



COMMUNITY VIEW

Advent/Christmas 2007

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

What will this year 2007 be most remembered for when someone takes up the task of writing a history of The Christian Community in our part of the world? The Ascension Conference in Melbourne would have to be the most likely contender. But, what about the two new priests – Sune and Veronika - arriving to join the seven already here? That would have to bear weighty historical significance. Also, Anand Mandaiker's first visit as our Circle of Seven contact member. The start of the Sydney Building project would need to be noted, but historically, the laying of the foundation stone of the church, and its actual completion will most likely belong to next year's history and the year after that as well. It has clearly been an eventful and significant year!

The coming year, 2008, is already looking very interesting ...

The year starts with a visit to several of our Communities (Auckland, Melbourne and Sydney) by Michael Debus, now retiring as a leader of the Seminar in Stuttgart. The major article in this edition has been written by Michael Debus. It originally appeared in *Das Goetheanum*. Following his article you will find short biographical details.

In April, Martin Wittchow, Rosalind Pecover, Hartmut Borries and Kevin Coffey will join with the Community in the Wellington region to present a **National Conference on Prayer**. This will take place at Raumati, a seaside area on the beautiful Kapiti Coast, just 45 minutes drive north of Wellington – New Zealand's capital city. The dates are: 24 – 27 April. This gives Australians an excellent reason for visiting New Zealand, and New Zealanders a great reason for visiting the Capital region. Watch the web site for details.

I've endeavoured to include an introduction

to one of the Communities in the region in each edition. This time you will learn a little about The Christian Community in Canberra.

With very best wishes, - Kevin Coffey

THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL WORKING IN THE CYCLE OF THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

In his book "The Somnambulists" the author and publicist Arthur Koestler wrote the following:

"The wonderful sixth century BC, the time of Buddha, Confucius, Laotse and Pythagoras was a truly pivotal time. It was as if spring had come to earth, from China to Samos, invigorating humanity with a newly creative breath of fresh air, not unlike the one God breathed into Adam in Paradise."

Although Koestler professed to be an atheist, his words are unusually poetic as he describes, albeit without knowing it, the character of the last Michaelic age as: "a world-embracing spring-time." The last Michael-age began indeed in the sixth century BC. Since Michaelic work is global in character, we find ourselves in harmony with Koestler's views.

The current Michael age has given us Anthroposophy and a new spirit-endowed science of the human being, which is also globally inclusive.

MICHAEL, THE ANGEL OF THE SEASONS

Michael has a profound relationship with the Christian year. He works in and through the cosmos into time. The cycle of the Christian year, its meaning and essence, have to be rediscovered today.

In former times human beings were cosmically attuned through the way they experienced time as a cyclically repeating process: day, night, year with its recurring natural events such as the rainy season, the Nile-rising and so forth; all were reliably

repeating events. The Adonis mysteries celebrated fertility in Phoenicia; other cultures celebrated cyclical returns of events, world-years, world-weeks, world-days. Reincarnation was understood as the same kind of cyclical repetition. People felt safe and embedded in the predictable sameness of seasonal and of cosmic rhythms.

At the same time there was no awareness of actual discernible development; life was experienced as the return of repeating cycles.

CYCLICAL AND LINEAR TIME-CONSCIOUSNESS

The development of the “I” is linked with making choices outside of the known norms, and in order to achieve ego development, the feeling of being embedded in safety must be left behind. Personal history will change when unknown, uncertain expectations are embraced; past present and future take on new dimensions; time is then no longer experienced as a cycle of repeating events but as a linear movement from the past into the future.

One people were chosen -in preparation for Christianity- to develop the kind of consciousness, which now allows a linear experience of time and history. The content and experience of Jewish festivals is the healing journey in the expectation of the Messiah. Most Jewish festivals, like Passover, Rosh Hashanah, the Feast of the Tabernacle, Hanukkah, all look towards the coming of the Messiah on the background of historical events.

In Christianity history is classified as either being pre-Christian or post-Christian. As is true for in the Jewish faith, so also are the Christian festivals commemorative festivals: Death and resurrection, the baptism, Whitsun, Christmas and so forth.

