an ‘unworthy creature’ who acknowledges three consequences of our sinful state: that we stray from God, that we deny him and that we are weak.

Returning to Isaiah, his confession invites the divine intervention of the Seraph, who retorts ‘Behold the live coal has touched your lips and your sins are cleansed!’ In the Communion, we pray that the healing spirit grant continued life to the spirits of human beings by healing the sickness of sin. Isaiah’s senses are renewed by being purified, and he can now hear God speaking: ‘Who will go for us?’ He replies boldly: ‘Here I am, send me.’ So he is sent to become a prophet to his people and to lead them to God. This experience of being sent out to proclaim the word echoes on at Easter time in the words spoken directly to the congregation. Their newly-awakened word is to go into the world, proclaiming Christ as ‘the meaning of the Earth.’ A transformation has taken place: from treading the path offered by Christ, we are now called to be free agents of his grace.

Rudolf Steiner’s reflections on freedom show how conscience can now become something more than merely the reaction to sin, or the memory of a moral code that we have learned. ‘An action is felt to be free in so much as the reasons for it spring from the ideal part of my individual being.’ (*The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*, Chapter IX, ‘The Idea of Freedom’). Of course, we will not neglect to study the moral codes of humanity, and to learn from them. However, the truly free deed is the one where we act out of love, reacting to the unique set of circumstances in which we find ourselves. For Steiner,

our conscience then becomes the voice of our intuitive moral sense of freedom.

The quality of conscience as an organ of perception for our inner world, was given when Christ became our reference point as our: Way, Truth and Life. Christ's deed on Golgotha is the 'free deed' which has liberated the heart of each person who has been healed from the sickness of sin. When Christ says, 'The truth will make you free,' he is speaking of our conscience, which can reveal the truth about which path to take, about what has to change, or what needs or does not need to be done. True freedom can only arise out of conscience, a conscience that has been cleansed through our self awareness.

This self awareness leads to the acceptance of who we are in our wholeness, including our defects and blemishes. Only such acceptance can bring about inner peace. This in turn can give rise to a sense of trust and gratitude to the spiritual world which accepts us for who we are. We may feel ever more strongly that we are under the protection of our healer, the Good Shepherd. However often we may have strayed, as long as we look to him, he will always be our guide on the way, as we seek to live truthfully with tenderness and courage.

In the inserted prayer that we hear on Christmas Day and for the Holy Nights, we are invited to join in the song of the spiritual hierarchies, the song of sacrifice that sounds from their ranks, from the Angels all the way to the Cherubim and Seraphim. This song proclaims that the source of all true healing is in God. We are reminded that this is the same choir that appeared in the heavens to the lowly shepherds who were watching their flocks on Christmas eve. They, the pure in heart, were the representatives of humanity's higher being. They were chosen to visit the holy child. The shepherds entered the lowly stable and beheld the Christ child; we approach him through the doorway of the Act of Consecration of Man at Christmas time. Our free deed of devotion may bring grace: we grow aware of his presence, and of the mystery that tells us of His love and how it can make us free.



The Artist, David Jones

Sensing Christ's presence

Georg Dreissig

In a previous article I tried to show how the ritual word can become an effective image, an active being, which draws on the attention and activity of all those who celebrate the service together. This task is not exclusive to the church: it is to become the responsibility of everyone, so that the blessing that we can experience in our worship may flow out ever more strongly into life, into the world. We are called to become active in a religious way in our everyday life, by cultivating our awareness of the presence of the spiritual, growing wakefulness, attention and receptivity. It is not enough merely to know about the spirit, we need to awaken to its presence in order to feel it and to receive its aims. The heavens want to enliven us, fulfilling our humanity and overflowing through us into life—into the world.

The sacraments of The Christian Community express this in a concrete way. However, each time we celebrate, it is left open whether the congregation will allow what they have experienced to become an impulse that transforms their daily life. This comes to expression in the last words spoken in the Sacrament of Ordination to the one being ordained. They are told that Christ will accompany them 'wherever you go'. They are then instructed: 'Always feel his presence; do nothing without this feeling!'

