

Sir George Trevelyan: thoughts and beliefs

## Missionary Movement for the Cosmic Christ

*review of 'Growing Point' by Alfred Heidenreich*



Extracted from The Christian Community Journal  
Review of *Growing Point*, Alfred Heidenreich, Floris Books

This is indeed a beautiful and enthralling book. It gives us the story of the foundation of The Christian Community and the 50 years of its life in Britain and it makes fascinating reading. It is important to members of the Community who want to know more about how their remarkable 'church' came into being, and to anthroposophists who would value the further 'insight' into this branch of Rudolf Steiner's creative work and its relation to the broader framework of the movement. It is a precious thing when we can be given a deeper and more personal description of Steiner as a great human being in action and inspiration. But the book will also be appreciated by many who are involved with the wide movement for spiritual awakening which is penetrating our society in our time.

In Heidenreich's words, 'We feel that our mission is to the countless souls who have turned their back on organised Christianity either through indifference or disappointment'. The 'New Age Movement' as it is loosely called is an expression of the 'holistic' world-view - that beautiful word which combines holiness and wholeness. The whole is holy. Healing is a restoring to wholeness. This 'Oneness Vision' overcomes the reductionist materialism of our present society. It recognises that all life is sacred, that there is Divinity in all created things, that Man is indeed a spiritual being, a droplet of the Divine source, a spark of the Divine fire. As such the human entity, the ego, is immortal and imperishable - a thought which lifts the load of fear of death.

The Planet Earth is seen as a living creature, an organism within the greater organism of the solar system. Man, the steward of the planet, has through his greed and egoism failed lamentably in his stewardship, chiefly because of his inability to grasp his own spiritual nature and the meaning of life on this training ground for souls. It becomes ever more clear that mankind, as the great experiment of God, has unlimited creative potential. Hence the wide interest in what is being called the 'consciousness movement', involving many and various techniques for mental training, yoga and self discovery. A notable trend in our time is the recognition that we are called on to find our own Inner Teacher. The Higher Self, Christ filled, can be approached through the inner sanctum of the

soul in meditation. In this precious centre the still small voice can speak – 'Be still and know that I AM GOD'. So there is increasing understanding that the individual, within himself or herself, can freely and directly approach the Source. No church, no dogma, no priesthood is needed for this approach. Thus Heidenreich's chapter on what Steiner called 'Cosmic Communion' is of deep interest. In Steiner's great phrase:

'The perceiving of the Idea in existing reality is the true communion of man'. And is not the divine Word which was incarnated in Christ, the Idea in all perceived things?'

The holistic world-view is leading to the emergence of an alternative life-style which shows itself in so many branches of life, for it represents the beginnings of a new society, based not on mere getting for self or satisfying desire but on working for the whole to the glory of God. This is avowedly what underlies many of the 'new age' communities. It manifests in much dedication, joy and creative activity.

The first experiments in the Collective under Marxism and Nazidom assumed that the individual must be sacrificed as a tool for the State. The spiritually orientated communities are demonstrating that service to the Whole results in the release of full potential of creative energy. In Teilhard de Chardin's powerful phrase, it shows the possibility of 'Totalisation without de-personalisation'. Furthermore ritual comes back into the New Age Centres. There is a natural tendency for groups to attune in silence before starting work and of course to do so before meals. Simple rituals at all the festivals and for marriage ceremonies or other significant occasions come naturally to birth and are often very meaningful, moving and artistic.

How closely this all links with the inspiration behind The Christian Community. There is very clearly a place for a church offering the sacraments in a renewed and living form, adapted to the consciousness of modern mankind. Heidenreich quotes Steiner as saying: 'There is a need of human beings for sacramental acts, for spiritual forms. To behold these forms in the world, but also to understand these forms, this is what we need.'

In his vivid description of the birth of the movement Heidenreich shows us how Steiner saw the religious need of man in our age. Today all our ideas about 'the Church' must be recast. 'The time for monopolistic claims and monopolistic organisations is over. No single body can be the sole possessor of the truth.' The human being must develop to moral and spiritual freedom. He must be guided to the finding of the Living Christ within; he must learn to see that ritual is a true way to direct experience of the Spirit. 'Communities whose members feel the Christ within them, may feel themselves united in a church to which all men belong who are aware of the health-bringing power of the Christ.' Steiner's recasting of the Apostles Creed for present day consciousness is a master piece of religious genius.

