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The starting point of the Christian religion was an experience. Thomas said to Christ, 'My Lord and my God'. It was a long time before understanding caught up with this deeply felt response to the experience of the divine in a human being. Theology did not define experience, it followed from it. Anselm of Canterbury wrote: theology is belief seeking understanding. For Anselm, believing meant to experience something deeply. One of the greatest of all theologians, Origen, was able to leave space for unanswered questions. Theology was a quest.

However, as church history advanced, theology was pressed into the service of controlling what people believed. This had the gravest consequences once Constantine decided to use the Church to further his political purposes. In a letter to the Bishop of Alexandria, he made it clear that he hoped that the Church would bring harmony to his scattered empire. This meant that the seeking, sometimes

argumentative Church would need to agree on clear dogmas that would be enforced with the threat of excommunication, as happened at the Council of Nicea. Later in the fourth century, when Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire, diversity could not be tolerated. Theology was used to define who had the right beliefs and who was a 'heretic', with fatal consequences.

Rudolf Steiner, without whose help the founding of The Christian Community would not have been possible, referred to the founding priests as theologians, whether or not they happened to have studied that academic discipline. He made it clear that he hoped that a renewal of theology would flow from the renewal of religious life. Such a renewal would serve to deepen and enrich our experiences in worship and prayer. In a world which is ever more open for spiritual experience, but which rejects Christianity in part because of the heritage of dogmatic religion, our efforts to give our experiences of Christ expression might serve those who are seeking for him without even knowing it.

We hope that the articles in this will help you on your journey of experiencing and reflecting.

Tom Ravetz

The entrance to the holy city

A contemplation for Palm Sunday

All contemplations on the days of Holy Week in this issue are by Ioanna Panagiotopoulos, priest of The Christian Community in Canberra.

...Find that far inward symmetry to all outward appearances, apprentice yourself to yourself, begin to welcome back all you sent away, be a new annunciation, make yourself a door through which to be hospitable, even to the stranger in you.

FROM 'MAKE YOURSELE A DOOR' BY DAVID WHYTE



In life we encounter many doors.

Doors lead us out into new encounters in the world. Sometimes they lead us back home to what we know, to people that we know and care for.

At other times, life can place before our being an opportunity, a different kind of door, and we can only know what lies beyond this door if we find a way to walk through it, despite not knowing what we meet on the other side.

At the threshold of Holy Week we stand before such a door.

Between Palm Sunday and Easter, between the day of the Sun to the following day of the Sun, it would shine into us from either side, the one transforming into the other.

We can also call it Life.

For the threshold leads through pain of death to a place not yet formed; to a self, not yet fashioned; the Holy Jerusalem, not quite a place, rather, a condition within us, where the bright transparency of our transformed soul allows for the indwelling of the divine in us, *shining in all that we behold*.

How do we prepare ourselves to walk through such a door when we sense what it takes to walk the path beyond: trial, tyranny, mockery, betrayal and pain?

To enter any holy place, we array ourselves in our best. But for the inner place we can take no garment, no title, no adornment—only a substance out of which we could form and fashion anew. To fashion anything in life, warmth is needed. The spark of inspiration, the warmth of our hands, the fire of our will.

And there is no power that makes sacred but the power of love.

At the threshold of Holy Week, on the way to the cross, it is love that burns in the place of the human heart, through which we find the courage to walk through the door, through the gate to the Holy City. It is the fire of love in whose face the tyranny can melt into ash; it is love, refashioning even darkness itself into light.

Artwork: *The Door* by Helene Schjerfbec

Georges Rouault

Deborah Ravetz

Wherever there is evil, grace abides in abundance.

GUSTAVE MOREAU

My objective is to paint a Christ so moving that all who see him will be converted.

GEORGES ROUAULT

Georges Rouault (1871–1958) began his working life as a craftsman apprenticed to a workshop replacing the stained glass at Saint-Séverin, a Gothic church in the heart of Paris. When he made the step from craft to creative invention, this sensitive transition was fostered by his remarkable teacher, Gustave Moreau. He likened his teacher to the Good Samaritan whom he experienced as bending over him with love and care.

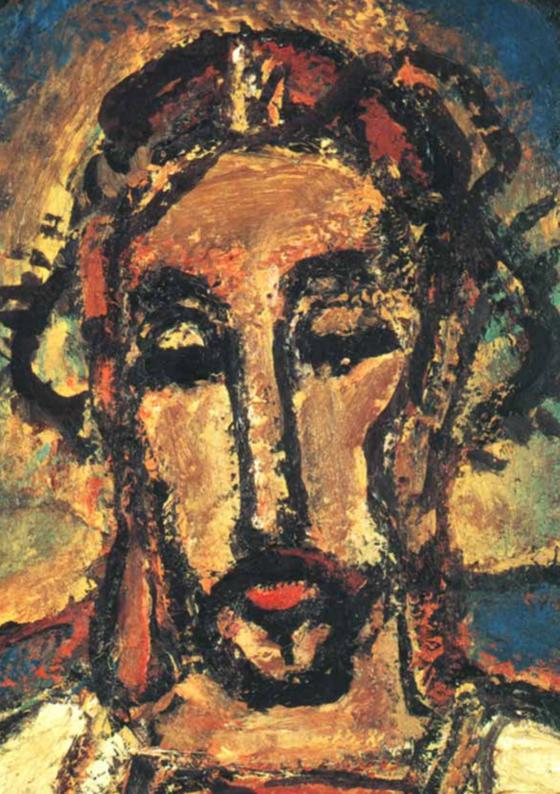
At the time Moreau's teaching was considered revolutionary and dangerous. He had broken away from the dead obsession with academic drawing, encouraging his students to cultivate work that made visible the mysteries of their own inner lives. One of Rouault's contemporaries called this the cultivation of the enthusiasm of their entirely individual hearts.

Moreau was an illustrator of biblical and mythological figures. It was his teaching and his subject matter that enabled Rouault to harness the power of spiritual symbols in his own work.

Until he met Moreau, Rouault had felt surrounded by an unreal world governed by mediocrity and ambition. In Moreau he met someone he found genuine and real. The education he received under his tutelage,

both artistic and intellectual, left him with the conviction that his work must be imbued with the entirety of his spiritual life. Brought up a Protestant, when he was twenty he met a Catholic monk from whom he was able to receive instruction in the Catholic Church and to take his first communion.

