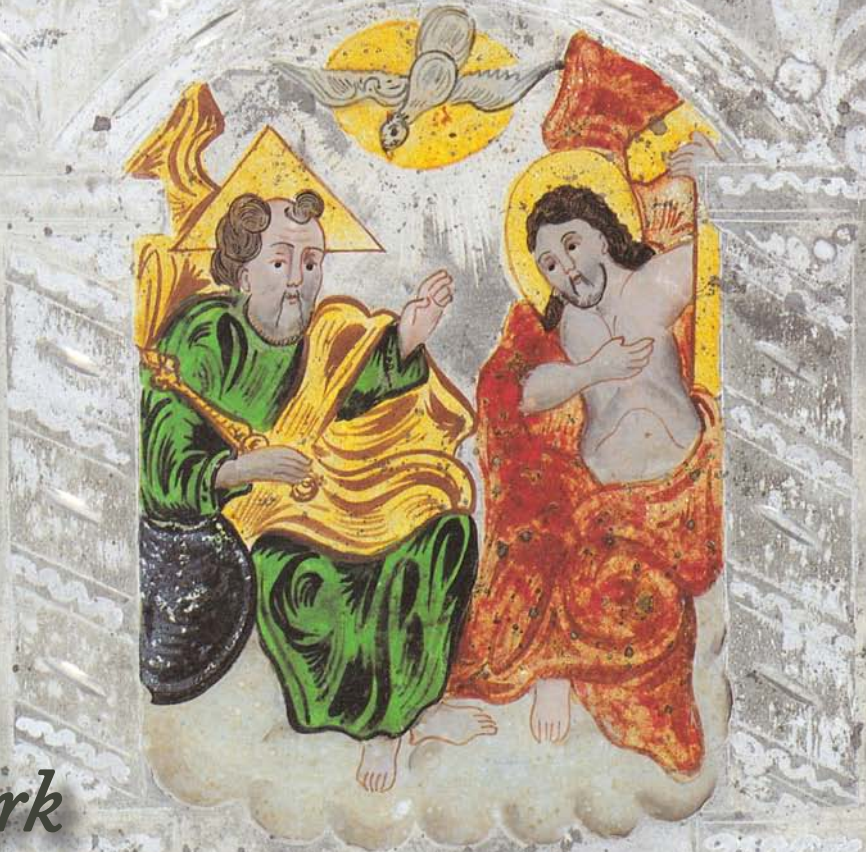


The Christian Community

Perspectives

June – August 2010



Work

Understanding Islam

Future Now

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Cover picture:

front: Trinity, mirror painting from 19th century

back: Parrot and the Islamic Tower in Delhi

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Working from the future as it emerges—that is the theme of Otto Scharmer’s book, *Theory-U*. His book gives a conceptual framework for something we have practised for nearly a century in the Act of Consecration of Man. What we encounter there is not a memorial of what happened long ago, but an event which is utterly real here and now, and which is also a prophecy of what is to come. The work we are drawn into is the work of transforming our earth into a new sun. In this work we join with all humanity.

TOM RAVETZ

The meaning of belief

Richard Masters

*I was asked once about the meaning of life
And my mind flew to the life of meaning
For meaning is a chameleon of many colours
Where belief is a palette of innumerable shades*

*My meaning may not be your meaning
But sometimes close: sometimes twin-like
Coloured in delicate shades—and other times
Further apart than mere black and white*

*A void filed by unsupported supposition
That transmogrifies into belief and
That belief can be an anchor or a mill-stone
Weighing down as a coat of chains.*

*But belief can also be as angel-wings
Lifting each of us to Nirvana and my belief
Is that one's choice twixt the two
Is the very essence of the Meaning of Life*

*One choice makes life meaningful whilst
The other renders it meaningless—so if you
Choose the first of these then truly rejoice
No matter what others say or do.*

Richard Masters is a member of the Forest Row congregation.

The Act of Consecration of Man as an Archetype of Work

Cynthia Hindes

Why do we work? There are several answers of course; to earn money, to survive. But basically any task we do, weed the garden, or paint a room, is done with the intention that something will be different, transformed in the world after we're done. If nothing changed, why would we bother?

Work involves a few other elements: we have to show up, at a particular place and time. (I can't weed the garden from my desk.) It helps if I'm suitably attired (I don't weed in a tuxedo). I bring suitable tools (I can't weed with a paintbrush.) And somewhere along the way someone has given me instructions on how to do it.

All work has three parts: the preparation, the actual work that changes something, and the review or cleanup. Depending on the job, the proportion of each varies. In painting a room, for instance, a large amount of the time is spent on preparation—taking down pictures, moving and draping furniture, laying down tarps, masking, spackling, sanding, priming, etc.

One of the ways to consider the Act of Consecration of Man is as an archetype for work in general. What is the intention of the work of the Act of Consecration of Man—how will the world be different? We offer bread and wine (prepared by previous work) along with the best of our soul forces of thought, feeling, and devoted will, so that they (both substances and souls) will be transformed into the bodily vessel and living force of Christ. We offer our efforts to God and his angels so that the world can be transformed according to their intentions.

For the Act of Consecration of Man we have to show up at a particular place and on time. Suitable attire includes our soul attire, our soul mood. At the door we divest ourselves of the stress of driving and parking, and clothe ourselves in a soul mood of serious endeavour and attention. We are also aware that this is not a job done in solitude, but that we are joining a work team. This team consists not only of those in the room with us, but also of those who are true inner Christians, no matter where they are, and those who have died, who are outside of

*Cynthia Hindes
is a priest of
The Christian
Community in
Los Angeles.*



space and time and can therefore be anywhere, anytime. And we prepare to listen to Someone who will instruct us in what to do.

Then begin the preparations: candles are lit, opening the visual space, signalling us to watch. Music tunes our souls. The bell rings, calling us to attention, and further opening the listening space. Then we state our intention, to dedicate ourselves worthily to the intentions of the divine world, in consonance with Christ, in a mood of reverence and mindfulness. The epistle is a kind of letter to us from the spiritual world, helping us take note of seasonal mood and atmosphere, further tuning our souls. The gospel reading, instructions from Christ, help us get an idea of where we are going, the aim of the work, especially this week. And the Creed gives us the big picture from beginning to end of earth evolution.

By analogy, if this were a painting project, up to this point we would have shown up with our tools and attire; we've heard the intention and instructions from the team leader; we're beginning to take down and drape the everyday items. And three times already we have asked that the Trinity be in us in this work.