The chapter on 'The Christian Community and the Anthroposophical Movement' is most valuable in clarifying the distinctions of these kindred but distinct organisations. Steiner stated that 'The Anthroposophical Society addresses itself to man's need for knowledge and brings knowledge: the Christian Community addresses itself to man's need for resurrection and brings Christ.'

It is avowedly a problem to many followers of Steiner, how Anthroposophy should relate to the New Age Movement. This is a strong and broad impulse, striving to find a way of life that lifts us out of the narrowing materialism of our age. It actively demonstrates a new co-operation, compassion and flow of love, suggesting that truly an impulse for the harmonising of all life has been released into the Earth.

Many are launching into meditation and other ways of self-transformation, but sometimes with little enough knowledge of the pitfalls on the path. In the age of Faith this path was followed in the seclusion of the monastic orders under strict discipline. Now many plunge in with excitement and sometimes lose their way and become disappointed. It is so great a tragedy that the Church has virtually abrogated its position of guide to the mystic path (see the opening chapter of R. Coulson's *Into God*). Yet so strong is the quickening of the spirit that people will forge ahead despite the warnings of 'authority', for this is a lay movement breaking new ground and forming a new society.

Here the vast body of spiritual knowledge given by Rudolf Steiner and his training in the path to knowledge stands as a touchstone of greatest importance as a measure of the truth. It must to some appear somewhat aloof and difficult of approach. Of course this is inevitable and it is essential that the core-group of the Anthroposophical Society take their stand on the teachings of Steiner, with no watering down to meet the public. Here The Christian Community takes its place as a bridge into the world – truly a fresh Christian growing point.

It is, as Heidenreich has well shown, a missionary movement for the Cosmic Christ and the Michael impulse, offering a transcendental path which in no way undermines the freedom of the ego. Steiner is quoted as declaring at the inception of the movement that 'A hundred years from now there will be no Christian churches left, unless something is founded like that which is intended here.' Heidenreich stresses that 'life with the sacrament in its renewed form and experience of its power would also throw new light on the Bible.' The significance and need for re-interpretation of the scriptures is very great. It is valid to see that the spiritual world-view can throw a fresh light on all the great works of human genius. But this requires something beyond the usually accepted academic approach, which is of course relying on the 'onlooker consciousness', standing over against the text and studying it objectively. It is valid now with Shakespeare and the Bible to approach the inspired works in the light of the Oneness vision, and see anew what they are saying.

Thus the Plays and the Bible begin to speak in a new way. For many people there is little leisure now for much academic study. There is no time for books that are dull to us. We must 'eat the book'. The passages must come alight and flame, as many of us have found in Steiner's writing. They must touch the 'thinking of the heart' which leads to re-interpretation rather than academic criticism.

The understanding of the Cosmic Christ and the concept of reincarnation are clearly vital for the renewed Christianity in this age. Heidenreich gives us Middleton Murray's fine quotation 'The holding together as a single act of understanding of the historic Jesus and the Cosmic Christ is probably the distinctive act of the re-edified Christian Church'.

In its threefold office, prophetic, priestly and pastoral, the renewed Church will be able to concentrate on its particular task the personal meeting with Christ as a Being. Indeed Heidenreich claims that 'we move towards a future where Christianity and civilisation become identical'.

This book is deeply moving and deserves to be read by many who are involved in the New Age movement for spiritual awakening in our time. It will help to bring understanding of the extraordinary things happening now, and courage for facing an epoch of change. The Christian Community Press and Floris Books are to be congratulated on their decision to publish this volume, for it records an epic achievement. There is something truly heroic in the story of the breakout from the Swiss-German-Austrian setting to start the enterprise in England and America. We in this country owe Heidenreich an immense debt of gratitude for his courage. What he calls the 'Englishing' of the Act of Consecration of Man is truly remarkable, achieved in co-operation with the literary talent of Cecil Harwood. In the closing page of 'Growing Point' we read the bold affirmation:

'A new Christian succession has been founded. Of its reality we have never had a shadow of doubt. Our roots in Christ are vertical, not horizontal. We have no direct link with the historic bodies. We are not a church of memory but a church of hope. We believe we have reason to know the living Christ is making a new approach to the human race in order to help it step forward from natural evolution to spiritual evolution.'