

## Christianity and Biodynamic Agriculture? Glen Atkinson

The theme to be bought to focus at this years Dornach Biodynamic Conference was, "Christianity as a redeeming force in Agriculture", however this title has since morphed into "Christian Motifs for the Development of Agriculture of the Future"

This theme has naturally set me reflecting on the role of Christianity and Anthroposophy in regard to what was presented in the Agriculture Course, by Dr Steiner.

The first thing to surface is that **Dr Steiner makes no mention of Christ or Christianity within this course**. Interestingly neither is there any reference to this in his many medical lectures, of which I consider the Agriculture course to be a natural part. There must be 100 medical lectures, and not even in the 'Pastoral Medicine' course to priests, was Christ a specific topic. These lectures are a discourse on the functional reality of the four bodies, as expressed in mental illness and its close friend, religious experience.

When I reflect further upon the many books within the general biodynamic library, again, I find no reference to this topic. However when I reflect on lectures I have heard presented, it is not that uncommon to have heard christian references of various kinds. Statements such as 'Applying the preparations is christianising the elemental beings' is an example some may be familiar with.

Where does such a statement come from? It arises from that part of Dr Steiner's work that came to be consolidated in the Anthroposophical world view. This is a movement that has christianity as a central core element of its philosophic stance. Thus the theme of this conference defines it as a conference of 'Anthroposophical Agriculture'.

An overview of the history of Biodynamics at the anthromedia.com website (3) states "When the lecture course on agriculture was given by Dr Steiner in Schloss Koberwitz, east of Breslau in Schlesien, around Pentecost 1924, he already announced in advance to which section of the Goetheaneum this impulse for the renewed agriculture out of anthroposophy was **to belong**. Because of her numerous tasks and responsibilities, Ita Wegman, as leader of the Medical Section, declined to take on this additional comprehensive area of work. And so the farming work became part of the Science Section."

Thus the Goetheaneum letter, the February conference, along with the influential Council of Representatives and the International Biodynamic Association, are all arising out of the Agricultural Section of the Anthroposophical Society. Thus making them 'beings' of Anthroposophical Agriculture.

The statement on anthromedia, identifies the right of those who have sought to christianize the Agriculture Course, to do so. Nevertheless the questions remain " Does the course need to be christianized, and are Anthroposophical Agriculture and the 'Agriculture Course ' the same thing? Following on from this is the question of where the Biodynamic Associations stand in regard to their Anthroposophical 'owners'.

Naturally we are all free to do whatever we like, and it is not my intention to place limitations upon the right of others to progress something as they feel fit. Nevertheless these are valid questions to ask and to be consciously addressed.

### **The Agriculture Course**

Upon reflection of the contents of the many medical lectures and the agriculture course, I am impressed by the world view Dr Steiner did present for us to work with, and the many challenges he clearly set for us in those courses.

Throughout these courses we are presented with an approach that is based upon the functional interaction of the four 'spiritual' bodies. He outlines four basic activities, that we find initially in Hinduism, from around 3000BC. These 'bodies' are the manifest influences of the four great realms of our environment, with the Galaxy / Fixed Stars being the macrocosmic home of the Spirit, with the Solar System as the macrocosmic source of the Astral activity, the Atmosphere of the Earth as the macrocosmic home of the Etheric activity, and of course, the physical body finds its source from the Earth sphere. While these names can be challenging for some, the astronomical reality of these spheres as 'energetic entities' are scientific fact. As Dr Steiner says 'we have to call them something'.(1)

From this base of the energetic activities, he described how they make their way into living processes and life forms, and how their disturbed interaction leads to dis-ease, in all living systems. He then provides many practical examples of measures that can be taken through homeopathic treatments and various therapeutic techniques, to help bring back the harmonious interactions of these activities. One is left with the impression that the indications he presents, are enough to work up a completely functional scientific approach, to the health of all life on Earth, within the parameters he set. The subsequent 80 years of medical and agricultural endeavors based upon these works would support this impression.