The second part of the Act of Consecration of Man is the Offering. There is a kind of restating and deepening of the intention—we're bringing our best inner resources because of the water stains, pockmarks and chips on our souls. We mix into the earthly substances of water and wine our best soul forces united with Christ, what Christ has already given us, and offer it to the Father Ground of the World. One could say that we are offering it to Him who holds world karma. We've begun stirring and laying on the primer.

Then the focus shifts into a kind of flow and weaving. 'Paint' is being stirred, pigments added. (Nearly half way through, and we're still preparing.) If you watch a Lazure painting team at work, you see three or four people working together across a wall at three different heights, working and blending each others' brushstrokes. Now in the Act of Consecration of Man we begin to work together in the same way, not only with earthly substances and mood, but also alchemically with air and light and warmth,

culminating in the censuring and the final prayer that brings in the creative fire of Love. The Team Leader is nearby.

In the beginning of the third part, the Canon, the intention is further developed—may our prayers reach through Christ to the World Father, and may He bless and strengthen our work. May the substances come alive as the body and blood of the Being of Love. The nearness of Christ gives the team peace, strength, and unity of purpose. Now finally the actual work begins: the work of transforming the earthly substance. Bread and wine are elevated and united with soul substance, imitating the directions given at the Last Supper. In gratitude and in union with the Father Ground, substance and souls are offered to World Karma. Christ answers with His intention—that Godhood be returned to humanity. And then the substances are elevated again, by us, by our own act of will and hope.

At this point we recognize that the actual work of transformation occurs across the threshold of the senses, from behind the veil. The actual transformation, the real work of change, is accomplished by divine grace. And as Christ concentrates his presence at the altar, and in our hearts, we can pray with Him His prayer, the Lord's Prayer. It is a prayer in the we-form, a prayer for the world.

Now, as we move into the fourth part, the Communion, Christ speaks directly to us. 'I stand at peace with the world! I can give you this peace...'. It is amazing and reassuring that Christ is not at enmity with the world or with us, no matter what a mess we may have made of it; He can work with us, anoint us with the oil of His peace, so that we, too can align and work with what is forward moving, evolving, in the world. All through this part, strength and healing is received. In humble awareness of weaknesses, we apply ourselves so that the alchemical work of transformation at the altar may serve the world.

There is an important moment after Christ has offered Himself as Bread, as soul nourishment: we are inspired to make a counter-offer of ourselves. 'Take me...'. We are inspired to ask to be 'hired on' for further work.

After the Communion, we begin to climb down the ladders, to review the work done and clean up. We visit the elements of the



beginning, the preparation, in reverse. We hear the epistle again, the 'letter' from the very beginning, now noticing the subtle changes in how it sounds, before and after. The statement that it is over mirrors the statement of intention of worthy dedication. The music from the beginning sounds again; the candles are extinguished; in the vestry things are cleaned and put away for next time. Perhaps bread and wine are taken to the sick out in the world. Cleanup becomes preparation for the next work, the next time.

What lessons can we take from the Act of Consecration of Man as an archetype of work? How can we perform our everyday tasks, using the Act of Consecration of Man as an example?

- *Clarity of intention—we can try humbly to form the intention to do work of earth, the transformation of earth, in consonance with the Trinity, commingling work of earth with work of heaven.*
- *We can do sufficient and thorough preparation work, both of self and of earthly elements.*
- *We can form the awareness that we do not work alone. No matter how solitary any given job may be, we can unite our intentions and actions with others, both living and dead.*
- *We can also form the awareness that the spiritual world has its intentions and can work in from its side, if we invoke and align ourselves with it.*
- *We can recognize the importance of the mood and soul atmosphere that we bring to our work. Inattention, negative emotions, and egotism are like pouring poisonous black pigment into the paint of our work.*
- *We can enlarge our awareness that everything we do is work for the world.*

Thus with courageous humility, with gratitude and in loyalty, day by day we keep on showing up for the task of joining work of earth with work of heaven.

Picture credits: stained glass window by Laura Summer, in the Taconic Berkshire Chapel, New York State, USA. Lazure painters from Charles Andrade's lazure.com.
from NA Newsletter Fall 09

Spirit of the width of space and the depth of time

Cleaning as a means of overcoming materialism

Ingrid Knowles

For years I have been serving at the Act of Consecration of Man. Having always been at ease with speaking and being active in public, I tended to have a bias to serving on the right. The left side I considered “too easy for me” not having understood the importance of the balance of the two.

I soon realised that it was not easy at all for me to serve on the left. Why? There is obviously not much to do. Just to prepare the juice and the water, burn the charcoal, perhaps cut the bread, if this has not been done by the right hand server anyway, and then to light the candles and ring the bell. So what made me dread it almost every time? It was the fact that I had to pay attention to detail, make sure everything was prepared correctly and in time. I was constantly under tension lest I forgot something. The fact that I felt a deep satisfaction when I had done everything correctly and was able to spend the remaining time waiting in silence for the service to begin, made me aware that there was more to it.

Today I know this was the best preparation for what I am doing for a living: cleaning. Of course I do it to provide my customers with a clean building but for me there is more to it.

I became aware of the connection between cleaning and preparing for the service at The Christian Community as I had to accomplish my cleaning tasks over and over again. I started to understand that I had to pay attention to the material I worked with and to proceed at the right pace in order to achieve the right result (I always have to remind my staff not to rush it). Of course, the work gains momentum and a routine develops but the constant repetition makes this job almost meditative, and somehow cathartic. It is as if I receive something back from the surroundings I clean. Over the years it became clear to me that the care expressed through cleaning developed a sense of connectedness and solidity in me which

Ingrid Knowles was inspired by Linda Thomas at the Goetheanum. They organised the first Cleaning Conference in 2004. She runs a cleaning business, works as a trainer in the cleaning industry and gives workshops and talks on the subject in the UK.

made me appreciate more the things in my surroundings and the materials that they are made of.

Cleaning involves my whole person with all its senses. The act of running a cloth over a surface with my eyes working together with my hands (I am now ambidextrous), hearing the unevenness or smoothness of the material I am cleaning, noticing the smells and being aware of how I use my body (I am now free of back pain)—all of this is part of carrying out the task.

The act of preparing just a few things at the right pace, with concentration, attentiveness and love is a good attempt to overcome materialism in one's life. Space and time merge to a meaningful entity and the result is deep satisfaction.

The vast amount of material we congest our spaces with and which we neglect because we cannot keep up with it all, is an image of our modern way of life: we are unable to pay attention to the needs of our environment and we therefore neglect a vital basis of our well-being. We have to acknowledge the responsibility of ownership by caring for the material we are given. The activity of cleaning has taught me that our physical capacity creates a healthy limit to the amount of things we can deal with appropriately. Instead of abusing our material surroundings to compensate for our lack of inner and outer activity, caring for them gives space to the activity of our mind.