The most important mystery of Christ, the mystery which is his open secret, is his presence. What we know from the translations of the New Testament as his return or second coming, is a translation of the Greek word *parousia*, which in fact means presence. He who is always there, always present, is experienced as the One who is approaching us. In this approaching we can also feel his presence. Feeling him, we breathe with his being—and this applies wherever we are. We express this when we say You to him, which always means: You—here and now.

Rudolf Steiner says succinctly of this situation:

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Christ has descended from supersensible realms into the realm of earth and has been participating in the process of earth development since the Mystery of Golgotha ... One does not need to find him through any institution, which can only be the mediator; one must find him through what happens within oneself as a result of what the institution makes possible. Since the Mystery of Golgotha, he can be found at any time, in any place, and a church can only be the mediator.

Not only the candidate for ordination, but all those who attend a service are called to feel the presence of Christ, not only in front of the altar, but wherever they may go—at any time, in any place. This awareness of his presence gives us a yardstick for assessing whether our conduct is worthy of him. The divine world longs and hopes to become present through us. Rudolf Steiner points to this fundamental truth with the words, ‘that on an earth on which the human being is to be present, the divine is also really present through the human being.’ The appearance of the divine in the human being and through the human being on earth is the purpose of being human, which only we ourselves can fulfil by allowing ourselves to be permeated by divine being.

The role of the congregation in the process of ordination

With regard to the ordination of Priests, this more general, fundamental point can now be supplemented by a very concrete one. We are not asked simply to copy what the Church has done up to now: we are called upon to bring something radically new into our concelebration of the sacraments.

At the end of the ordination, after the final words which are spoken to the candidates, the celebrant turns to the congregation who have gathered for the ordination. Now it becomes clear what a decisive difference their presence makes for the process of ordination. The one who has been recognised as a priest by the spiritual world must also be recognised as a priest by the congregation, if they are to unfold their priesthood. Recognition by the spiritual world is a part of what ordains someone to the priesthood; recognition by the congregation is equally essential.

The final words of the ordination make clear that this recognition needs to be supplemented by our following helpfully the deeds of the newly ordained priest, if their work is to be fruitful. In these words it becomes clear that the process of ordination is not completed when the Sacrament of ordination comes to a close: rather, something has been inaugurated that continues to flow into the future.

This raises the question: How long does the ordination actually last? Is the ordination that one experiences when one becomes a priest enough, if it is to be a continuing reality? The ordination is woven into the Act of Consecration of Man, which we celebrate daily, refreshing the consecration that our humanity experiences there over and again. The same is true for priests. Their ordination is refreshed every time they celebrate the Act of Consecration of Man. And here too, the blessing of the consecration is not bestowed by the divine world alone; it also flows from the congregation that celebrates together with the priest. The celebrant turns to the congregation, to speak the words that express what they perceive when they behold the congregation: 'Christ in you.' The server responds, 'And may he fill your spirit!'—thus expressing what flows from the side of the congregation, awakening the current of Christ's substance that refreshes the ordination of the celebrant from the side of the congregation. Just as the first Acts of Consecration of Man to be celebrated at the founding of The Christian Community were ordinations to the priesthood, so every Act of Consecration of Man is also an ordination—a consecration to the priesthood by the congregation, as the words 'and may he fill your spirit' make real.

If we become aware of how the hallowed substance breathes between us when we celebrate the rituals, we can ask: How can this consecrating breath of the sacrament also breathe in and through our everyday encounters? Do our words and our deeds contribute to the consecration of the human in our encounters with our fellow human beings not in the church but on the street? The Christ, whose words sound out at the altar is, after all, the same Christ who expresses himself in life. What applies to worship applies to our humanity as a whole and our relationship to Christ's presence 'at every time, in every place.'