Throughout all these suggestions, there is a constant reminder to work to bring full consciousness into these processes, and to carry out rational scientific trials to find the practical reality of his suggestions. While he in places, most notably in the Agriculture lectures, encourages us to initially start with faith in his suggestions, he also says "what we have to do is not so much to return to the old instincts as, through a deeper spiritual insight, to discover things which can be applied ever less and less by the instincts as they have become uncertain." (2) Most notably he instructed the experimental circle (and doctors) to work out the practical scientific proof of his suggestions, before making his biodynamic and medical indications public.

So how well have we done in this task? I suggest not very well at all. While there has been significant scientific research to prove the physical value of BD practices, there are very few biodynamic commentators who can show how biodynamic practice, has become a complete and practical manifestation of the four body understanding. It is all too common for speakers to admit they do not understand the Agriculture course, yet they offer interpretations of it anyway. It appears 'the Agricultural Individuality' as a self contained organism, has become the comprehensible image of the course, while the details of the 'four body' agriculture outlined rarely rate a mention. The world view presented is often based only on that in lecture one, which is an image only of the external environment. Other lectures detail the internal influence of the preparations. Thus we most commonly have 501 /Cosmic / above, being polarized against 500 / Earthly below, while the compost preparations are seen as microbial and chemical activators. Thus the true practically energetic nature of the course appears to have escaped the majority of those interested in Biodynamics, which in turn has significantly limited its potential development. How often is the solution to pest and disease found in an 'organic' solution.

## **Christianity and Biodynamics**

Given this reality, where does christianity find its place as part of Dr Steiner's biodynamic impulse. The recent 'summer circular' from the Agricultural section in Dornach offers an insight. An appraisal of this document would support the statement "that it finds its place as part of Dr Steiner's Anthroposophy.' There is no doubting that Dr Steiner had a very strong connection with the Christ, and made this being and much of the standard christian lexicon, part of his view of the greater cosmic drama he saw as life's development on Earth.

I have listened to many Anthroposophically inclined biodynamic speakers over the last 30 years and initially accepted that the christian orientation was a natural part of Biodynamics. Statements like the one I presented earlier, and those in the recent circular, were accepted as the knowledge gained from wise ones. However, as I have gained my own experience of Dr Steiner's lectures and approach, I have come to wonder about the truth of these sort of statements. They are all

very well but how are they really confirmed? How can they be incorporated into a scientific approach? Most of all do the elementals want to be christianised?

I am left with the impression that christianising the course has become a way of providing a spiritual meaning to a document that does not need one. If the true practically energetic context is grasped, there is no need to add faith based spiritual connotations to provide deeper meaning.

We only need reflect upon Dr Steiner's directions, when giving the indications for the religiously orientated 'Christian Community', and how it was not his intention for Anthroposophists to join the Christian community. He saw them as two very separate impulses. In this same way, it seems to me, he saw his directions for Anthroposophy and Biodynamic Agriculture and Medicine as different streams, that need to develop along independent paths.

This is not saying Anthroposophical developments of Biodynamics are not a valid and worthwhile enterprise, just that it needs to be clearly seen as a separate enterprise. There is no doubting that Biodynamics has arisen out of Anthroposophy, and that Anthroposophists have been the first to develop many of the explanations around it. After all, the course was a private document until 1976 or so. But it also means that now it is a public document, other minds are being brought to bear upon it, and that other valid non-Anthroposophical developments of this work, are forthcoming. It is clear Dr Steiner's intention was that this becomes a movement for ALL the peoples of the world, many of whom have a justified antipathy to christianity. After all the biodynamic preparations do their job regardless of the belief and understandings we place around them.

We humans love to philosophise and find meaning. We like to tell a good story and it seems that, in lieu of finding the truly practical application of the four body agriculture, that many Anthroposophical presenters have fallen back upon the enormous reservoir of Anthroposophical concepts and beliefs, to fill in the many gaps that arise from piecing together an understanding, around a set of lectures that they invariably admit they do not understand. These gap fillers, of angelic beings and christian destinies, are impossible to question, and thus makes their theories impossible to challenge, and at worst leads them and their listeners away from the truly practical answers. The practical biodynamic outcomes however are a test of the philosophy. With the exception of Enzo Nastati, it appears there has been very little practical innovation arising from these stories. Meaning is so often derived from 'wonderful' concepts and pictures, as can be seen in the recent circular, but as for practical developments, I see very few arising, from this path. We are asked to work with what is Cosmic and what is Earthly in the growth process to renew agriculture, not be Christians.