Islam – An Individual's Quest to Find Peace

Kevin Street in conversation with Mohammed Shaban

What follows is an understanding of a conversation I had with a Muslim who is working actively in Birmingham to promote peace.

Books and Covers springs to mind—would you want to judge Christianity by looking at a history of Northern Ireland? And who designs the cover in the first place? John Simpson's latest book 'Unreliable Sources' exposes much that has been sloppy and dishonest in the last century of journalistic reporting, and we must now bring that rigour to trying to understand just what lies at the heart of our latest fearful preoccupation—that of Islam, and its seeming link with global terrorism.

Mohammed Shaban is 28, from a Pakistani family. He has lived in Birmingham all his life. His family are Muslim. However, although they observed certain rituals such as fasting, they did not pray regularly, and wore the Islamic faith lightly. Shaban followed the normal path through school until he was about 11, but then spent a year and a half back in Pakistan in the company of his beloved grandmother. It was here that his eyes were first opened to Islam, and a very different life style—the open call to prayer, bare foot games in the fields, and people with time for people. A cousin, who was a local Imam, encouraged his attendance at the mosque for daily prayers, and this continued when Shaban returned to a Birmingham comprehensive school.

The next couple of years passed with the habit of regular prayer being forced out by school routines, and it was only when he was 16 that Shaban rediscovered his spiritual quest, starting regular prayer, but also determined to explore other religions. A statement in the Qur'an that 'the closest people to you in the love for God are those who say: We are Christians' saw Shaban reading the Bible, but he also spent hours in discussion with Buddhist and Hindu friends.

As opposed to joining or becoming part of a sociological group Shaban experienced Islam as what he

Kevin Street is a member of The Christian Community in Stourbridge and manages the subscriptions of Perspectives.

calls a 'state of being,' reflecting the etymology of the very name—'aslama' meaning submission, and 'Salam' meaning peace. In other words, gaining peace by submitting to the Divine order.

Part of the barrier of people understanding Islam and Muslims is that Muslims are projected in the media as simply a sociological category of people who seem to want to assert their identity on the rest of the world. Very few people look into the deeper reality of the overwhelming majority of the Muslim community who strive to experience the spiritual state of peace in their day to day life by submitting to Allah (God).

The Qur'an says, 'everything in the heavens and the earth is in aslama (submission)'. One of the most notable things about nature is that it seems to follow an order, for example the changes in a tree during the four seasons. Therefore there is an idea in Islam that just as nature is at harmony by submitting to a natural order humans should also endeavour for peace by submitting themselves to the Divine will.

It is interesting to note that the five daily prayers in Islam are synchronised with the movement of the sun—beginning at dawn to the final prayer when the last light of the sun disappears from the sky. We know from biology that all living things have a very deep relationship with the sun. Muslims are reminded throughout their day to align themselves with nature in following a heavenly order to attain an experience of peace and harmony, a state fundamental to Islam.

If it is so fundamental, where on earth has the militant terrorist sprung from? The Prophet Muhammad taught moderation, but was wise enough to human nature to be able to predict the rise of terrorism and extremism. He said 'beware of extremism in religion, for it is extremism that destroyed peoples before you.' If it was not a serious threat then Prophet would not have warned about it, and he understood that it is the misuse and abuse of religion by religious people that leads to the hatred of religion, the highest truths and morals known to humanity.

Interestingly, Shaban feels that the biggest single cause for Islam being misunderstood rests in Muslim communities as a whole not being connected with their roots, ie, the teachings of Prophet Muhammad. Unfortunately many Muslim communities hold to the rituals, beliefs and ideas that they have inherited from their different cultures as "Islam" where in reality they may have little to do with the original teachings of Islam. The teachings of Islam are totally accessible in its original sources. The Qur'an is unchanged since the time of the Prophet in its original language, Arabic, which is a still a living language spoken by millions. The teachings of Prophet Muham-

mad remain documented and filtered through 'Asma-ur-Rijaa' (literally meaning 'The Names of Men'), which is a science of learning dedicated to the authentication of the traditions of the Prophet. Chains of narration that underpin Muslim teaching and understanding are closely scrutinized as to their authenticity according to the moral standing of the person in the community who is attributed with the narration. Shaban believes that through this, it is easy to distinguish what is spiritual and what has become cultural—a very important difference. He cited a few instances of supposed Muslim teaching that have no basis in the Qur'an or the traditions of the Prophet: that women should not cut their hair, marrying relatives, wearing particular designs of clothing, the rigid segregation of the sexes and that women should not work.

Until Muslim communities go back to their roots and become the manifestations of the original and authentic teachings of Islam comprehensively, not just in practices but also in understanding and spirit, there will be ongoing misunderstanding of Islam.

At university, Shaban became part of a Islamic society and moved on to identify himself with one of the four schools of thought associated with Islamic jurisprudence, the Hanafi School. Through this he gained the knowledge of legislative rulings of Islamic teachings such as prayer, marriage, fasting, charity, etc. This was the school of thought followed by the Ottoman rulers, and is characteristically 'mellow'. The majority of Birmingham mosques reflect this school.

Shaban graduated with a degree in pharmaceutical chemistry, and worked for a time in a hospital. It was during this time that he experienced hostility from colleagues resultant from 9/11 and 7/7. It was perhaps this that led to Shaban becoming increasingly involved in initiatives in the West Midlands stemming from the Government's campaign 'Preventing Violent Extremism'. A friend, who is the West Midlands co-ordinator, asked Shaban if he would start assessing and working with 13 to 20 year old Muslims who are referred through YOTs (Young Offenders Teams). These are teenagers who are persistent offenders, who want to practise Islam, but don't know how to channel this. The danger is that they become radicalised and brain washed. Shaban engages with them in an intensive programme of workshops, where through shared meals and conversations he is able to guide them back to the only point of reference, the Prophet Muhammad, using the idea of going back to the roots, in order to identify authentic Islam—the Islam that teaches that on the Day of Judgement, The Prophet will argue the case of the innocent person even if he had been wronged

by a Muslim, and that to take the life of an innocent, for no matter what reason, is unlawful.