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Two events laid the foundation of what he was to become. He was exposed to the art of Cezanne, who used colour to create form, as the stained glass windows had done. Rouault's conversion to a sincere and loving relationship with Christ and this new-found freedom in making work that was liberated from surface realism meant that he was to become one of the greatest religious painters of his time.

This was a time in which it was deeply unfashionable to have any faith. Rouault's way of interpreting the Christian story, using these ancient images and symbols and filling them with the experience of the modern human being, made him part of the revival of the relevance of Christianity in France after the First World War.

Rouault was working at a time which gave birth to many modern movements both in terms of politics and art. He was at heart an expressionist believing in the communication of truth rather than surface beauty. Expressionism was really taken up in France as it was in Norway and Germany. This in part contributed to the fact that Rouault remained a solitary man, creating work that embodied what he believed.

Artists often turned to the bordello or the commedia dell'arte to find subjects for their work. Rouault also did this though he did not wish his work to have the quality of the eyewitness.

When he painted a prostitute she was not a particular prostitute, she was the archetype of her profession. As Christ saw such women, so did Rouault. She was not an object of indifference and scorn. Instead she was an object of his empathy and compassion. In this image she sits before the mirror preparing her hair. She is not seductive or coquettish, she is unbearably lonely, tired and sad. His painting is denouncing those who would use her. We do not want to exploit her, we want to comfort her and protect her vulnerable and naked body.

Roaualt saw all of life as a mystery drama. His beliefs were being played out in front of his eyes and in his own soul. Each of us has to struggle to decide which part of ourselves will be our master. Knowledge of human weakness did not make him cynical or judgemental. Our frailty and our battle to achieve goodness is what connects us. He

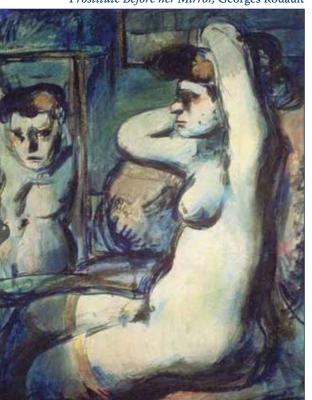
was loving and magnanimous in the face of all of our struggles but he was also unflinchingly honest in the face of hypocrisy.

Usually artists use dark and light to depict form. In Roault's work it is used to express the deep emotions he feels in the face of our individual struggle for good.

When he painted the life and death of Christ he did not see this as a faraway story belonging only to the realm of theology. He saw these stories mirrored in our lives. Of the crucifixion he said that every man shall know at one time the perpetual agony of Christ. He believed that this story was part of the reality of being human. There were no good people or bad people; we were all capable of the sublime and the grotesque.

Looking at the images *Christ Mocked, The Crucifixion* and *Head of Christ* we can experience an economy of gesture. Only the most essential forms are used. They are formal and stylized and have a quality of absolute stillness. Roaualt creates his own inner space by painting the image with no plane in front of the subject so that we are immediately immersed in the world of this story.

Prostitute Before her Mirror, Georges Rouault



The jewel-like colours and the use of the strong black line to construct the images remind us of his first work, restoring the glass windows in an ancient church. The paintings have a visionary quality reconnecting us to the poetic and dramatic function of art. We experience how in the Head of Christ the figure looks inward. The images are not big but they possess majesty and greatness. We are looking at the one who has suffered every pain, who will suffer all pain to come and who through this pain has opened the door to our healing and redemption.

Monday

He is the sun, and when the sun rises, the moon perforce grows pale.

EMIL BOCK

Monday is the day of the Moon.

Our Moon undergoes many phases in her cyclical course; her many phases influence the mood of the waters of our world—rising and falling, entreating, retreating. Like a bright eye in the night, she shows us the brightness she has received from the sun, even as she carries a body of hard darkness.

Our human soul is as vast as the universe. Like the moon, our soul undergoes manifold cycles and phases; rising in fulness and joy, falling in depths of sorrow and despair; entreating towards insight and action, retreating in doubt and weakness. We too experience the illumination of our higher values even as we inwardly house a body of hardness built up over time, over the errors of our life choices, our betrayals, our humiliations, our pain.

As we move through Holy Week and open the ear of our heart to what weaves and works through the soul of the world, we can feel—there is a turning of the tides in us too. A presence moves through the hardness, the darkness of this world, to fill every crevice and crack and fissure with sun-power.

On the way to the Cross, we can choose: our heart may remain like the moon—harbouring darkness and pain, waiting for illumination; or, it can, through the conscious knowing of what passes in our midst, become as the Sun—light-giving, warmbearing, constant in deeds of love and offering, that heal and clarify the many ups and downs, rises and falls of our soul, of our world.

He is the sun, and when the sun rises, the moon perforce grows pale.

Emil Bock

Tuesday

To work upon one's soul demands the greatest courage.

EMIL BOCK, The Three Years

No matter how deeply we may long for a state of constancy and peace, the way of the world is such that as soon as we grow accustomed to it, the tremble of conflict erupts through the boundary of our life, the swords become unsheathed, and in the blink of an eye, our peace has been shattered by the clash of conflict.

Tuesday is the day of Mars—Ares—the ancient God of War. Feared and despised throughout time, he is also the great awakener. For in his presence, are we not forced to consider—was it really peace, or were we simply asleep?

We human beings are truly as vast as the universe. We are sleeping so long as we do not recognise that every battle that is being waged today exists also in the burning heart of us all. The personal stages of conflict play out within us as the war plays out around us: the denial of another, the demonisation, assembling the armies of support, and finally, seeking to stamp out the existence of the other—through banishment, through a breaking of the bond that once held us together. To what end?

Autumn's conflict clothes everything in red. The deep impenetrable green of late summer cannot let anything new emerge. But the fire of autumn's red will burn what has run its course—what has fallen to sleep—and burn its way to ash. It will leave a glowing emptiness where a new revelation of nature will emerge.

And so we confront the great awakener of battle and conflict. Just as the great Sun-star passes in the midst of the circling planets and meets the fire of Mars, so too in our inner life, the Being who makes His way through the raging conflict of Holy Week is as the Sun—bestowing, not weapons of earth—but weapons of the Spirit.

He bestows the Sword of the Spirit, that pierces the flame and haze of battle and bestows Truth—that behind every working of our life, every turning of the inner tide, the constant, ever-present existence of the creative Spirit rests. His light is the armour through which true peace can come to human beings. The peace that is graced when we have truly understood that the Christ-in-Us all would enter, awaken, speak, and reveal within the raging, battling heart of humankind.

