

*With so much of our spiritual life depending upon the free flow of ideas, this newsletter is intended to be a forum for people to explore their affections and thoughts in areas of their choosing. Our hope is to give expression to many differing voices that go to make up the tapestry of the Lord's creation.*

## Do Not Fear

by Kris Earle

*Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life...But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Luke 12:22, 31,32*

We Christians are very familiar with this passage from Luke. Here the Lord assuages our anxiety. We are told to stay focused on what is of real importance: our relationship with the Lord and our spiritual health.

Interestingly enough for many of us, the subject of women in the ministry often brings up the feelings this passage warns against. "Will the General Church ever recognize the contributions women can make in the professional ministry?" "Will we ever accept the valuable gifts women have to offer and not deny them due to ignorance and prejudice?" We could come up with a thousand worries and uncertainties like these! Fortunately my own concern about women participating in a professional ministry in the General Church has been lifted after an experience I had late last summer.

I teach at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. One of the projects I have her individual contribution. Seeing the balance created through their co-operation

been working on over the last couple of years is organizing freshman orientation. Late last August we gathered all of the incoming freshmen and student leaders at Deer Park for a weekend orientation off campus. We had a challenge course, vespers, Sunday morning worship, games, talent show and group work. When I began the organization process I was clear that I wanted volunteer students to create the worship services instead of having the traditional format of a priest leader. Ray Silverman, our chaplain, was more than happy to facilitate our students in this task. These workshops resulted in my personal epiphany!

A small group of young men and women volunteers, new freshmen and student leaders, organized three experiential services with inspirational music and stories from the Word. The beauty for me was not only the services themselves, but also the process the students went through to organize these services. Both men and women, on equal footing, worked collaboratively together, each making his or her contribution. It was what took away my concern for the future of the ministry. These students did

not seem to have any fixed ideas of what he was to do, or what she was to do. The gifts they gave were given and recognised as individual gifts, not male or female.

If this up-and-coming generation can work together to worship in unique, heartfelt ways, what then do I need to worry about? If these young people can individually and collectively seek the kingdom of God, I have nothing to fear.

Sure, they will encounter problems along the way; sure, it will never be perfect, but if they can sustain the experience I had at Freshman Orientation, the ministry will undoubtedly change because WE, the General Church, are changing. "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Ah! My heart tells me, the kingdom is indeed at hand!

## Male and Female in the Writings

By Dewey Odhner

I quote several passages from the Writings, after which I will give my reflections on them:

*We receive one thing from our father and another from our mother. From our father we receive everything inside us. Our soul itself—our life—is from him. From our mother we receive everything on the surface. In short, our inner self (our spirit itself) comes from our father, while our outer self (our actual body) comes from our mother. Anyone can grasp this simply by considering the fact that the soul itself is implanted by the father and sets about clothing itself in the tiny shape of a body in the ovum. Whatever is added after that, in either the ovum or the uterus, is the mother's, because the soul has no other supply of material to draw on. AC 1815:1*

*...[T]he soul of the offspring comes from its father, and its clothing from its mother. No one who is wise calls into question the idea that the soul comes from the father. Moreover, it is clearly visible in later generations which descend from fathers of families in a true line of descent, from their qualities of mind, and, in addition, from their facial features (these being images of the qualities of mind). Indeed, the father reappears, as though in effigy, if not in his children, nevertheless in his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The reason is that the soul forms the inmost element in a person, and though this may be covered over in the immediate offspring, still it emerges and displays itself in generations after that. The fact that the soul comes from the father and the clothing from the mother may be illustrated by analogous parallels in the vegetable kingdom. Here the earth or ground is the common mother. It admits seeds into it as though in a womb, and clothes them. Indeed, in a way it conceives, carries, gives birth to and rears the seedlings, as a mother does her offspring from a father. CL 206*