Certainly, media misrepresentation causes Muslims to feel isolated, but Shaban also knows that this can lead, and indeed has led to positive dialogue. A further stumbling block for understanding Islam is the American attitude to the Middle East, and all that stems from an ignorance about world events and history. Muslims feel that the West must recognise the Palestinian issue as the festering sore on the body of this Earth as well as the crimes against a people who have been humiliated for over 60 years. In recent times, a lack of understanding in the West as to what lies at the heart of the problems and atrocities in Bosnia, Kashmir and Palestine feeds into latent Islamophobia. The concept of oneness, of unity and brotherhood means that someone such as Shaban will feel empathy for the plight of those caught up in such conflict zones, and he will strive to understand what is really happening there, rather than relying on the mass media as his source. He takes heart from the growing dialogue between Judaism and Islam, pointing out that the secular state of Israel has little spiritual connection to any religion. He sees Orthodox Jews as noble people with whom Muslims have historically co-existed peacefully. Unfortunately the events stemming from the occupation of Palestine have led to the unjust vilification of all Jews by some Muslims in the Middle East.

There are encouraging signs however. Since 9/11 more Muslims have been forced to go back to the roots of authentic Islam, rather than accepting the blur between outmoded culture and religion. Shaban can look now to his own family, who in the last few years have started to embrace Islam in a conscious way, and order their lives to reflect the original understanding. As well as leading to better interfaith dialogue, Shaban's own life is an example as to how this newly-won confidence can be set against misguided radicalism, and how authentic knowledge can be the best way to swell the numbers of young Muslims who are on a quest for peace and harmony with their neighbours, the world—and God.

Islam and the Grail

Christine Gruwez

High in the mountains of north-west Iran at a place called Takht e Soleiman, Throne of Solomon, the ruins of an ancient Zoroastrian fire sanctuary from the Sassanid period are to be found. The palace, whose remains can still be seen, is ascribed to Choraos II. The only thing that has remained intact over the years is the breathtaking majesty of the surrounding landscape. Mountain ridges circle the sanctuary which must have been one of three places where a great fire was continuously kept alive by the priests. From this place the holy flame was shared over the entire country.

On top of the plateau, like an eye that opens towards the heavens, lies a beautiful turquoise coloured lake, which has such a high salt content that it can contain no life. On the shore of the lake one can still clearly see the remains of the throne room in which the sjah-in-sjah, the King of Kings, surrounded by his priests, gave the orders for the holy rituals. Behind the king, underneath the cupola of the throne room, burned the holy fire. In front of him glittered the motionless surface of the lake like a mirror in which the universe was represented. Temple and palace were an inseparable unity; the king was an initiate who, through his own person, guaranteed the purity of the elements, of water and of fire, in accordance with the teachings of Zarathustra.

In the 20th century researchers, especially Lars Ivar Ringbom in his groundbreaking work *Paradisus Terrestris*, saw in the temple complex a possible realisation of the Grail temple as it was described by Albrecht von Scharfenberg in the 13th century in *Der Jüngere Titurel*. Here is described how the Grail temple rose from a round mountain top consisting of onyx (verse 337). This, however, was covered by a thick layer of earth and grass and only after this layer was removed did Titurel order the onyx to be polished until it shone like the surface of the moon.

This is only one of the facts that points toward the simultaneous existence of Grail traditions in both east and west, drawn from a common imaginative source. Aside from the Grail stream which, as described by Rudolf Steiner, pulsates from east to west through the hearts of human beings, in the world of Islam a Grail science was cultivated by various mystical movements and in spiritual places which passed on an individual

schooling path. There, the seeker of the Grail would pass through various stages of spiritual development. The 'kighthood'—*futawah* in Arabic and *javanmardi* in Persian—that was pursued contained an esoteric and a social dimension, which can definitely be compared with the medieval traditions of the guild system in Europe. The knights' challenges consisted of attaining to the original purity of one's own being. The brotherhood had the task of supporting its members.

In Iran, the Grail theme developed in its own special way. For centuries the influence of Zarathustra's teaching had spread and the consciousness of the people had gradually opened up to the various spiritual beings that surrounded Ahura Mazda. These beings worked within the creation, permeating it with their light-filled nature, constantly renewing all nature in her archetypal and paradisaical existence. The transformation of nature, her re-creation, in which these beings of light were successful, was now also available for human beings to achieve, if they chose to take the path of spiritual kighthood.

The realm in which these angels of light work exists in between the world of matter and the divine-spiritual realm of creation; that realm in which what is created becomes spiritual and where spirit densifies into matter. This in-between world of *malakut* represents the actual source of the living image, in which imaginations have an independent entity. If in Iran there indeed existed temples and castles which in their architecture point towards a Grail temple it is nevertheless true that the true Grail temple can only be sought in the realm of images. This imaginary world has as its centre the mountain *Qaf*. It is coloured green like emerald and even when it appears brilliant white, the rocks from which it rises are purest emerald. As the centre of this imaginary world the mountain *Qaf* is also at the same time the portal that closes off the heavens. On its peak the phoenix alights to rise again out of its ashes. The *jam-e-jam*, the bowl that belonged to *Yima*, the mythical king who lived at the same time as Zarathustra, was also formed from emerald. We find it in many poems, of which those by Rumi and Hafiz are the most well known, in the form of a bowl or cup from which living water flows.

These images have inspired poets and painters again and again. In one of the mystical writings of *Suhrawardi*, who died a martyr in 1191, we find the oldest story of the Grail history as it is attributed to *Kay Choru*, a figure who as one of the wise men accompanied the first presentation of Zarathustra. 'I myself am the bowl, the *jam-e-jam* of *Choru*, in which the universe is mirrored,' writes *Suhrawardi*.

This event is described even more succinctly in Omar Khayyam's quatrain:

*To find the cup of Jamshed's treasury
I laboured long, and compassed land and sea.
And last I asked the seer, who answer made,
"Jamshed's world-mirror is within thee."*

The quest for the throne and the cup of Jamshed also pervades the work of Hafiz. 'Throne of Djam, where is the cup that can show us the cosmos?'; the poet calls out more than once. With cosmos is not meant the universe and its star signs but the power that moves them! 'He who wants to drink from this cup,' Hafiz writes, 'has to thread pearls to his eyelashes.' Only then is he deemed worthy to catch a whiff of love, the universal power. He also writes: 'Hafiz's tears take wisdom and patience to the sea. How can he hide that his heart is burning with love?' – 'For years my heart has been looking for the cup of Djam...'

When the poet, after many journeys and after sinking down again and again in despair on the dirt floor of wine bars, finally finds the magician holding the cup in his hands, he is sent off travelling once again by the merrily laughing magician! The poet arrives at the following conclusion when he exchanges the cup for the earthly drinking bowl: 'The language of love is not spoken, by any human tongue! Give me wine, further discourse serves no purpose.'



Translated from
the Dutch by
Anna Phillips.

This article is a
summary of her
book *Die Farbe
Gottes* published
by Pforte Verlag,
Dornach,
Switzerland 2008.