Yet Christianity also benefited from Greek traditions. The New Testament for instance was written in Greek and the art with which Greek philosophers used language greatly facilitated writing and understanding of the Gospels. The cosmic dimension of Christianity in a cyclical time-frame is discernible. Had the church accepted the cosmic dimensionality as well, the Christian festivals would have been embedded into the cycle of the year cosmically rather than seasonally. It didn't happen. The result is

that in the Southern hemisphere the confessional churches didn't need to address the seasonal reversal, since the Christian festivals have no essential tie to the seasons. *Quote: The birth and death of Jesus Christ relate to both the cyclical-cosmic time experience and the linear historical reality.*

THE NEW COSMIC DIMENSIONS

With Anthroposophy we have been given tools to regain knowledge of the cosmic dimensions as well as their relationship to the cycle of the seasons. For Rudolf Steiner this is the task of the Michael era, which began in the year 1879. The Calendar of the Soul [1912-13] was first published 33 years after the Michael era began. [Easter 1912] On the front page Rudolf Steiner noted: the year 1879 is the birth-date of the “I”. Clearly this indicates a linear historical understanding of time, since included is the year of the crucifixion as well as the onset of the Archangel Michael's reign.

The Calendar of the Soul has 52 weekly meditations embedded in the cycle of the year. With the Calendar of the Soul Rudolf Steiner gave us the means to develop a renewed cyclical consciousness of time. Rather than re-establish the former feeling of safety and embedded-ness in nature's cyclical returns, we are given the means to develop a conscious “I”-centred relationship to nature, which includes all three aspects: history, seasons in nature and cosmos.



CHRISTMAS IN SUMMER?

The Archangel Michael is the champion of global consciousness. He holds the entire earth in his consciousness.

It must be seen as one of the paradoxes of evolution that opinions arose, which promote a season-related celebration of the Christian festivals. The primary impulse for celebrating Christmas ‘in winter’ came from the Southern hemisphere, where the 24th of December falls into the summer. The idea to celebrate Christmas in June instead has been raised as well as Easter in September and Michaelmas in March. Countries lying close to the equator would thus possibly celebrate Christmas twice? Let us now look at historical facts. Rudolf Steiner indicated that Christ was crucified

on Golgotha at 3 pm on April 3rd of the year 33. ... and it doesn't matter where on earth one lived, the Mystery of Golgotha happened for all mankind. In other words: the event happened at the same time for both hemispheres. "At the moment the blood of our redeemer flowed into the earth" the earth, - the whole earth, - became the heart of a new cosmic reality. [*] Easter can therefore not be celebrated at any other time.

The birth date of Jesus is a very different matter. Rudolf Steiner repeatedly said that the 25th of December is not historically verifiable. "The 25th of December has been chosen as a representative symbol for this Christian festival and its resounding importance for the whole world". Jesus' birth date in the deepest winter is a symbol of the inner qualities of Christmas. As such it has meaning for the cyclical time-experience; and seen from this side, it makes sense to celebrate Christmas during the coldest time of the year. "Just think, when we celebrate St. John's Tide, and if our souls follow the earth's soul, which is outside, then in close union with the stars, the antipodeans celebrate Christmas." We will speak more about these words of Rudolf Steiner later on. **To celebrate the Christian festivals in a Michaelic sense means to understand the historical fact of the Mystery of Golgotha as meaningful for the whole earth.*



GLOBAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS

The experience of Easter and Christmas celebrations, for instance, will differ for those who have a

linear-historic- and those who have a cosmic cyclical time consciousness. In order to neutralize the polarity between the two, the cyclical time-consciousness must be united with the linear time consciousness through the development of the "I" impulse.

This [Trinitarian] principle was formulated by Rudolf Steiner in the following way: 'Every thought and idea carries silently within, its opposing view. Reality is only met in the inclusive union of the polarities'; and "esoteric reality mandates a thinking which adds and includes the polar opposite idea. When, for instance, I think: 'God is in me', I will subtly add: 'I am in God'. By doing so,

the single-sidedness of the one thought will be neutralized by the other". In terms of our topic it is clear that the future-oriented cyclical time consciousness needs the "I" centred inclusive consciousness of the antipodes.

We will likely find it challenging to include the celebration of the festivals in the other half of the globe in our thought patterns. The task has been carried mostly in the Southern hemisphere, but more and more it must be held in the Northern hemisphere as well. In other words: to Christmas in winter we must learn to think summer-Christmas in the Southern hemisphere.