*The Lord said on many occasions that the Father sent Him and that He was sent by the Father: e.g. Matt 10:40; 15:24; John 3:17, 34; 5:23, 24, 36-38, et al. He said this because by being sent into the world is meant coming down and mixing with human beings; this He did by means of the Human, which He took upon Himself by means of the Virgin Mary. The Human too is really the Son of God, because it was conceived of Jehovah God as the Father (as is stated by Luke 1:32, 35). The Human is called the Son of God, the Son of Man and the Son of Mary; by the Son of God is meant Jehovah God in His Human, by the Son of Man the Lord as to the Word, and by the Son of Mary the actual human which He took upon Himself. It will be proved in the following pages*

that these are the meanings of the Son of God and the Son of Man; that the Son of Mary means His purely human nature is evident from the reproduction of human beings, where the soul comes from the father and the body from the mother. The father's semen contains the soul, and this is clothed with a body in the mother's womb. To put it another way, everything spiritual a person has is from his father, everything material from his mother. TCR 92

There is a discrepancy between Swedenborg's idea of sex and the common one that applies to actual men and women. Why was he able to notice the facial resemblance of grandchildren and great grandchildren to their male ancestors and not to their female ones? Surely in Swedenborg's time there were people who noticed facial resemblances to grandmothers and great grandmothers, and that a white father did not always produce a white child<sup>1</sup>, and even that there are male and female plants. But the evidence was not as inescapable as it is today. Now, in addition to the kinds of observations that could be made then, we know the genetic basis of inheritance. We know that females pass on genetic material as well as males, material by which the body is formed. To most educated people today, Swedenborg's idea of male and female would seem ludicrous. He evidently had some attachment to the idea of a person's soul being from their father. This idea is rooted in our theological heritage: the Lord referred to God as His Father, and it is a fundamental doctrine of the New Church that His soul came from God, and is God.

So if we accept Swedenborg's Writings as divinely inspired, must we not also accept his idea of male and female? I think there is a way we can accept it without rejecting the overwhelming evidence of modern science. That is, we can accept it in a theological sense, and be careful to

distinguish this from the common usage. In the theological sense a *male* or *father* is that which passes its soul on to its offspring, and a *female* or *mother* is that which supplies the substances in which the soul embodies itself. Thus God is the Lord's Father, and Mary was His mother while He lived on earth; but God is also the Lord's real Mother, since the Lord discarded the substances from Mary and glorifies Himself in a body of purely divine substance. Now we can consider in what sense it is true that all plants are male<sup>2</sup>. They are in the sense that they all pass their character on to their offspring in their genetic material. However, they also pass on the genetic material itself, not just the soul it embodies; and the biologically female flowering plants pass on other materials in the cotyledons (parts of the seed that store food for the new plant), from which in part the plants form their bodies. So to some degree the plants are female as well as all male, even in the theological sense.

Humans also could be considered all male, for all human parents pass on some aspects of their character to their children through genetic material and other means, but less so than plants for two reasons. For one thing, human mothers are more female than female plants because they pass on more material for their offspring's bodies than plants do. The other reason is more important: God creates each human individually as an immortal soul. We only pass on to our children relatively external

---

<sup>1</sup> "That the soul is from the father follows not only from what has been mentioned above but also from many other indications; as from this circumstance, that a child born of a black father, for example an African, by a white mother, for example a European, is black, and vice versa..." DP 277

---

<sup>2</sup> "Trees and the other members of the vegetable kingdom do not have two sexes, male and female, but every one is male". TCR 585

stuff that the soul uses for its embodiment. Therefore, in the theological sense, all human parents are mothers, and God is our common Father.

Making this distinction between the theological and biological senses of sex clears up for me the apparent absurdity of these passages, where the theological sense is clearly called for. But there are many passages where it is not so clear which meaning applies. I think it would be useful

not to automatically take distinctions of sex in the Writings in the biological sense, but to consider other possibilities, especially in passages that have been interpreted in ways that promote hurtful attitudes toward women. The true meaning may not apply to actual men and women, but to parts of ourselves that are male and female in the theological sense, or possibly in some other sense.