The Watcher

Richard Masters

*A fleeting thought slides swiftly and then is gone
Leaving still an indelible trace for recollection
And deep one knows the thought itself was born
Of true substance with import for correlation*

*With what you hope and what you believe
And how you try to make the two as one
What was that thought that will not leave?
Your mind, your soul, and all you've done*

*To mark you as a mere one among all the rest
For share of sheer unbounded succour and love
Bestowed full on those who deserve it best
By He who watches ceaselessly from above*

Richard Masters is a member of the Forest Row congregation.

Pastoral Points: Welcoming the Angels

Julian Sleigh

Some time ago I was entertaining some visitors on the stoep of our house, when one of them looked upwards and said "This place is full of angels!" Naturally I felt glad about this, for indeed our garden is a peaceful and a blessed place. Another time I had been watching the performance of a Christmas play by a cast of residents and co-workers of our Camphill Village and was profoundly moved, almost to tears, by the way the play came to life in its simplicity, as though the event had been blessed by the presence of many angels.

These and similar experiences can stir in one's soul deep gratitude towards the angelic world. This can begin with one's own personal angel. We can remember that angels are evolving and refining their

spirituality and we can do much to help or hinder their progress. We ourselves are growing as individuals and can easily forget how we are accompanied and guided by these great beings.

One can feel that angels are pleased when we unite in community for a celebration or a festival. I imagine their joy when sensing careful preparation, cheerful and considerate togetherness, warm appreciation of each other and selfless dedication on our human level. The presence and participation in any social or spiritual event can imbue it with harmony and joy and also earnestness and depth of feeling.

It is good and also true and beautiful to invite the angels to bless our endeavours and so to help us to unite with the heavenly world.

Stag

*Then lights were lighted
along the stag's antlers
like holly and its clusters of berries,
grouped like grapes great and small or
the close-held cones along larch branches.*

*And a glow
came from the stag's brow
and long nose.*

*And he
paused
in the forest.
Then turned away
into the darkness
like the hero
of humankind
going off
to war.*

*Iain Cranford Hunter
is an artist and poet, and
member of the Christian
Community, from west Fife.*



FUTURE NOW!

Dortmund 2010

The future started long ago!

Richard Goodall

Here in the Cape of Good Hope and throughout the whole of South Africa there is a great deal of talk about building “a better future for all”. Huge hopes and a lot of good will are connected to this ongoing debate. Of course the fact that in only a few months South Africa will be hosting the FIFA World Football Cup has given a huge boost to the morale of the country and to visible progress in improving the infrastructure of roads, public transport, airports and the police to say nothing of the multi-billion Rand football stadia around the whole country. We in South Africa are living in an open, as yet unformed and therefore slightly chaotic space between a regrettable past and a future which is dependent on how we conduct ourselves in the chaos. Here, anything is possible and even our history is unpredictable as it continues to be rewritten from diverse ideological points of view. There is a strong feeling that we’re all in this together which calls up both excitement and also trepidation. There is at the same time a keen awareness of all the problems and pitfalls along the way to realizing “a better life for all”.

Chief among these hazards are the high incidence of corruption at all levels of governance and the corporate world, and nepotism and the appointment of political stalwarts who are unfortunately in-

competent administrators to important managerial positions in the public service. This has led to very poor service delivery in many areas of the country and a lot of resentment and hardship. Schools, hospitals and local government are some of the areas which have been severely compromised as a result of this. All of these are in a sense teething problems of a new emerging nation which has yet to find its own feet. All of these challenges could be turned around if there were sufficient political and public will to do so. What is more difficult to resolve is the range of social problems which have their root in people’s behaviour such as HIV/AIDS and domestic violence and also the high levels of unemployment.

How you choose to look at South Africa is decisive in what your relationship to the country will be and what your thoughts about its future are. It is easy to look at all its ills and become an “Afro-pessimist”, but that is something you can only indulge in if you don’t live here. It means that you choose to define the country by what it doesn’t have, by what is not there. Most people who live here choose not to do this.

They have daily experiences of each other and recognize that in any random sample of our population there is a rich diversity of talents and strengths, possibil-

ities and energetic enthusiasm, good will and optimism. They choose to define our country and our possible future by its collective strengths, talents and possibilities and not by its deficiencies.

However, despite all the youthful forces available in the country there is something which holds them back from really being effective. Something which prevents them from joining together to make the “better life for all” future happen. Something which causes all of the potential to get stuck and be prevented from flowing into life. This something is the legacy of Apartheid—it is the deep seated wounds that live in the hearts and souls of all our people who are old enough to have experienced Apartheid. Through the cutting-edge process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission a start was made in addressing the wounds of our society. It was a deeply cathartic process of unveiling the truths of the past and allowing peoples’ stories to be told. But it didn’t go far enough. It became a short-term institution of transformation but stopped short of becoming a new culture of transformation in which everyone needed to get involved. The general population failed to take ownership of its attitude of transformation through total exposure and reconciliation. The result is that millions of people still nurse their wounds. For some it is a deep anger against all that represents the one-time oppressors. For others it is a sense of guilt for being white and therefore a target for the anger. Neither the anger nor the guilt is visible on the surface. They rarely come to expression and that is the problem. The unexpressed and therefore unheard woundedness of our people is what prevents them from doing what they would love to do—getting fully involved in cre-

ating the future of this country with all their strength.

South Africa is known for its wealth of precious minerals and above all for its gold. However, right now, as in *The Green Snake* and *The Beautiful Lily*, what is far more precious than gold for the future of South Africa is conversation.

The once oppressed would clearly like to be purged of their anger just as the whites yearn to be freed from their guilt. Both sides have found that they cannot do this on their own. They are stuck in themselves through their woundedness and at the same time bound to each other through the unfinished business between them. In the meantime the anger mounts and the guilt deepens and the result is that we are sitting on a slowly ticking time bomb. No matter what policies are put in place, no matter how political structures strive to rectify social imbalances, they alone will not defuse the situation. The angry are not seeking vengeance and retribution. All they want is to be heard. Black people are waiting to be asked by white people for the opportunity to sit down together so that they can tell their stories and be heard and understood. The guilt of white people is only likely to be released by hearing these stories and sharing their own with black people. Without each other, healing will not come about. Without a healing process there is no trust in each other. Without trust the wonderful potential of ordinary South Africans is unlikely to develop and be invested in the well-being of the whole. People need to feel safe about becoming vulnerable. These conversations cannot take place behind the shield of anonymity offered by internet chat rooms and Facebook and the like. They need to happen in small intimate

groups of people sitting together in one room face to face, eye to eye, with a clear idea of why they are there.