And the nature of His revelation is thus:

I do not fight my fellow human beings. I lay down my life for them.

'You cannot fail!'

On the 'gold standard' of the sacraments George Dreissig

Destiny decreed that Friedrich Rittelmeyer was not able to take part in the first two lecture courses which Rudolf Steiner held to prepare for the founding of The Christian Community. The divine world had arranged things so that he would have to find his own way to experience the reality of the renewed sacraments. He paved the way for the stream of religious renewal to enter humanity in a very personal way.

One year before the founding of The Christian Community, on October 6 and 7, 1921, Rudolf Steiner read the four main parts of the Act of Consecration of Man to those gathered for the second 'theologians' course', at the first Goetheanum in Dornach. Friedrich Rittelmeyer did not witness this, but he was sent a copy of the text of the service. This written text was enough for this Protestant pastor, who was well versed in meditation, to enter the realm in which the founding of The Christian Community was being prepared in the spiritual world. He later described this in his book *Rudolf Steiner Enters My Life* as follows:

'The text of the Act of Consecration of Man was sent to me. I immediately began to think it through thoroughly from all angles and took it up in meditation. After a few minor language difficulties had been overcome, the pure, high spirit of the Act of Consecration of Man had a very strong effect on me. I began to have an inkling that a service could be created here in which all true Christians could be united, which could be regarded as the centre of a truly Christian community life,

around which a new, diverse, ever-growing religious life would unfold. Slowly the impression arose in me: This must not be withheld from humanity! You cannot fail now if you do not want to incur a great debt towards humanity and towards the revelation of the divine world itself! And if it is not possible to bring this

Georg Dreissig is priest emeritus of The Christian Community, living in Berlin. to humanity through the existing ecclesiastical forms, then we must dare to try something new!'

I would like to draw particular attention to two things here. The first is that Rittelmeyer knows that he is not merely dealing with a text, but that he is encountering a being: the 'pure, high spirit of the Act of Consecration of Man.' The second is his experience that he himself is affected, that he feels the responsibility that lies in this encounter and revelation: 'You cannot fail!'

Rittelmeyer's further remarks on the presence of Christ in the Act of Consecration of Man are also very touching and worth reading. In this context, it is worth quoting the consequences that this experience had for Rittelmeyer: 'That I had to be there for the reality that had opened up to me, without any hindrances through other ties—that was clear from that moment. That is how I came to the new Christian Community from the very centre. And I am glad that I can say this. It was not Rudolf Steiner who gave the last word, but a higher being.'

The last word of a higher being became a first word: Friedrich Rittelmeyer describes his calling to the priesthood out of the Act of Consecration of Man by the 'pure, high spirit of the Act of Consecration of Man'. He formulated this call himself, albeit as if another were speaking to him: 'You yourself must not fail now.' This is how the spiritual world speaks to us, this is how we understand divine beings: we take into our I what flows out of their being as an impulse of will, as if it were our very own, and grasp it by formulating it ourselves and thus elevating it to conceptual and mental clarity. I make a commitment to what has revealed itself to me as if it had flowed out of my own will.

The gold standard of the rituals

Friedrich Rittelmeyer had the decisive experience of being called by the spiritual being of the Act of Consecration of Man even before the Act of Consecration of Man was celebrated on earth. He experienced it as a reality in the spirit and he then brought this reality into his celebration on earth. Since the founding, this reality has been able to indwell all the rituals when they are celebrated on earth. This

turns the images of the ritual into living, effective realities. To use an image drawn from the realm of finance, the rituals are a kind of currency, and the spiritual world provides the backing, the promise that their value will be redeemed.

It is crucial that we also consider a second way in which the sacraments have this backing: our own actions. However noble and sublime the spiritual radiance of the Act of Consecration of Man may be, it would be meaningless for the earth if people were not to awaken to their own impulses of will, take hold of them and in this way incorporate into earthly reality what shines forth as a possibility in heaven. Friedrich Rittelmeyer understood this immediately and willingly sacrificed the security of his life as a well-paid Protestant pastor, a position he had worked hard to achieve, in that moment.

What surged up to his 'I' through his powerful experience works on today. When The Christian Community was founded, we should not imagine that its reality in the spiritual world had been exchanged for an outwardly perceptible cultic act—a thing. It resonates through the outer appearance of the sacraments, is present in them, works in them today as truly and vividly as when it touched Rittelmeyer. The rituals are heaven on earth. Supersensible and sense-perceptible reality are one. This process of unification touches every human being and, through our activity, it touches creation as a whole. This reality surges up in the 'I' of everyone who takes part in the service. What becomes of it? How does the I respond to this experience?

We are confronted with the challenge of following the path that Rittelmeyer took in the opposite direction: from the conceptual and intellectual clarity of what is said in the sacraments to the experience that what unfolds around us in word, image and deed speaks to our innermost being, that it affects us deeply. We too can feel the encounter with a spiritual being that awakens our sense of responsibility: 'You cannot fail!'

Being awake to the presence of the spirit gives the sacraments their gold backing from the human side. When this experience occurs, the celebration of the sacraments is real right into its sense-perceptible appearance; then it can unfold its power to bless.

Wednesday

When Jesus was in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster jar of the most precious ointment; and she poured it on his head as he sat at table.

'By anointing my body she has prepared me for burial. Yes, I say to you, wherever in the whole world this Gospel is proclaimed, what she has done will be told and her memory will be honoured.'

FROM THE 26th Chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew

In the middle of Holy Week, Wednesday, we are reminded of the one whose ancient mission was to be the Messenger of the Gods—Mercury—Hermes. This god, whose feet are endowed with wings in order that the messages from the spiritual realms can swiftly move through the portals and reach human ears, brings all things into movement. Winging through the element of air, he bears the healing staff whose symbol entwines the realms above with the realms below.

In stark contrast to his ancient liveliness, the words of our passiontide epistle still ring to us:

You have lost the spirit that wakens you.

Who will weep for the spirit-forsaken human soul?

For indeed, do we not see the human soul entombed in the spheres of modern life—within our education, within our culture, in our politics, in our economics of greed? Our human soul, no longer moved by the wings of the spirit of the past, is fallen into the immovable, death-bearing element of a spirit-less earth. This element dimly glows with the dull blue hue of fixed and fearful thoughts; of emotionless and intellectual gazing at the tragedies of others; of a will paralysed by the stone-dint fixation of preserving physical and mental comfort within our communities.