The reality of Christmas is bypassed when the traditionally celebrated festivals are exported from the North into the summer-time of the South, as most Southern hemisphere churches do, [as well as the business sector], along with fake snow, sleds and snowmen.; - or if the festivals in the South are reversed to conform to the seasons in the North. [Christmas in the Southern winter.] Both would mean a return to the cyclical consciousness of former times.

Rudolf Steiner's much contested remark about the 'antipodeans' can from the context only be that he meant 'winter' when he said 'Christmas'. He was not a stickler for words.

It will therefore be a matter for both the Southern and the Northern hemispheres to find –through and with Anthroposophy- new forms of celebrating Christmas in terms of its spiritual content and significance. In the Southern hemisphere it means finding the spiritual substance of this cosmic-historical event to celebrate in summer. For the Northern hemisphere it means to renew the degenerated traditional forms through renewed insightfulness.

To celebrate the Christian festivals in the epoch of the Archangel Michael means to understand the Mystery of Golgotha as a historical fact. In addition the festivals are indeed embedded in the seasons of the year, in the seasonal polarities of the hemispheres. The Archangel Michael is our guide to global and inclusive consciousness, which unites the cyclical and the linear time-experiences into a global view of the cosmic Christ.

Michael Debus

[Translated from German by Eva Knausenberger]

Michael Debus will be visiting Melbourne, Sydney and Auckland in January and February 2008. He regularly lectures in most European countries and occasionally in North America, South Africa, Korea, Russia, and Georgia. This is his first visit to New Zealand and Australia.

Michael is a graduate of the Universities of Erlangen and Tübingen in mathematics, physics and philosophy. In 1969 Michael Debus was ordained as a priest in The Christian Community. For the last 30 years he has been one of the group of priests responsible for the day-to-day teaching and training of students at the Freie Hochschule der Christengemeinschaft (Priest Training Seminar) in Stuttgart.

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN CANBERRA



Canberra is unique amongst all the cities in Australia and New Zealand, in that it is a city that has been designed and built for the purpose of being the seat of the federal government.

If we have a ‘designer’ city, then Canberra is it. And its design is outstanding thanks to the capacities of the American born architect, Walter Burley Griffin.

Through the early developmental years of The Christian Community in Canberra (from 1982) several priests had periods of visiting – including Rosalind Pecover, Arie Boorgert, Kevin Coffey, Michael Tapp and then from 1992 to 2002, Hartmut Borries brought the Community to a new stage. Then the Canberra Community received its resident priest – Cheryl Nekvapil. It had taken 20 years, from 1982 to 2002! Cheryl was in fact one of the founding members of the Canberra Community and was thus already an intrinsic part of the Community at the time of her ordination. And the ordination actually took place in Canberra – one of the few ordinations ever to take place in the Southern Hemisphere!!

One of the characteristics of Canberra is that people do come to live there for a time, and then they may well move on. This is certainly evident in the comings and goings

within the Community. On a recent visit I noted, besides Cheryl and her husband Michael, only Ron Cameron that I remembered from visits in 1988. Members originally from other communities are in evidence, including Elaine Goodman, Melinda Turner, James and Susan Wishart, Yasushi and Clare Hayashi and Claire Goodman.

The Community has also had some unique buildings for its activities. In the early years there was the chapel out at Queanbeyan on the farm of Lou and Elaine Posthumous. This was a lovely quiet spot, but rather removed from the to and fro of people. Priests fondly remember the farm chapel on account of the closet size of the vestry! Then comes the current ‘home’ - an unusual situation which actually works very well – a leased ‘Girl Guide’ building on the fringe of a park and playing fields. What wonders can be done with a basic block box shape! Peter Stewart’s superb coloured glass windows work beautifully to allow the play of light into the chapel. And the use of screens and curtains along with many other details have made the space into a place of life.



Recently the Community was host to nine priests gathered for their regional synod. As one of the nine I can vouch for the calibre of hosting – including food as good as it could possibly get (I’m probably slightly exaggerating!) There was an excellent turnout to meet with the priests – and the photo above gives an accurate impression of life in The Christian Community ‘Canberra’ style.

Kevin Coffey

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