## Going Nearer to the Lord

By Helen Kennedy

*"Therefore she (Hagar) called the spring, the spring of the Living One who sees me." (Gen 16:4) This means, "The truth that was thus clearly visible". (AC 1956,7)*

*The Arcana speaks of things the Lord saw while on earth, "from His Interior Man within the Exterior Man, and without the Rational serving as a go-between". "These ideas do not fall into words, only into the sense conveyed by words—abstractedly, quite apart from the material ideas... These matters, which seem so obscure to man, present to the angels ideas so clear and distinct, ideas enriched by so many representations, that if anyone wrote about just a tiny fraction of them he would fill a whole book. It is after this passage from the Word that Hagar names the spring, and that obscure things become clearly visible." (AC 1955)*

An understanding I have of truth is that it makes affections visible, or helps me to see what I am feeling and put words to it. Truth on an inner or interior level helps me to see what I am sensing or feeling in an inner, unconscious way; sometimes it takes a long time, or a lot of emotional effort, before things become clear. Trying to make these inner affections clearer was one of the purposes of myths and elaborate rituals from worship services in ancient times. They often uncovered deep unconscious things, and I believe that is why they were so highly valued. Rituals like this that are part of our common heritage occur in Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. They are ones that people of the Jewish Church

performed. Most of them don't make much rational sense, but the Writings assure us that these rituals had to do with the celestial heaven as well as the spiritual heaven. If it's true to say they do represent the celestial heaven, too, then we can look to affection for some meaning behind them, because they don't make much sense to our thinking mind. People often are bored reading them. While recently reading the first parts of Leviticus in Everett Fox's new translation of the Five Books of Moses, I didn't have a lot of thoughts about them either, but a few feelings drifted into my mind. And when I paid attention to the feelings, some beautiful things started to form:

*Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: anyone—when one among you brings-near a near-offering for YHWH from domestic animals... If an offering-up is his near-offering, from the herd, male, wholly-sound... to the entrance of the Tent of Appointment, let him bring it near... He is to lean his hand on the head of the offering up... He is to slay the herd-animal before the presence of YHWH... And the sons of Aaron, the priests, are to bring-near the blood and are to dash the blood against the slaughter-site, all around, that is at the entrance of the Tent of Appointment... (Lev. 1:1-5)*

Animals correspond to affection. The passages are saying when a person wants to go nearer to the Lord, she has to do it from affection. The offering being from the herd, male, wholly-sound says she can do it only from truth that has a sound affection within it, an affection that springs from the internal into the external. In *True Christian Religion* we are told that "A person must climb up and get to know the Divine Being" (24:1). To do this depends on internal things, for a head means internals. It is significant in the text that the person is to kill the animal himself—it means you are to go deeper into the internal and not depend on a priest to do it for you. The priests are to disseminate truths (blood) but the good or love (the animal) can come only from the Lord being within you.

*Then he is to flay the offering-up... And is to section it into its sections... The sons of Aaron, the priests, are to arrange the sections...upon the wood that is upon the fire... A fire offering of soothing savor for YHWH... (Lev. 1:6,8)*

When you make an offering, you have to go past external things, for flaying is removing the skin and skin has to do with external things. You have to think it through, or sort things out and decide for yourself what internal things you want, and

these sacrifices and rituals connected the Jewish Church with societies in heaven, and that is the only way the connection between heaven and earth could be kept until Jesus was born. But

These insights were really exciting to me. And the gruesomeness of the sacrifices (from our standards) made me think that the sensuous level is really crude when compared with the inner or spiritual level. It is that inner, spiritual level that the Lord is trying to get us to. At one point when Jesus was on earth, He saw within Himself that the human sensuous level was so devoid of goodness that He had to first use truth to set it back into order (*The Path*, Geoffrey Childs, p. 165). This shows the necessity for truth (the male from the herd), but also for affection (wholly sound). In that way the sensuous could receive something good within itself, the offering which brings us nearer to the Lord.

how you are willing to serve the Lord. The fire has to do with love, so it all has to be done from a deep affection. With this affection as an offering, the Lord will find soothing savor and be happy that you want to know Him better.