It is my contention that this liberation of the soul will give the hard-won political liberation of the majority its full meaning and make the economic liberation of the majority a possibility. It is not gold and natural resources but soul to soul conversation that will secure a prosperous and

dignified future for all in this extraordinarily beautiful and vibrant country.

Although this is particularly applicable in the post-Apartheid era in which we are now living in South Africa, one has to ask the question: Is this not a universal necessity which could bring about meaningful change in any and every country in the world, especially in countries where there has been conflict of some kind?

Cookery Course

Paolo Belmonte, Philippines

My name is Paolo Belmonte. I am one of the first three Christian Community confirmands in the Philippines. I was also part of the pioneer class of my country's first Steiner school from grades two to eleven. On April 1, 2010, I will no longer be a teenager. I am seriously thinking about attending FutureNow 2010, so if you're there and you see a good looking Asian guy with frizzy hair and a funny grin on his face, that's probably me. In the meantime, please enjoy a little something I've cooked up for your consideration.

The future is full of uncertainties. This is not a situation unique to our age. Those who complain that the future is uncertain perhaps have never stopped to consider that it is in the very nature of the future to be uncertain, unpredictable, constantly in motion and forever broiling in the passions of the present.

One can only hope that what has been cooked turns out to be pleasantly delectable, a joy to the discerning palate, and not burnt to a disgraceful crisp of carcinogenic waste.

We, the cooks, need to take great care in the preparation.

But we must not be overly careful, or worse, fearful, and salt the dish too little, lest it turn out bland and tasteless. Still, we must sprinkle the seasoning with a gentle touch, for should our hands shake from overzealousness, we may find there is scarce worse than a meal whose seasoning exceeds the substance.

Faced with the possibility of a ruined meal, we complain that we do not know how to cook. And behold! Our grievances are answered.

We are handed a cookbook, an ancient tome with pages missing, a dusty volume not only out of date but also printed in an illegible font we can barely make out through the fading.

After wiping away the dust and reading a few pages, we put it down in disgust and toss it in the rubbish. We know in our hearts we cannot trust men who recommend cooking with bombs.

We go to the store, and after long hours of searching, we realize with horror that this is the only cookbook left in stock. Yet we cannot cook a splendid meal without

a cookbook unless we know the recipe by heart.

So how then can we create a meal which is even barely edible? Only trial, error, and perhaps a bit of luck shall see us through in the beginning. We gain a sense of what it is to cook, but still we work in an instinctive, barely conscious manner. Master chefs are fully aware of what they are cooking and exactly how the dish is going to taste, and initially, all we can hope to do is emulate them as best we can.

And out of the sweat that flows from a hard day's work, hurried rumours of other cookbooks are whispered from mouth to eager ear. We put down our knives and sit enthralled by the tales.

So many of them turn out to be disappointments. We shake our heads and acknowledge the blatant absurdity of a quick fix. And thus we sharpen our dulled knives, ending the experience with a little

less stupidity in our brains than before.

Yet even with guidance from a genuine cookbook, one is bound to lose focus every now and then.

The knife goes CHOP CHOP CHOP while we stare into the cookbook, endlessly reading the directions, all sound trailing off into the distance. When we finally catch ourselves and look back at what we're doing, we notice that we have chopped off a few fingertips.

If such a thing does happen, be not disheartened and be grateful for the bloody stumps that remain. The hand that is whole cannot possibly know how much seasoning is required. Look at the masters. Entire appendages are missing.

Mortified, we ask ourselves: can cooking ever be a joy? The answer is firm, a resolute yes. As yet I do not know exactly how I come to know this, but rest assured I shall inform you when I do.

The concept of future in the African context

Jan Lampen, Johannesburg, Südafrika

Although I am not an expert in this, the concept of future, as seen from a western perspective, is not as clearly defined in traditional African cultures. This became very clear for me in researching the story of Moshesh, the King of Lesotho, and Eugene Casalis, a Missionary from the Paris Evangelical Society who landed at the Cape in 1832.

Eugene Casalis had a very clear idea of his future. In fact, on the boat that brought him to the Cape, he had a dream which he describes in his journal: A man stands at his bed which he recognises as Daniel. Daniel takes him by the arm and rapidly ascends to the "celestial regions"

where they soon arrive at the gates of a palace "whose extent appeared immeasurable and whose splendour was greater than that of a thousand suns". Casalis wanted to enter this abode of his Saviour, but Daniel said: "Not yet!" Then the picture changes and Casalis is shown a wild country with thousands of natives hungry for the Lords' word. "That first ..." said Daniel ... "then I will return for you, for a place is reserved for you in the Palace of the Redeemer".

His Christian ethos is thus immersed in a philosophy of self-denial, sacrifice, hard work and a single minded focus on a future goal. The conversion and the baptism of the Lesotho people and their King Moshesh

would lead to a reward in heaven. Eugene Casalis dedicated his life to this mission and although he spent almost 30 years at a missionary station in the Mountain Kingdom, he never managed to 'save' the soul of the King.

The reason is simply that the King and his subjects adhered to a very different religious ethos. They had no concept of a future as we feel it. They were spiritually connected to the ancestors who had a very strong and vital link to the present. Their prayers and sacrifices had nothing to do with a future vision of individual personhood. Instead, showing reverence to the ancestors in frequent rituals would lead to a good harvest or a positive outcome of a war. Carrying disfavour with the ancestors would result in crop failure and drought. Thus, their spirituality enhanced their present circumstances and they lived in a cosmic interconnectedness with nature, animals and their extended families.

Western culture sees matter as neutral and Man as the Prime Mover while the Basotho speak openly of a world connected and continuous in which the inert or the ancestors are the ability to affect the lives of the living. The cultural clash would lead to numerous misunderstandings and growing mistrust.

African philosophy still embraces a communal system based on wholeness of life signalled in rituals, an idyllic cosmos where hurricanes, comets and birds are interconnected and where all is ruled by the blessing and guidance of the ancestors. Personhood in a communitarian African world view is not what is bestowed upon someone simply through birth. Who you are, what and how you are is built by you over years through interconnectedness.

Casalis, for example, found it interesting that of all virtues, kindness was the one

most appreciated by the Basotho. They had words to express liberality, gratitude, courage, prudence, veracity, patience, but only very vague terms to express ideas of self denial, sacrifice, temperance, humility and future. The moral framework is thus immersed in a communal life which questions the idea of individual responsibility and conversion. (The concept of the "I" is thus completely alien.)

Unlike Casalis, who has a very clear concept of "above and below", the separation of the physical and the heavenly, the Basotho incorporated the spirit in their land and cattle. In Sesotho for example, cattle are called Modimo o Nko e Metsi. (God-with-the-wet-nose).