Dr Steiner clearly wanted Biodynamics to be applied to as wide an area of the Earth as possible. Given the historical difficulties christianity has produced for itself, in regard to the majority of humanity, it would seem an obvious disadvantage for Biodynamics to be seen as a christian agriculture. Anthroposophists would no doubt admit that Dr Steiner's take on christianity, was a redeeming act of a corrupted impulse. So what many people accept as Christian belief is not even that promoted by Anthroposophy. "Traditional Christianity" for example, did away with the four body reality in 999, at the council of Constantinople. From then humans were defined as Body and Soul, with God the spirit being external to us eternally sinful humans. The internalised spirit and astrality were combined to become the soul, and the etheric and physical were combined to become the physical. From this time, on humanity began its inevitable march toward atheistic materialism, where the soul firstly becomes the mind, and eventually merely brain delusions, and 'we' become only the body, with one life to indulge as we wish. This dreadful legacy of all subsequent christianity, other than Anthroposophical christianity, stands in the way of christianity being seen by many as a truthful and appropriate world view for dealing adequately with living processes. This is but one of the many legacies that Christianity has to overcome.

Others, arising from inappropriate abuses of power of christian nations, who have used their faith as the battering ram for the rape and pillage, of people and the Earth, set up many barriers to the

wide spread acceptance of Biodynamics, as a Christian act, let alone a redeeming one for the future. The very recent crusade by a christian America in the middle east, stand as testament to the fact that this reality is still not far below the surface. How can depleted uranium, blanketing Iraq, be considered a christian act? This is the brush christianity is tarred with. Do we want it on us?

Possibly a better title for the conference would have been "Anthroposophical Christianity as a redeeming force in Agriculture". This would have at least acknowledged Dr Steiner's reorientation of a very general impulse.

## **Anthroposophical Agriculture and Biodynamic Agriculture**

A wider issue in the consideration of this topic, is the clarification of the relationship of Anthroposophical agriculture and Biodynamic agriculture. The Agriculture course and the medical lectures define, Biodynamics as, the science of the four bodies expression in life.

Anthroposophical Agriculture however has chosen to christianize its view of the Agriculture Course, and in doing so makes itself, but one of the derivative impulses arising from Dr Steiner's lectures.

In my experience, Anthroposophical Agriculture has played a clandestine role in the NZBDA, and is indeed the basis of the 'inner circle, in crowd' phenomena one eventually meets, which appears to work against the true 'being' of a community, from arising naturally. It is time Anthroposophical Agriculture comes out from behind the curtain and stands on its own feet, lives its own path and allows Biodynamic Agriculture, as defined in the lectures, to be the central impulse. Biodynamic Associations are now far more than its Anthroposophical members, and while Anthroposophical Agriculture continues to live in the shadows, it must manipulate the natural life of the BDAs, and their members, to achieve its aims. This of course, does not fit with Dr Steiner's instructions, at the Foundation Stone lecture, that there must be no deceit in the presentation of Anthroposophy. This 'clarification' is therefore a spiritual imperative that Anthroposophical Agriculture must make for its own health.

We, the non Anthroposophical members of Biodynamic Associations all over the world, are faced with a challenge. Are the Associations, a subservient appendage of the 'christian' Agricultural Section of the Goetheanum? If not then what is Anthroposophical Agriculture's place in the scheme of things and how do we practically define this relationship?

Is the present situation leading us to a conscious science of the four bodies or into a world of fuzzy philosophic belief, that separates us off from our real constituency, the farmers of the world, many of whom are Hindus, animists and even atheists?

Dr Steiner's approach is inclusive, scientific and practical. It is open to the whole world and as many people's endeavors have shown, it has powerful practical answers to the agricultural and health challenges we face in our time. If we follow his lead and continue to develop the truly practical 'spirituality' he provides, all people can receive it and we will do justice to his immense gift to humanity and the Earth.

1 Pg The Healing Process

2 Lec 1 Ag course

3 [http://www.anthromedia.com/articles/agriculture/agricultural\\_section\\_at\\_the\\_goetheanum](http://www.anthromedia.com/articles/agriculture/agricultural_section_at_the_goetheanum)