Translated by Tom Ravetz

Apocalypse – Advent for adults

Johannes Beurle

As individuals, human beings will lose themselves in fear and in expectation of everything that is coming upon the whole earth.

LUKE 21:26

With the present catastrophes raging in the world, how is it possible to get into a Christmas mood? We usually associate the preparations for Christmas with the smell of cookies, candlelight and reverential carols. But the Advent tones of the lyre have barely ceased to sound before the words of the Mount of Olives Apocalypse announce great upheavals breaking in over humankind. Ought we not to be trying, in the service at least, to screen out the troubles of our times and sing devotional hymns by candlelight? That is what we do every year for our children.

But what does Advent mean for adults? Apocalypse! Christmas, the Feast of Birth, needs to be prepared. The birth pangs are a necessary part of that. What we are currently undergoing are the birth pangs of a new age, announcing the renewed coming of Christ. Every year, through a reverential Advent festival, we offer our children the experience that the joyful expectation is fulfilled. Will we, too, now be able to go forward towards the coming world events with that kind of confidence and joy? If, within the troubles of the times, we learn to discover that which is of the future, it can be born within us.

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Translated by Jon Madsen

What is it that moves between you and me?

Peter van Breda

A wise man once said that what distinguishes us as human beings is that we each have an endless story to tell. Learning to share our story is not always easy but wherever we find ourselves, be it in bounty or poverty, happiness or sorrow, our personal story remains profoundly precious. There's always a meaning, a road ahead, a never-ending personal tale of destiny.

Our karma leads us into life and into relationships where we encounter a complex social world. We soon experience that other people also have unique biographies—stories to tell and to live out. They too are constantly challenged as they attempt to fulfil their life's goals. There is, though, the possibility to recognise and experience a special energy that passes between two people in moments of meeting. An invisible force is present. Christ asks his mother at the marriage of Cana: What is it that moves between you and me? What wants to be born between us? In a sense this Christ question is our question as well. Christ, who is the Lord of destiny, of karma, is always potentially present when we meet others.

Can we sense the relevance of this question not only with regard to when we encounter another person, but also as a question between ourselves and Christ? What wants to be born out of our personal and super-personal relationship with Christ? What moves between us? Maybe we can feel that Christ is asking what consequence it has in my life that I am intimately in relationship with Him. How does the relationship touch me? Does it colour, for instance, the story of my destiny? Does Christ as a living being form part of my daily life?

On their journey through life, with all its inner and outer challenges, many people feel bereft and seek,

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consciously or unconsciously, the religious and spiritual life. A deep intuition tells them that they can find hope here for another kind of future. Deep within us, we bear a desire and need for religious renewal. In a church such as The Christian Community we may learn through the sacramental life to enter ever more intimately into the sphere where Christ can be experienced in us and between us. In our services, our striving and our prayers, we can begin to feel the living presence not only of Christ but of the Father and the Holy Spirit.

One hundred years ago, in a deeply holy event, forty-five men and women became aware of the descent of The Christian Community into the earthly world in the presence of Rudolf Steiner. A new future began in that year: 1922! It soon became manifest in our seven sacraments and other services. In each sacrament we encounter the living, working presence of the spirit. The sacraments do not only transform our personal stories but also the story and destiny of all mankind, which so desperately needs to become clearer. The holy story of the founding of our movement for religious renewal needs to sound out into the world, to be told again and again. We need to create not only a coherent story of the last hundred years but also to become apocalyptic and to find the words which point to a future of hope and potential.

Christ is the great storyteller. We can harken to his tale and go out and spread his word, the word of the spirit, for the good of mankind. Not only does our Mother Earth groan and sigh for our redemption; we too as humanity long for a rebirth. The many challenges of this new millennium threaten to obscure our connection to the aims and goals of the spirit. More than ever, religious renewal is calling out to us to be part of a new future. Those who have been graced to become part of our movement may feel a challenge, that we are among the first to put our shoulder to the plough, as we help towards the deepening of a new understanding which will lead to a new consciousness of Christ's living presence in our world.