Who will awaken for the spirit-forsaken human soul?

In the middle of Holy Week, we can feel the tension of this day—whose name Mercury is synonymous with movement and healing—erupt in the rock-hard hearts of the chief priests and elders of the people of the day, like a shadow of the true impulse of healing. We are brought, into the shadow expression of healing—that of destruction. For today is the day of the plot to destroy Jesus by those very elders who lead the people. Today is the day of the betrayal.

But, the human being is as vast as the universe. Out of the immeasurable depths of us, a strength and a power can emerge. We feel it, we hear it, as the one within us who says *no* to the wilful destruction of another human being, no matter how justified it may appear; who says *no* to the ideas that abound which fix us to only the material realities of our life.

This emerging power is the one in us who, feeling, senses on the day of dark choices for humanity, a new message from the depths of the human heart. The heavenly healing staff of Mercury is endowed with a new power—the art of hallowing.

Who will act for the spirit-forsaken human soul?

Mary Magdalene, in the midst of human darkness, does not argue, does not take sides, does not form opinions or try to fix what stirs as dark intent

She moves in silence through the shadows of the world with one intent—to make sacred, to anoint and consecrate the One who, in two days time, will be nailed to the Cross.

Out of the depths of our being, the Mary-in-Us can emerge with a new-found power — through the freedom-wrested wings of the human heart — the power to Hallow the darkness and the pain. Its fragrance will fill our forsaken grave of the soul with the promise of the new; it will transpose the ancient lost spiritual heritage of humankind with the present, living, breathing, hallowing power of the One whose death makes all things new.

Maundy Thursday

This is the commandment I put before you, that you love one another as I have loved you. No human being can have greater love than this, that he offer up his life for his friends. You are my friends if you strive after the aim I set you.

FROM THE 15TH CHAPTER OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

The word 'Maundy' comes from the Latin *mandatum*, meaning command, order. We are not unfamiliar with this word today. For some, a mandate is something to be obeyed without question. For others, something to simply endure. Yet for others, it is something to defy, if it does not meet with an inner accord.

In the course of our human journey, we once lived without question in the command of the gods. When humanity was still young, the world's wisdom erupted with merciless power through the hand of the god of Thursday: Jupiter—Zeus. When lightning strikes through his hand, the very rocks can shatter. Ancient wisdom is law, and human beings once lived in awe of his mysteries, of his Wisdom, and sought to order life in accord with his commands. Holding the world-globe in his hand, his farreaching gaze holds dominion over the skies while keeping earthly human affairs tightly in his grasp.

But the gods of old are silenced with the turning tide of human destiny. A warming light moves through time, sun-filled, to eclipse the cold and merciless flashes of Jupiter's lightning. As we walk these autumn days of the Passion, and perceive the amber glow that has transposed the bright late summer light into liquid warmth, a new order, a new command can light up in us. It will meet with no discord, for it is no mandatum of an abstract world—for it is an inner fulfilment of our destiny.

This Maundy Thursday, the warming light that has approached us through the folds of time can reach our time today. The old holding of the globe of Earth in the hand of a commanding god has ceased.

In that intimate circle of friends at the Last Supper, the globe of the world is renewed into a vessel; a chalice, ready to receive the Spirit-Sun; ready to glow in the amber light of the approaching deed of Golgotha.

It will be filled with no order but the order of wilful sacrifice. He who holds today the vessel of the world, fills it with the substance of his own healing being. Love is the new meaning of the Earth, to which every human heart can speak 'yes'. Its power is strong enough to shatter rocks—the stony walls of the hardened human heart. Thus love can now order our world, heart, like an overflowing cup, warming and brightening all who receive it.

Fire and flame

Engelbert Fischer

All smokers carry their lighter, their own fire, in their pocket. A flick of the thumb brings about the wonder: the appearing—the epiphany—of fire, in the form of a flame. In human hands fire can become a flame. The flame can be extinguished—not so the fire.

In the story of creation, the kingdoms of nature are mentioned: earth, water, air, stone, plant, animal and the human form. Everything in the world is named—everything in the world which has become earthly and visible as a revelation of the divine creating will and which has been given into human hands and responsibility. But about fire, not a word. The fire of His love, creative of Being, remained God's.

It needed one who could 'think ahead'—a Pro-metheus: 'fore-thinker'—to audaciously steal the eternal fire out of the hand of God and make it appear in human hands as temporal and active flames. This made tremendous cultural feats possible—but also devastating destruction.

The difference between the eternal fire of the divine creative will and the worldly flames also needs to be borne in mind when we consider the Whitsun event. 'Behold the flames', says the Act of Consecration. 'They are the revelation of the spirit'. And: the flames stream heavenward; they stream heavenward from human hearts.

The Acts of the Apostles tells of how God's fire, creative of the Being of worlds—the fire of the Holy Spirit—is now given to human beings: it no longer has to be stolen. In their hearts it becomes indi-

vidual flames to be perceived above their heads. The fire, earthward; the flames, heavenward.

But these flames do not destroy. They bring forth a new kind of being: the creator-will arrives among human beings. Through the loss of the tangible presence of the Risen One for ten days after his Ascension, and through their prayerful schooling in longing for the coming of the promised Holy Spirit, the hearts of Engelbert
Fischer was a
priest of The
Christian
Community in
Germany. He
died in 2018.

the disciples had been prepared so that the fire could become a flame. Others were not yet prepared at that time, they even mocked.

In devoutly seeking to unite with Christ's offering as we offer our soul forces to the Ground of the World, we too prepare ourselves in the Act of Consecration to receive the fire of God, creative of Being. If it can become a flame in our hearts, we too can gain just a modest share in the creation of a new, timeless World Being.

From: Mitteilungen 2021



Head of Christ, Georges Rouault

Raphael and the beloved disciple

Rory Valentine

This essay is a study of Raphael's Cartoon 1515, known as Christ's Charge to Peter, which has as its subject matter the final scene from the Gospel of St John.