There is a theory about the African lack of vision as proposed by several authors including PJ O'Rourke. This theory holds that because of the rich earth, the long summers and the abundance of fruit and wild life, people living in Africa, unlike their brothers living in colder climates in the northern hemisphere, did not have to worry about the future. They did not have to hoard food or think about tomorrow, as tomorrow would look after itself. This, the theory goes, explains the difficulty Africa has to develop because development is closely linked to an idea of a future outcome.

African culture does throw up the odd prophet, the most famous being a Xhosa Queen who prophesized the total destruction of the Boers if indigenous communities would sacrifice all their cattle and burn their crops. This they did on a large scale which led to famine and the death of thousands of Xhosas in the early 1800s.

And yet, this all too simplistic. I have just read *Zulu Shaman, Dreams, Prophecies and Mysteries*, written by our own Zulu Shaman, Credo Mutwa. In this book he

emphasises the fact that the Zulu people do in fact believe in reincarnation:

He states: "We in Africa believe that the soul goes through a number of incarnations in its development—toward reaching the goal of maturity. We believe that our present stage is but one of several stages through which the soul must pass, and we use the symbolism of the butterfly's development from egg to caterpillar, to pupa, and then to adult as a symbol for the upward movement of the soul through various incarnations."

It becomes even more problematic if one considers that the West, as a Christian-formed culture, not only grasp the concept of future in terms of an ideal still to become,

but goes as far as borrowing from it, as the recent financial crisis in America seems to suggest. The implosion of the financial markets on such a massive scale seems to me to be the exact opposite of the African tradition of living in the moment, in the present. But it is maybe precisely this crisis which has highlighted that aspect of life which the African ethos imparts so clearly: one of sharing a communal destiny.

And come to think of it, is it not true that it is always individuals who are the makers of change? So maybe we need to expand the western emphasis on the individual to embrace the African sense of community. Could this be the beginning of true Christian community?

My greatest joy and hope for the future

Carol Kelly, Spring Valley, NY

About two weeks ago, I sat in a circle of teen-aged girls and two young women in conversation about sexuality and morality today. Many of these girls did not have much of a connection to The Christian Community, or to any church. In another room in the church, on the same evening, there was a group of men, talking about love and its meaning. At least half of those men, if not more, had very little connection to the church.

That these two events happened in a Christian Community church at all, is to me a ray of hope for the future and that they happened simultaneously was just an unplanned "coincidence". But what is going on? How is it that people seem interested in what we do, in what we have to say, in our projects, camps, conferences but have no relationship to the sacraments? Is this a sign of things to come?

The burning question for us here in America is how to bridge the enormous gap between what we have to bring and what people "expect". I meet people who are looking for something they cannot quite articulate. They may have an experience of one priest or another and through conversation become interested in what we are doing. But then comes the moment when they step into the Act of Consecration and they are confused, bewildered, and estranged. The Service, they say, is "too formal, the music is weird, the priests so foreign". To me, being a priest in America is like having so much food in the western world, knowing that so many people are starving, and not being able to manage to get the food to the people who need it! In the case of food, those reasons are political and economic, in the case of the Christian Com-

munity, those reasons are educational, I think and cultural.

So what can we do? Are there signs that we are “breaking through” somewhere? Here on the east coast we have recently had an addition of several wonderful, gifted young priests. This has certainly made a difference in the age of the people who are interested in The Christian Community. This is because the 30’s generation is taking up leadership roles and they are interested in one another! They do not seem to be a group, in general, who look up to the elders as was done in the past. They want to hear from one another. And after all, they are now the ones with the impulses for the future, so let us hear what they are saying. The generation “gap” in our church has changed dramatically since my new young colleague joined us last July. Now we really have congregation members from 18–98 yrs!

We have three active youth groups between Spring Valley NY, Washington DC and Devon PA. We form a triangle, geographically, where we can get together for events and social work projects. Just last night (you have to meet with teen-agers at night) two groups met in two different locations and one group called the other and sang to them over the phone! We are planning a trip together in May. With every age group there is a need to model harmonious, wholesome community life, clear thinking, good conversation and joy. This model may or may not bring them any closer right now to the sacraments or to what they understand as the Christ. But seeds are being planted. We strive to keep the conversation going. We keep singing songs that we love, sitting around the fire, looking up at the constellations and asking questions. This is my greatest joy and hope for the future.

Coming from India

Nirmala Diaz

It was in Whitsun 1997 that we attended the millennium conference organised by the Christian Community in Hamburg. It was a huge conference, perhaps the largest I have ever attended. But everything was so perfectly organised and the days went by without a hitch. Echoes of the impression of this conference still live on.

During our stay we had the chance to visit the Priest’s Seminary at Stuttgart and we were present at the ordination of several young priests who committed themselves to The Christian Community. The Social Responsibility of the various Steiner institutions, Old age homes, hospitals, farms, Camphill and schools also added to the depth of the after-image we carried back within us.

This year’s conference Future Now 2010, has awakened a feeling of anticipation. Of course the seeds of the future live in the moment and our meeting with people and our decisions need to be treated with utmost care and artistry. The Christ impulse that lives in our meetings with people from all ages and so many countries can never be overlooked.

In 1997 a group of us in Hyderabad, India was on the verge of setting up SLOKA, the first Waldorf school in India. Today the School is strong and flourishing. I feel that the conference, the interactions and the meetings, during our stay in Germany played a very important role in making this dream a strong reality.

THE GREEN SNAKE

An Autobiography

MARGARITA WOLOSCHIN

Told from the perspective of the anthroposophical artist, Margarita Woloschin, this is a first-hand account of her privileged upbringing in Russia and subsequent life. It records, in lavish detail, Woloschin's meetings with the Russian intellectual elite, including Tolstoy, her extensive travels throughout Europe and her marriage to the journalist-poet Max Voloshin.

Instrumental in the introduction of anthroposophy into Russia, Woloschin recounts the construction of the original Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, in which she was involved, and its ultimate destruction. The narrative is interspersed with the artist's personal memories and insights of Rudolf Steiner and the struggle for meaning in her own turbulent life.

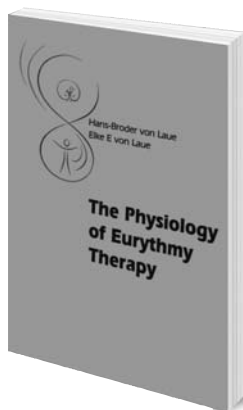
Set against the extremes of tsarist Russia and the Bolshevik Revolution, this haunting, historical memoir is testament to a fascinating and inspirational life.