Made blind by our expectations?

When do we notice that a new age has begun?

Ilse Wellershoff-Schuur

I

The birth of the Christ child took place in an age of great expectations. The nation to whom God had been so particularly close was living under the rule of the Romans, with the culture of the Greeks and in the midst of other nations that knew nothing of the special future of this nation, of humankind, of the earth. The voice of the heavenly ruler, which for many centuries had spoken to the people of God—and thereby to humankind—was stilled. The God of the people of Israel was silent. For at least 300 years the time of the prophets had been over. Since then, it was only by tradition—mostly by word of mouth, less so in writing—that what the voice of God had spoken about the fulfilment of the divine plan of salvation was passed on. Or rather: what was passed on to the people was what the prophets in inspiration had received from the spiritual worlds about the further development of humankind.

The words from heaven that once had given so much strength threatened to fall silent. The images faded. Instead, the world was overtaken by externality and foreign domination.

In earlier times this was called a ‘famine’. Or perhaps such times of alienation were always accompanied by famine? In either case, people were in want. The longing for heavenly nourishment, for redemption from suffering, grew ever greater.

The prophesy had actually always been there—beginning with the words that came to Abraham from God: a great nation was to come forth from him, to be a blessing for the peoples of the earth (GEN 18.18).

It was also clear that the way of salvation for humankind led to a special, earthly human being

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who was to come from the tribe of Judah: 'The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until the leader comes, and the peoples shall follow him' (GEN. 49:10).

During the time of the great wanderings in the desert, the seer Balaam expressed it almost unwillingly: 'I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star shall arise out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the foreheads of the Moabites and the heads of all the sons of Sheth' (NUM. 24,17).

Later on, more things become clear. He will not only come from the tribe of Judah; he will be a descendant of the great King David who himself was regarded as the Anointed One, the Messiah, and hence as an eternal Lord and King: 'Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch. He shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land' (JER. 23:5).

All misfortunes will be turned away from the people, and all the godless peoples will be destroyed: 'My servant David shall be their king and their only shepherd. They shall walk in my righteousness and keep my commands' (EZEK. 37:24).

And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of insight and the fear of the Lord. And he shall delight in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, nor judge by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor and deal justly with the wretched on the earth; he shall strike the violent of the earth with the staff of his mouth and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the godless.

ISA. 11:2-4

Yes, all will be well when he comes: 'But it will not remain dark for those who are in fear. In former times he brought contempt upon the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but hereafter he will make glorious the way by the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, the Galilee of the heathen. The nation that walks in darkness sees a great light, and a light shines bright upon those who live in the deep darkness. You awaken great rejoicing, you increase their joy' (ISA. 9:1-3).

This expectation is quite concrete, and in the traditions there are many details of the dawning of a new, great age—such as that a virgin

will give birth: 'Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: see, a virgin shall conceive; she will bear a son, and shall call him Immanuel (ISA. 7:14).

The place of his origin, too, is foretold: 'And you, Bethlehem Ephra-
thah, who are little among the places of Judah, from you shall come
forth for me the one who is to be the ruler in Israel, whose origin is
from the beginning and who has been from eternity' (MIC. 5:2).

'Yes, all will be well when He comes, the redeemer, the...wonderful
counsellor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace: his government shall be
great, and on the throne of David and in his kingdom there shall be
never-ending peace, that he may strengthen and uphold it through
justice and righteousness from now on and for ever more. The zeal
of the Lord of hosts will do this (ISA. 9:7).

II

At what point do the people around Christ Jesus notice that a new
age has dawned? Do they actually notice it at all? Or, why do they so
often not notice it?

Perhaps it has to do with the expectations that the prophecies have
given rise to?

Although we live in a quite different age, let us nevertheless try to
imagine ourselves in the life situation of those people. We feel cut off
from all that made life meaningful in earlier times. We are not able
to re-enliven it in ourselves. We are living as strangers in our own
country. Strangers and strange customs control our living space. We
are oppressed, outwardly. We may also be suffering material want.
But at one time there was hope, and with all our strength we try not
to let it fade away entirely.