The beloved disciple

The gospel of St John is unique in having a number of references to a certain disciple whom Jesus loves. These begin at the heart of the gospel around the event of the Raising of Lazarus, we next hear of him at the Last Supper, then as being with the women at the foot of the cross, following this at Christ's tomb with Peter. He last appears as a witness to the Risen Christ on the shores of Galilee in that sublime and mysterious final chapter where we learn that it is he who writes the words we are reading—that it is he who must hold the title 'John the Evangelist'. This final scene stands significantly at the very close of the epic journey through the four gospels, a scene which leads out and away into the future, for it tells that the relationship with the Resurrected Christ is ongoing—a beginning rather than an ending.

In the last years of his short life Raphael paints four of the above five scenes. The first is the gospel scene mentioned above, known as Christ's Charge to Peter 1514–15; next, commissioned in 1515–16 is a Bearing of the Cross picture known as The Ascent to Calvary. There is also a less well-known Last Supper in Raphael's frescos in the Villa Farnesina. The painter's final work, The Transfiguration 1517–20, was from the

outset intimately related to the Raising of Lazarus.¹ The study of Raphael's portrayals of the Beloved Disciple can, I believe, open up new understanding both of his work in general and of the very theology that underlies the particular scenes he paints. It is in the picture of our focus here, more than any other, that Raphael directly approaches the Beloved Disciple.

Rory Valentine is a member of The Christian Community in Buckfastleigh.

The cartoons

In Rome, in 1514, one of the great commissions in the history of art was given to Raphael. The commission was for ten scenes from the lives of Saints Peter and Paul; they were to be painted on paper—in full colour and detail, no mean achievement in itself as some of these pictures are over five metres long by nearly four metres high, rendering the foreground figures larger than life size. As these cartoons were completed they were sent to the workshops of Pieter van Aelst in Brussels where they were cut into strips and placed under the warp threads of huge looms; the busy hands of the weavers then transposed the pictures into tapestries of the highest quality—they were to hang in the Sistine Chapel. However, so very much was lost in the translation between the mediums of the cartoon and the tapestry.² The world is very fortunate that the cartoons, which were essentially disposable once they had served their purpose as templates, were mostly rescued and are now part of the British Royal Collection.³



Figure 1: Christ's Charge to Peter²

Christ appears to the seven

In order to enter into the picture, the text from John 21 needs to be ever fresh in the foreground as the painter works so closely with it, both in mood and letter:

Later on, Jesus showed himself again to his disciples on the shore of Lake Tiberius and it was in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas (called the twin), Nathaniel from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two other disciples were together... John 21:1–2.

There then follows a night-long unsuccessful fishing trip; as dawn is breaking a lone figure on the beach calls out and instructs them where to cast their net. As a result of this a mighty catch of 153 fish is immediately taken. The mysterious figure on the shore is then recognised:

That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!'

JOHN 21:7-25

With this sudden mention of the Beloved Disciple we can realise that some detective work is required of us if we wish to go more deeply into the mystery of his identity. On disembarking the disciples find that a charcoal fire with fish and bread has been prepared for them (what a welcome sight this would have been for the cold, tired and hungry fishermen!). Spirit and matter blend seamlessly here, both in this picture and the gospel account which inspired it. There follows the breakfast, after which come Christ's threefold question and instruction, or 'Charge to Peter,' to tend the flock. Immediately following this comes the passage:

Then Peter turned around and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following behind them (he was the one who had laid his head on Jesus' breast at supper and asked him, Who is the one to betray you?) so Peter said, Yes Lord, but what about him? If it is my wish, returned Jesus, for him to stay until I come is that your business Peter? You must follow me...

...Now it is this same disciple who is hereby giving his testimony to these things and has written them down. We know his witness

is reliable. Of course there are many things which Jesus did and I suppose that if each were written down the world could not contain the books that would have to be written.

No matter what our personal beliefs may or may not be, we can all perhaps appreciate the telling of a good story—and this story with its intermingling of sharp detail with events that are completely out of the range of everyday experience, is a work of masterful storytelling. But who is it that is telling the story? It clearly states that it is this nameless disciple whom Jesus loves, he whom Christian theology more or less universally insists to be the fisherman John who is the brother of James (together being 'the sons of Zebedee'). This view is certainly not confirmed by the gospel passage above. The mystery of the identity of the Beloved Disciple, however, is confirmed. It is a mystery which can only be explored by the careful reading of the John Gospel, for it is only here that any direct reference is given to this disciple.

In the picture we notice a centrally placed figure in prominent red with a green undergarment stepping forward. He is the only one of the assembled disciples who can be said to be actively following Christ. The picture seems to capture the moment just before:

Peter turned around and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following...

The importance of this phrase is emphasised by Raphael having put the Beloved Disciple in the geometric centre of the picture, the undertone being that it is he alone who has achieved the ability to truly follow the Christ; he alone who has this active forward direction. And how has Raphael depicted him? He is shown as a golden haired, beardless youth of ambiguous gender who wears fine pleated, hemmed and tailored clothes which further single him out; it is also notable that Christ, although pointing down to the kneeling Peter, looks towards him.

Seven and eleven

We note that seven disciples are mentioned as being present in the gospel passage. Raphael gives us eleven, with the seven presumably being those nearest to Christ. Moving from left to right there is perhaps a *threshold*

of recognition of the presence of the Risen Christ, which has as its marker the background buildings and tower. Beneath this are two disciples, one of whom stands stopped in his tracks with his right hand to his heart, the other facing forward but with head turned back. These two can be seen as being on the threshold behind which stand the four *doubters*: the four who make up the eleven but are peripheral to the scene. We can be confirmed in this view by remembering that there is another gospel account of a meeting with the Resurrected Christ in Galilee:

But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him they worshipped him; but some doubted.

MATT 28:16-17

The figure standing stopped in his tracks seems to play a pivotal role in the picture (fig. 2); here on the threshold, one behind and the other in front of him, two disciples appear to be in dispute, one of whom has his head turned back to face another whose feet are turned ready to leave the group. But just what is in dispute? What is the closed book being held? It is tempting to see it as representing that which belongs to the past; he embodies, in countenance and gesture, that moment of turning back at the life-changing threshold.

Nathaniel

One of the seven mentioned as being present on the night fishing trip is Nathaniel. He is perhaps a surprising inclusion—not named as having been one of the twelve⁴, not mentioned in any other but the John gospel, and then appearing just once before this in its first chapter:

Philip went to find Nathaniel and told him, 'We have met the man



Figure 2

spoken of by Moses ... and by the prophets: it is Jesus, son of Joseph from Nazareth.' Nazareth?' exclaimed Nathaniel, 'Can anything good come from Nazareth?' Philip said 'Come and see'.