Swedenborg says that every detail of that was a long time, 1200 - 1500 years or more, for this odd connection to keep everything functioning. The Church, meaning the spiritual state of mankind, is said to have been in externals at that

time. Significant, then, is realizing that when I am in externals, the Lord will use odd little ways and things to keep

reaching out to me, keeping me connected to Him.

"...You are not unstable or infirm, unlike me." (Irish Monastic Poetry - 10<sup>th</sup> century)

*It is precisely here that the Bible and the Qur'an find their real kinship. As divine revelation, each book says much more than what a literal reading can possibly capture. To say that God is one, as both the Qur'an and the Bible insist, is also to say that God's wisdom is unfathomable. As the Prophet himself insisted, God reveals himself through signs whose meanings need to be deciphered. Here, it would seem, lie the promising seeds of religious reconciliation. Humility, not bravado, is the universal posture of anyone who dares to plumb the mind of God and seek to do his will.*

Kenneth L. Woodward *Newsweek* 2/11/02 p. 57

## Johann Sebastian Bach: Musical Expression Of True Marriage

By Linda Simonetti Odhner

*"The persistence of sexual modesty challenges and utterly refutes [the] equation of the libertine with the erotic, because those who are returning to virtue are doing so for precisely sensual reasons. They are often totally secular, but have found vice boring and insipid. [Simone de] Beauvoir said that Sade showed that 'no aphrodisiac is so potent as the defiance of Good,' and now history has proved her and Sade wrong.*

*"Modesty is the proof that morality is sexy.*

*"It may even be the proof of God, because it means that we have been designed in such a way that when we humans act like animals, without any restraint and without any rules, we just don't have as much fun." Wendy Shalit, A Return to Modesty, p. 193.*

Some purists about musical performance believe that music should only be played on the instruments for which it was composed, and in particular, that the Even if Bach weren't writing for the piano, Gould's interpretation convinced me that the piano, more than any other keyboard instrument, brings out the full richness and nuance of Bach's formal conceptions.

keyboard works of Johann Sebastian Bach should not be played on the piano. Having grown up with Glenn Gould's piano recordings of Bach, I couldn't disagree more.

Maybe the real reason people disapprove of Bach played on the piano is something entirely different.

It's too sexy.

Bach's sacred choral music is a turn-on, too, but the abstract concert works, pure form, no words, go straight to the point. On the harpsichord, their harmonic qualities are a little difficult to make out, veiled by strident overtones. Playing them on the piano strips off the powdered wigs, buckled shoes, and knee breeches of the Baroque period and reveals them in all their timeless and naked glory. The concert compositions are called secular, but they too are sacred.

What is it about the music of Bach that makes it more erotic than any erotica? There's nothing in the least improper or indecent about it, nothing of allurements or seduction or the tang of the forbidden. It's not about sex, but it's about what sex is supposed to be about, what sex expresses at its most transcendent: the true marriage of love and wisdom: the resolution of tension and friction between what appear to be irreconcilable opposites, and the joyous, fruitful union that results. Bach never cheats or takes cheap shortcuts; all the effects are solidly crafted and honestly come by, and that is why his music is a never-ending fountain of joy of which I never tire.

In response to my previous article, "Leave It to Lovers," I have received warnings about the dangers of even the finest erotica for those suffering from sexual addiction. And, especially because they came from those who reacted positively to my words, I take those warnings seriously. But what if in certain cases true erotica is so pure and clean and decent that most people don't even recognize it as such? What if, being about true marriage and true intimacy, it has right hand, as their joining wavers between harmony and dissonance, fits them together into yet another melody, while the staccato tenths in the left hand set off their fine

nothing to offer a sex addict, who craves the reward of pleasure and the illusion of relationship, but shies away from real closeness or commitment to a married partner or to the Lord?