There will come One who will save us. He will take away all our
troubles. He will punish those who have brought them upon us. He
will make our life easy, will take it in hand for us, show us the right
ways to go, lead us and guide us. He will solve all our problems. A
leader...?

In view of what then happened, we must admit that the reality
of the incarnation of the Son of God does not correspond to our
expectations! We might perhaps have known that, for there are also

the prophecies according to which he is despised, persecuted, killed; according to which he falls in order to rise again.

‘He was the most despised and most worthless of all, full of pain and sickness. He was so despised that men hid their faces from him; that is why we did not respect him’ (ISA. 53:3).

Was he not going to ride into Jerusalem on a donkey, to enter into his sanctuary?

‘Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion, and exult, O daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you—a righteous benefactor, poor and riding on a donkey, on the foal of a donkey’ (ZECH. 9:9).

And was it not also a part of the prophetic message that he should be delivered over to torture and death?

‘He endured torture willingly and did not open his mouth, like a lamb that is led to the slaughter; and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers he did not open his mouth’ (ISA. 53:7).

Many details of the traditions do actually indicate that the very powerlessness of Jesus is the fulfilment of the prophecies—for example the apposite words in Psalms 22, 34 and 69.

But as contemporaries of Jesus, we have not so far been able to make much of this part of the prophecies. This weak, powerless person to be our saviour—how is that supposed to happen? Surely he is meant to defeat our enemies and reinstate the kingdom of God!

As a matter of fact, the people’s living conditions did not improve immediately after his death and Resurrection. And if one has built up hopeful, concrete expectations of effortless deliverance from misery it is particularly difficult to reach the insight that everything perhaps was meant quite differently!

III

When do we notice that a new age has begun? Do we actually notice it at all? To what extent are we, too, blind to that which has been sent to help us?

What a dreadful similarity of mood there is—everywhere alienation, powerlessness, material and soul-spiritual poverty. Disruption, divisions—even where all appears to be going well. Worse still, for there, when we engage our feelings more closely we become aware of

a yet deeper despair, particularly where we are among the supposedly privileged: we are in a position to know about the catastrophes everywhere, about the crises, the despair, the seemingly insoluble problems and conflicts throughout the world. Averting our gaze from all this signifies a lapse into sin...

Who or what can help us? What are our expectations?

How childishly we often react to the challenges of fate: obviously, others are to blame, possible solutions are self-evident to the simplistic mind, but those in charge are unwilling to apply them. Are they blind or malevolent? Are they remotely controlled by the adversary powers? We would certainly know how to handle it but we are not permitted...

Or: We never had a chance. Everything that would have empowered us has been taken from us...

Or: The power of evil is simply too great, so the only way is to inwardly withdraw into inner emigration—perhaps together with a number of chosen ones who also would know better; form a conspiracy of the enlightened...

We know all too well that these inner and outer strategies do little to further the progress of the world; that they make us emotionally driven and merciless towards those whom we suppose to be the root of the evil. In an age in which Christ wills to work in us, black-and-white ideologies no longer lead to the goal.

Perhaps we have to concede that we are part of the problem—just as we can also become part of the solution, the redemption? So what is our expectation of salvation?

IV

Do we notice that a new age dawned, long ago? What are we expecting from the birth of Christ in us? What form will our Christmas take in view of our expectations?

Up until now we have perhaps always imagined that at some point He will redeem us; that He will speak to us, enlighten us, move us—and that then all will be well. By itself, as it were. Without effort or exertion, without opposition or any hindrance. He will take us by the hand and lead us, spare us all difficulties.

As long as we live with the expectation that something will come from outside to save us, we are not really looking at that which already is, that which already is in becoming, that which can take hold of us in our hearts. Love is not wrong-headed—it is empathic, even when something does not match our expectations. Do we not often seek salvation in the wrong places?