When Jesus saw Nathaniel coming, he said, 'Here is an Israelite worthy of the name; there is nothing false in him.' Nathaniel asked him, 'How do you come to know me?' Jesus replied, 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip spoke to you.'

'Rabbi,' said Nathaniel, 'You are the son of God; you are King of Israel!'

John 1:45–49.

Jesus said that he 'saw' Nathaniel *sitting under the fig tree:* many commentators point to the similarity of this phrase to that of the Eastern meditative path of initiation, of *sitting under the bodhi tree.* That Jesus so readily and completely recognises Nathaniel's high spiritual standing, that he is a *true Israelite*, ⁵ prompts Nathaniel's realisation that it is the Messiah who addresses him. This recognition places Nathaniel among the first to proclaim Jesus to be the Christ; as such it would be surprising if he were not to become a prominent disciple.

So how does Raphael deal with the depiction of Nathaniel? I suspect that Raphael had in mind the previously mentioned one who stands stopped in his tracks, hand to heart. The crucial words of Philip to 'come and see' reach their full, astounding conclusion here in this gospel scene. Nathaniel is named as being present as witness to the Risen One but surely to be witness here means to be able to 'see', not with the



eyes but with that organ of perception of the spirit which is the human heart?

As to whether or not Raphael had Nathaniel or perhaps Thomas in mind for this Figure 3

pivotal character is not known and good argument can be made for either case. There is however, another of the seven depicted who seems to fit the role of Thomas more strongly, this being the full-bearded man above Peter (fig. 3); he has a hand outstretched towards Christ, as though to want to test the nature of the reality of the figure before him. This gesture of reaching out to touch the Risen One also, of course, carries a compelling echo of Thomas's statement about not being willing to believe unless he can touch the wounds of the Resurrected Christ.

Naming and moods of soul

A valid and perhaps natural starting point for exploration of these pictures is to go with the somewhat subconscious tendency to treat them as though they were photographs of the actual scene itself—such is the power of Raphael's characterisation. If, however, we wish to enter more deeply into the images it is, I think, vital to attempt to identify the mood of soul being expressed by the characters; then the naming of characters becomes secondary and a useful reference in sharing and talking about the pictures. For example, it is not enough to say that the character named above as Thomas looks 'doubtful'—his mood surely goes beyond doubt, just as Thomas had by the time of this scene; he knows that Christ is before him but reaches out to understand the nature of His presence—of His new reality—as well he might! Does Raphael here show Thomas' persistent enquiry to be a valid way of approaching closer to Christ? One of the great gifts of this picture is that in his depiction of the Beloved, Raphael shows, by gesture, the mood of soul of one who is obeying the instruction of Christ to 'follow me'.

The sons of Zebedee

Raphael has perhaps depicted these brothers with heads together (fig. 3) directly behind the advancing Beloved Disciple, with James being behind his brother John. If this is the case, it is notable that Raphael has painted the profiles of John and the advancing Beloved Disciple as sharing similar features and that the hand placed between them serves to make a distinction between them. If this hand is given importance it adds breadth of meaning to the dispute between its owner and the disciple he turns towards, it becomes a dispute over identity; this



Figure 4

question of identity, mentioned earlier, existing between the Beloved Disciple and John Zebedee seems clearly known by Raphael. The painter places these two characters in close relationship to each other, both by the similarity of

their profiles and by the sharing of *higher ground* (fig. 4). If attention is turned to the feet of the Beloved Disciple it can be noted that the way the shadow has been painted, with a curling lip, has the effect of showing his right foot to be on elevated ground which is also shared by a foot of John Zebedee. Here we may also ask: is there an echo of the bindings of Lazarus in the footwear of the Beloved?

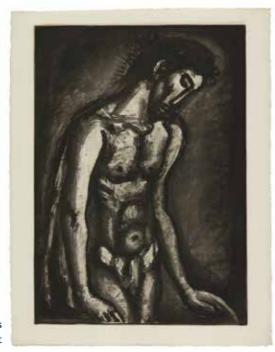
In another of the cartoons, *The Healing of the Lame Man*,⁶ Raphael paints a chronologically later scene from Acts 3 in which, soon after Pentecost, Peter and 'John' carry out a miraculous healing. Raphael gives to John the same clothing and characteristics as he gives to the Beloved Disciple in the picture we are studying. One can conclude that, for Raphael, a mystery uniting these two separate beings does occur: that the Beloved 'lives in' John Zebedee but retains his own individuality. We also realise that what lives in the gospel name 'John' needs a fluidity of comprehension that we are not accustomed to give to a name, the purpose of which, we assume, is solely to give separate identity to that which is named. Surely herein lies one of deepest mysteries of the Gospel of St John?

In the next issue we will look at the striking background of the picture, the scene of destruction, and ask, What are you doing here, Raphael?

Photographic credits:

Raphael, Christ's Charge to Peter Main picture & details © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

- 1 The Transfiguration commission was one of a pair of altar paintings for the Cathedral of Narbonne, the other being The Raising of Lazarus painted by Sebastiano del Piombo.
- 2 The process of weaving the tapestries rendered Raphael's cartoons to be reproduced in fabric with left and right orientation reversed. This meant that the artist had to produce the cartoon in mirror image in order that the tapestry should represent the scene according to his final intention. In view of the importance of Left/Right to artistic composition the difficult decision was made to present the pictures in this publication that they may be viewed with Raphael's final intention in mind.
- 3 They can be seen in the Raphael Room of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
- 4 Some commentators hold that he is synonymous with the disciple Bartholomew.
- 5 Rudolf Steiner refers to the importance of the designation true Israelite in the third lecture of the cycle on the Gospel of St John.
- 6 The Healing of the Lame Man can be viewed in fine detail on the website of the V&A Museum. Ref: The Raphael Cartoons.



Miserere Georges Rouault



Good Friday

Then darkness came upon the whole earth until the ninth hour. The Sun failed.

Luke 23:44

See, that is your mother. John 19:27

Throughout time, the feminine Goddess, the mother, has revealed herself to human beings with manifold garments through which we can glimpse the activity of her spheres.

As the primal 'mater', she is mother of all creation; as Urania, the celestial goddess of the stars. We have seen her as the Purifier of the Waters, the one who brings all human souls to birth out of the waters of the human womb. We encounter her as Natura, the beautiful one who walks the Earth and causes to rise the fresh green growth from the ground of being. She has presided over all affairs of the human heart, all desire, beauty, and love.