Margarita Woloschin (1882-1973) was born in Moscow. She met Rudolf Steiner for the first time in 1905 and from 1908 followed him on his lecture tours across Europe. In 1914 she went to Dornach, Switzerland, where she worked on the construction of the first Goetheanum. In 1917 she returned to her native country, now in the midst of a revolution. She left in 1924 for Stuttgart, Germany where she lived until her death in 1973.



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Each one of us carries our destiny within ourselves. When we travel so far to attend such a conference, it gives us an opportunity to experience the essence of our being. And to realise what we would like our future to hold within the larger picture.

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It is a transformative moment. Future Now has a sharp urgency to recognize this call on a personal and macro level, to be open and share both dreams and striving with the people we connect with in this journey.


Only such an experience can enrich our moral imagination, to meet the world and to create the Future with renewed courage and affirmation.

Once again after 13 years as we prepare for this conference, I feel so much has happened and that coming back to a similar conference is like a promise for the Future Now.

*We have the will to work
That into this our work may flow
That which from out the spiritual
world
Working in soul and spirit,
In life and body,
Strives to become Man within us*

RUDOLF STEINER

Temple Lodge Club a quiet oasis in the middle of London



Temple Lodge—a Georgian Listed Building in the middle of Hammersmith—was once the home of the artist *Sir Frank Brangwyn*. Whilst his studio has been converted into a chapel with a **vegetarian restaurant** on its former mezzanine floor, the house itself is given over to accommodating bed and breakfast visitors. They come from four corners of the world to enjoy the *quietness and tranquillity* of the house. Many have described it as a really peaceful haven, despite being a stone's throw from the centre of Hammersmith and its busy traffic interchange. The absence of a television in the house and rooms *adds to this atmosphere*.

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

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THE SPIRIT WITHIN US

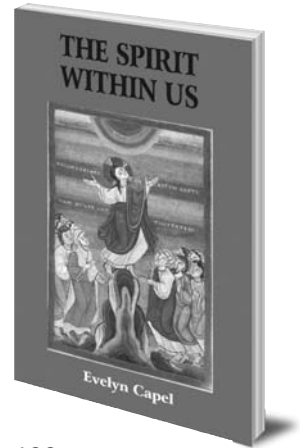
EVELYN CAPEL

Many people today find themselves in situations with which they cannot cope. How often do we feel, if only I could be wiser or more courageous to help me deal with problems that face me?

Most of the time, we must find our strength from within ourselves. This is not something which happens quickly or easily. Capel argues, however, that the spirit of Christ is a source of inner strength for each one of us. By developing an active inner life, the spirit within us can be found and brought into our consciousness.

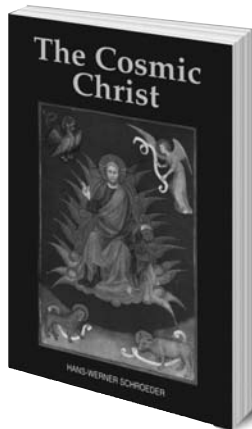
In this inspiring book Capel offers practical and compassionate advice to help the reader cultivate their inner life.

Evelyn Capel (1911–2000) was born at Stow-on-the-Wold in the Cotswold Hills in England. She read History at Somerville College, Oxford, and then studied at the seminary of The Christian Community in Stuttgart. In 1939, she became the first English woman priest ordained within it to celebrate the sacraments.



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HANS-WERNER SCHROEDER

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Hans-Werner Schroeder, born in 1931, is a priest of The Christian Community. He teaches at the seminary in Stuttgart.



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Cape Town (021) 762 0793
39 Timour Hall Road, 7800 Plumstead
Johannesburg (011) 789 3083
46 Dover Street, Randburg 2194 (Box 1065, Ferndale 2160)
KwaZulu Natal (031) 768 1665
148 Kangelani Way, Assagay 3610

UNITED KINGDOM

Aberdeen (01224) 208 109
8 Spademill Road, Aberdeen AB15 4XW
Botton (01287) 661 312
Danby, Whitby, N. Yorkshire, YO21 2NJ
Bristol (0117) 973 3760
20 St. John's Road, Clifton, Bristol, BS8 2EX
Buckfastleigh (01364) 644 272
23 Chapel Street, Buckfastleigh, Devon, TQ11 0AQ
Canterbury (01227) 765068
55, Wincheap, or 730882 Canterbury, CT1 3RX
Edinburgh (0131) 229 4514
21 Napier Road, Edinburgh, EH10 5AZ
Forest Row (01342) 323 205
Hartfield Road, Forest Row, E. Sussex, RH18 5DZ
Holywood (028) 9042 4254
3 Stewarts Place, Holywood, Co. Down, BT18 9DX

Ilkeston (0115) 932 8341
Malin House, St. Mary Street, Ilkeston, Derbyshire, DE7 8AF
Kings Langley (01442) 216768 or (07949) 324349
The Priory, Kings Langley, Herts. WD4 9HH
N. London (020) 8563 2758
34 Glenilla Road, London, NW3 4AN
W. London (020) 8748 8388
51 Queen Caroline Street, London W6 9QL
Malton/York (01653) 694 391
The Croft, Highfield Road, Old Malton, N. Yorkshire YO17 9DB
Mourne Grange (028) 4176 0110
Newry Road, Kilkeel, Newry, Co. Down, BT34 4EX
Oaklands Park (01594) 516 658
Newnham, Glos. GL14 1EF
Stourbridge (01384) 377 190
22 Baylie Street, Stourbridge W. Midlands DY8 1AZ
Stroud (01453) 752 105 or 73 Cainscross Road, 757 587 Stroud, Glos. GL5 4HB
IRELAND
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Boston (781) 648-1214
366 Washington Street, Brookline, MA 02445
Chicago (773) 989 9558
2135 West Wilson Chicago, IL 60625
Denver (303) 758 7553
2180 South Madison Street, Denver, CO 80210
Detroit (248) 546 3611
1320 Camden at Wanda, Ferndale, MI 48220
Los Angeles (818) 762 2251
11030 La Maida Street, North Hollywood, CA 91601
New York (212) 874 5395
309 West 74th Street, New York, NY 10023
Philadelphia (610) 647 6869
212 Old Lancaster Road, Devon, PA 19333
Sacramento (916) 362 4330
3506 Eisenhower Drive, Sacramento, CA 95826
San Francisco (415) 928 1715
906 Divisadero Street San Francisco, CA 94115
Spring Valley (845) 426 3144
15 Margetts Road Monsey NY 10952
Taconic-Berkshire Region (413) 274-6932
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