Can we learn to look in a really positive way at that which is in becoming? To look without prejudice at our time, with all its challenges? That is the ‘task’ of our time, which alone enables each one of us, wherever we are, lovingly to make our contribution.

In the Apocalypse, the rider on the white horse, the King of all kings, and Ruler of all rulers (REV. 19:16), brings salvation; he bears a name which only he himself knows. Christ does not come as an outer authority to his brothers and sisters but rather as the one who speaks the ‘I’ in us. And Michael, the spirit of our time, also gives us only a ‘hint’: to follow the Christ as He is now. The overcoming of death through powerlessness: this is what is being revealed through Him. The new age dawned long ago. In that age, fully aware of our responsibility for the humanity of Man, we may co-operate effectively on redemption through the ‘I’. No one will come but He who speaks the ‘I’ in me.

Revelation, ordering of space, course of time

Are they being accomplished now?

Engelbert Fischer

The famous physicist Max Planck was once asked if he believed in a God. He is said to have replied that it was not a matter of belief; anyone who looks carefully and with precision at the phenomena of nature and then consistently follows his thoughts about them through to the end is bound to accept that in all this barely comprehensible diversity an all-sustaining and moving being must be at work. A cursory or superficial glance does not disclose it but to a lovingly attentive gaze each separate phenomenon reveals how much wisdom lies within it: be it a crystal, a sunflower, a housefly—whatever it may be. And the kind of thinking that is not content with quickfire theories but which thinks further, taking thoughts to their conclusion—such thinking recognizes how magnificently all the phenomena of nature and their life processes harmonise with one another and work together. Behind that there must be an all-embracing, all-sustaining Ground of Existence.

Various cultures know of such a Ground of Existence and name him in different ways. That, however, is not so important; it is always the same being who reveals himself in the multiplicity of the world's phenomena. The Koran, for instance, says, 'Allah has a hundred names.' This means that every individual thing in the world is a name of the Ground of Existence.

It is obvious then, that the wealth and multiplicity of revelations have to be ordered within space. After all, they must not merge with one another, cover each other up or become blurred and indistinct. In addition to Revelation there has to be the Ordering of Space. And as a necessary third factor, there has to be a

*Engelbert Fischer
was a priest in
Germany.
He died in 1918.*



reliable Course of Time, in order that the life-processes can take place: in growth, in flowering, in ripening and fading. And that, of course, is also how things are in our earthly world.

Initially, it is a surprising and unfamiliar thought that Revelation, the Ordering of Space and the Course of Time are not only already established facts—in the form outlined at the beginning of the Bible as the ‘creation of the world’—but that they are living accomplishments. A resolve of will that is not merely begun but is carried through to its aim is one that has been accomplished. But we don’t hear—in the Act of Consecration—about a divine being that carried out its will in a far distant past. Rather, we hear of One who accomplishes it now—also today, at the present time. This work goes on constantly.

A geographical picture may help to clarify this: as is well known, the River Jordan in Palestine flows into the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea lies in a rocky canyon, many metres below sea level. Hence the water cannot flow away, it can only evaporate. Now, there is an amazing equivalence between the amount of water that flows into the Dead Sea from the Jordan every day and the quantity that evaporates every day. So the Dead Sea grows neither larger nor smaller. Its shoreline is stable, as stable and dependable as a mineral or some other physical object. One might say: well, the Dead Sea is just there. Yes—but only because the Jordan constantly adds its water. If the inflow were to cease, the Dead Sea would soon no longer be a sea. In fact, in recent times attempts have actually been made to divert water from the Jordan for the purposes of irrigation; this disturbed the balance between inflow and evaporation with severe ecological consequences. In a similar way, the continuity and reliability of our whole earthly world would be endangered—into its very detail—were it not for a constant influx from out of the revelatory will of the Ground of the World, bringing order into space and into the course of time.