Today, on this Friday, once attributed only to her, the goddess must witness all beauty turn to mocking hatred; all blessing profaned by violent judgement; all desire burn with selfish, sel-serving intent; all the colours of the human soul sink into blackness.

And yet, she remains.

The darkness of this day is the backdrop by which the highest, most hallowed art of love can emerge.

For in truth, can love be called love, when it remains in our feeling as the early joy of encounter and pursuit, of comfort-seeking

Opposite page: Crucifixion, Georges Rouault

bliss and unending happiness? Through these feelings, we may encounter the beginnings of our humanity. But the old gods fade, and but a seed of them remains in the waters of memory.

Such a seed breaks in the heart of the one who follows the events of Good Friday in lamentation; who finds the endurance to stand beneath the Cross; who holds the body of the One whom she has birthed—and delivers Him to His grave.

She lives in us. She is both our heritage and our future. She is the one who evolved from the young origin of the world's beauty, the soul's desire, into the black-shrouded Mother who must comprehend the meaning of death and love.

When love's early joys fade into the hardship and trials that confront our world today, we can remember and renew the greatest act of love for humankind.

The black-cloaked Mother purifies the waters of our grief, and through their clarity, like a balm, we can see reflected there the never-ending waves of the deed of Christ on this day.

He does not turn away when mocked; does not accuse when denied; He does not condemn when beaten and betrayed.

Our soul is born of her who understood it. Who bore witness. Who endured. Even as the outer sun failed and the day turned dark, and still does in every human grief enacted in our dear Earth, we can surrender, and enter her black shroud that enfolds us—with the boundless, endless, groundless depth, deep enough to hold a universe of pain until it touches eternity. She will hold it with us, until it is awakened with the Christ-light that in turn reaches into the darkness like a faint dawn, and begins with us the holy act of healing our temporal, fallen world.

Holy Saturday

The realm of the shades opens.

In the saturnine darkness of this sphere an unexpected light is kindled. He who died upon the cross has entered the kingdom of the dead. In the realm of the dead, the Sun rises.

From The Three Years by Emil Bock

After great pain, in the still-dark stretch of night-beforedawn, we may hear the stirring of a bird. And yet, we cannot call this moment 'day', despite the rising of the day-star that casts a pale light through the folds of Holy Saturday's shroud.

Before the immensity of Saturn's Day we stand, bearing the deeds of yesterday. We cannot yet know about tomorrow, we cannot comprehend what will—in time—emerge.

For now, we must endure the consequences of our actions.

On Saturn's Day we meet Kronos, the Father of Time. Through him, we have experienced the ancient rending of our soul with the spirit of the sky. Kronos rends us asunder, cutting the god of the sky Uranus, tearing a free path from the immensity of spirit that lies above.

But the freedom that Saturn wrested for us also brings a burden. Freed from Heaven, we act without heed, forgetful of the divine breath that permeates all being. In the heavens, eternity is the dawn out of which we emerge. When we are born, we are cast out of this light, and must experience the darkness of earthly time, where the call of the spirit becomes buried in the Cave of Nyx (night) —Time's unending prison.

How often have we had to endure in our life the deep chasm that emerges through loss, through our errors, through our failing strength? How often have we become chained to our deeds in time, free to act, yet unfree, bearing as we must the consequences of our actions over time?

This chasm is the only place in us deep enough to truly enter the heart of darkness. We may meet ourselves there, in all our dying moments. And yet, we may meet something more—the stirring of a bird, announcing, with impossible quiet lightness—the arrival of the beating heart that sounds through time, the very source of eternity, eclipsing the light of day with the cry of forgiveness.

On Holy Saturday, with quiet solitude, our own heart can become the spirit ear to receive what begins to call and rise in the realm of all our death.

Easter Sunday

The grave is empty, the heart is full

From the Easter Epistle of The Act of Consecration of the Human Being

We have stood before the entrance of our heart and come to know the inner life. We have brushed close to emptiness, we have touched the burning place of the heart, even gazed into the body of death.

With the rising of the dawn of Easter in the inner sanctum of our heart, something is emerging; from the ray of grief that has drenched our gaze through the days of our world's Passion, something almost untouchable arises from the vast horizons of our inner life.

Walking through the gentle sunlight of these Holy Days, over the low-rising hills of our region, one can glean the Pieridae—the white butterfly. A glimmer of white to the right, as it moves alongside our tread; another appears ahead on the left, accompanying us for a time, and yet another gleam of white emerges down the path.

Baptised through the fire of our experience, our Easter joy—like the woman who walks the Easter garden—comes to us like the emergence of wings. They will need time to set and reach their full expansion—like the Pieridae, warm life will be drawn from the centre of our being and spread through the pathways of our soul, expanding us to behold what lives in the spheres of our life and our Earth since the first Easter.

Like the butterflies that meet us outwardly on the path, the Christ meets us as the gleam of light that emerges on the path of our life as we continue our seeking path of longing, in life or in death alike, to become and unfold in his Life.

From the tight confines of the cocoon of our consciousness, we can break through to behold Him.

We can because the Ancient God of the Sun himself has moved through each sphere of Heaven and Earth to bring us the power of the Spirit of the Sun—His own life and being—has walked as Human Being the very ground upon which we tread, He has breathed the air we breathe.

Breaking through the cocoon of death, with wings vast enough to catch the colours of every human soul, every height, depth, and horizon of our existence, the Christ moves beside us, bestowing the gentle brilliance of sun-touched wings of freedom.

Untitled poem by Lory Widmer Hess

When you only perceive the empty tomb
Bereft of the body you longed to serve;
When the man you meet on the road is a stranger
With words you don't understand;
When the voice that asks your hunger
Is unheard as the beloved one,
Then life is passing like the wind
That blows from nowhere to an unknown place
Leaving you breathless and cold.

It's not time yet to leave this world.

Touch him, take his offering.

Be in the body he gave to you.

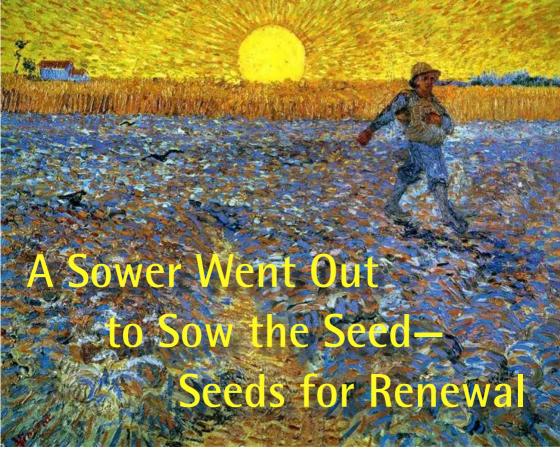
Let your eyes and ears be opened slowly,

Be washed in wonder and joy

Before they can bear to be pierced by the presence

Of that which has risen from death.

Jump out of the boat and into life. Put on your soul, and swim.



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The Seasons and their Festivals—Human, earthly and cosmic rhythms Karl König

Floris Books 2022, 192 pages, £14.99

Reviewed by Anna Phillips

This 21st volume by the Karl König Archive Publications brings together sixteen lectures given by König about the seasons and their festivals throughout the year. König's inspiration in celebrating the festivals had its root in the time when he set up a home for special needs children in the grounds of the estate which also pioneered biodynamic agriculture, based on Rudolf Steiner's instructions. The house and grounds in Silesia (Poland), provided both for the nurturing of man and nature and König was highly aware of their inherent connection. In biodynamic agriculture land workers aim to care for the land in harmony with the cosmic forces always wisely present. Likewise the human being is connected with the cosmos and can mirror its ever weaving presence into community life on earth. Thus, once in Great Britain, König established the Camphill Communities where land work and social community form naturally integral parts united through festival celebrations.

The lectures, given between 1932–1965, span König's whole career but are arranged according to festival rather than by the chronological dates when they were given. The volume is not fully comprehensive however, and we are promised that the many Holy Nights lectures he gave will be published in a separate volume.

The initial content delves deeply but generally into the intimate connections

between the human being, earth and cosmos. König explains the significance of celebrating festivals, as they are the heartbeat of the year which renews life impulses; they are a conscious communication with cosmic life. In doing so festivals become the modern temples for our time, König claims.

König's medical background shows in everything he contemplates. He is able to identify the threefold members of the body, with which we freely move in space, with the members of the earth, the seasons, which rhythmically move in time. Likewise the organs of our body relate to the functioning of the earth organism. Because of this connection, when we honour the festivals we enhance our own health while also bringing healing to the world. König states: 'Humanity and humanity alone can bring healing and redemption into the world of nature. To this end König worked intensely with Steiner's Calendar of the Soul verses. We may have a natural affinity with one season while struggling through another yet we can rise above such inclinations and unfold our being harmoniously throughout the changing times when we become conscious that the human soul is the mediator for healing activity.

In the lectures on St John, König explains how each calendar year is also a being which gestates, is born, lives and dies. He says the old year peaks at Whitsun after which follows the quiet time of death and resurrection, followed by rebirth of the new year at Michaelmas. St John's claims the zenith of the sun's strength while, as the light diminishes after that, the spiritual forces go on into the light. This gives rise to what he calls 'historic conscience'. With his cry 'change thy way' St John asks us to

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Reconnecting with the divine

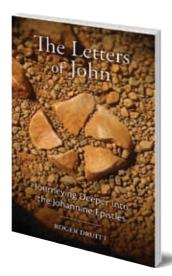
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look back at what we have done and to propel ourselves forward in a new way according to the revelation by St Paul: 'Not I but Christ in me'.

The impulse for social renewal runs through all the lectures. A true Michaelmas festival, König says, needs to be powerful enough to reinvigorate social renewal just as the festival itself is in need of renewal since the beginning of the Michael age in 1879. He explores, at the hand of prominent figures and movements, what happened around the turn of the nineteenth century and the legacy they have left us to work with.

As the lectures follow each other we can clearly observe a remarkable deepening of the subjects König studied over his lifetime. The later ones being more effortlessly given than the earlier ones. Towards the end of his life (König died in 1966) he is able to combine knowledge which is so obscure that it proves hard to follow, as in the notes and essay

showing connections made between Christmas and cosmic rhythms, especially those of Saturn and Jupiter.

Easter lectures relate how the earth-shattering events of the first Easter resonate in our struggle to overcome ourselves in order to experience the risen Christ. I found König very helpful in supporting a better understanding of the resurrection body, that great mystery of our time, as he provides an indepth study of Steiner's lectures *From Jesus to Christ*.

The most important point however, König makes in 1964 in a Whitsun lecture on the significance of celebrating the festivals: *This is necessary because we would completely and utterly forget the existence of a spiritual world—we no longer remember the origin of our own existence—if we cease to celebrate and understand the reality of festivals.* And to that understanding this book offers a most valuable contribution.

Reflections on the Gospel of John

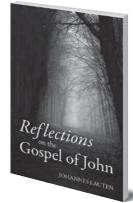


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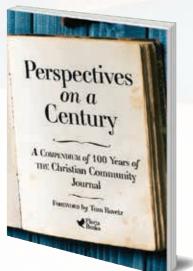
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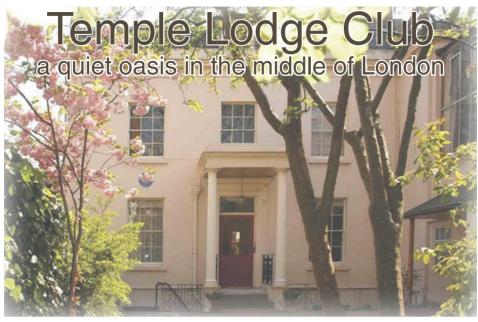
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Temple Lodge is a Georgian listed building in the centre of Hammersmith and was once home to artist Sir Frank Brangwyn. The house is now a guest house welcoming visitors to London from the four corners of the globe. The large studio he built for his work has been refashioned into a space for worship by The Christian Community in London. The mezzanine floor has been kept for its historical associations and has been home to The Cate vegetarian restaurant for the last 30 years.

Many visitors have described the peace and tranquillity they experience upon entering the house as an oasis amidst the turmoil they leave outside. An experience of the garden can be gained from most windows, and this will be enhanced as a redesigning and replanting of the garden takes place.

The work in the garden follows work to build three new double-bedded garden suites, each with its own en-suite facilities. Guests now have access to and through the garden on their way to the dining room. A hearty and substantial vegetarian/vegan breakfast provides just what is needed for the new day ahead.

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