That is why Indian wisdom calls the world of the senses—which for many people actually represents all that there is—a *maya*, an illusion, which only gains its reality through these supersensible living deeds. If we dwell upon this thought for a while, and look at the ordinary world

around us and at ourselves while trying to grasp that here the Ground of the World is active everywhere, we may almost feel oppressed by it and grateful that we do not constantly have to see this invisible fullness of activity.

But recognizing an active Ground of the World by no means requires that such a One be called Father, nor does it justify addressing this Being as *You, Father*. In none of the great religions of the world is ‘turning to the Godhead’ regarded as ‘turning to the *Father*’—*only* in Christianity.

How then can Christians—going beyond turning with reverence to the Ground of the World—gain a relationship to him/it like that which a son or a daughter can have with a good father? That has become possible because a divine being, namely Christ, has come to us human beings. His bearing is like that of a son towards his father. Thereby he has opened the way for us, too: ‘No one comes to the Father, except by me,’ he says.

As creatures of nature, we human beings are of course also a revelation of the Ground of the World—indeed the highest thinkable in space and time: ‘an image in His likeness,’ as the Bible says. But it is up to us ourselves whether this gift of nature is developed further or not, because our ‘I’ substance gives us our freedom and self-responsibility—and out of that a higher quality of love. That is why we may in soul draw near to Christ, bringing him to life within us, and uniting with him, he who became Man. Through him and with him we can follow the path that leads us to the Ground of the World as ‘our Father.’ And that, in turn, opens up the possibility for us to overcome, before him, the separation and alienation brought about through sin. A new dimension of his revelation in space and time can become a reality—through our active cooperation.

It is good to free ourselves from the image of the benevolent old man on the heavenly throne and to consider instead the *relationship* between God and mankind. It then also is clear why we do not say ‘Our Mother’: a motherly relationship to a child simply is different from a fatherly one.

In the course of the Act of Consecration of Man the closeness to this Father grows; and (immediately before the Our Father, the Lord’s

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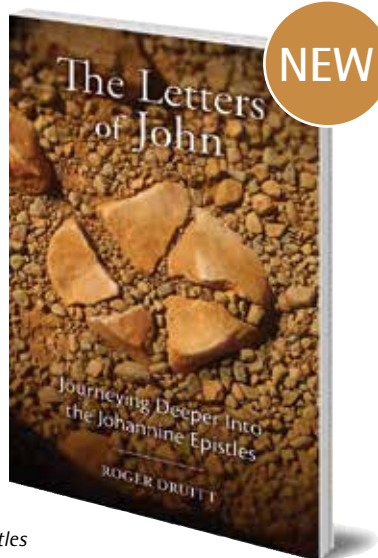
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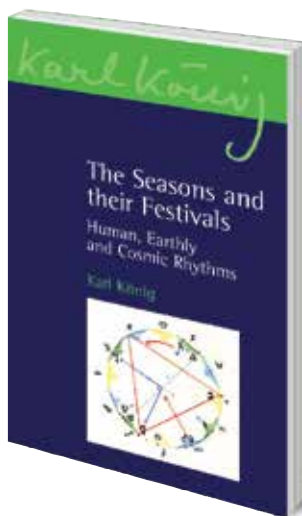


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Translated from: *Mitteilungen*, Johanni 2022 by Jon Madsen

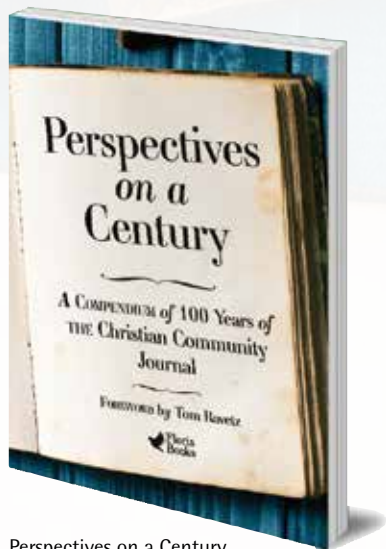
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