Music can be a drug, and become an addiction, but as a drug it can also function therapeutically, for healing. Music, like other forms of art, can serve as a channel for remains that mean the difference between life and death. But that story is for another time.

I once wrote to a musical friend that Bach is the master of the musical orgasm. She replied that at first she thought I said it just to shock her, but then realized that it was true. A surprising number of people I've spoken to feel as I do, but it's something we don't discuss publicly.

The Capriccio from Partita No. 2 contains the most exquisite musical climax I have ever heard (though it is only one of many in the first three Partitas, which I've studied in detail). It comes in two versions, one early in the first half and the other, longer and more intense, late in the second half. These musical phrases straight out of heaven stand alone, but gain even more from their context, like jewels in their proper setting. The first one comes as a sudden surprise, an unexpected gift, but the second is the culmination of a masterful buildup of musical tension, and the ideas the whole sequence communicates to me—the whole piece, in fact—simply defy verbal description. To say it is about the sport of love and wisdom, the union of opposites, and the miracle of redemption, only begins to express all that I hear. The movement of the two melodic lines in the

shades of meaning; the phrases move upward while the key modulates downward. This is silly; go find a recording.

This description will convey meaning to

you only if you've experienced something akin to it in your response to art or life, but I suspect that most people have. Where erotica is concerned, the process of making Bach's music a living part of me has led me to two conclusions.

First of all, in approaching the use and creation of erotica, I take Bach as a model. If I make it as pure and decent and transcendently beautiful as Bach's music, how can I go wrong? I expect to come up a little short, though. The purpose of true erotica should be not just to excite and gratify bodily desire, but to inspire and ennoble those who encounter it. I know it sounds unlikely, but when I contemplate Bach, I feel that anything is possible.

Secondly, erotica can be a tool for seeing sex in marriage as spiritual practice. Within the discipline of fidelity and chastity, sexual intimacy with one's partner can be the gateway to some pretty amazing states of being, some stunning experiences of the presence of God and the oneness of humanity. And, as David Schnarch points out in *Passionate Marriage*, it's not what you do that makes sex what it most deeply is; it's who you are and what you express through it. The arts are appropriate media for demonstrating this truth to those who are open to it.

And who can doubt that Bach, as he practiced his art, found communion with his God?

### Johann Sebastian Bach

O magnify the Lord with me! Each voice  
Must make the call its own: if they conflict,  
Strike dissonance, with more cause they'll rejoice,  
Bent, breaking to His will, to sentience pricked,  
When chaos meets perfection. Shifted free  
By symmetry in the well-tempered scale,  
Turn, turn again; with every change of key  
Let added meaning burn a different trail,  
Light unsuspected facets, while one phrase  
Insists, repeats, cascading, staggered through  
The dance of insight endlessly renewed.  
Sound turns to sight, makes bright the songs of praise,  
Each a complete departure, and all true,  
Their beauty by the Maker long pursued.

Poem by LSO previously published in the *New Philosophy*

The highest kind of angel has love of the Lord as the main focus... These angels not only know, but also feel what is true and act on it without debate or speculation. Huston Smith in "Intimations of Mortality" *Harvard Theological School Review*

## The New Church in the Philippines

On February 24<sup>th</sup> Caritas was honored to have Bishop King present a short worship service on the ministry. It was followed by an informal gathering to discuss the San Diego General Church society's outreach program, the Universal New Church, a group not unlike Sons of the Academy or Theta Alpha that meets in San Diego society's church building. Its purpose is to share the spiritual principles of truth contained in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg with all people, and its defining faith is contained in *True Christian Religion*, Note 3. This group is providing a stepping stone for Philippine people who would like to join an organization. The services it offers are:

1. To provide the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg and collateral literature describing spiritual truths.
2. To provide translation services, mainly into Spanish.
3. To provide speakers to visit and give lectures and/or conduct services of worship for groups, small and large, who might be interested in incorporating these principles.
4. To provide teaching aids for all ages where local groups wish to educate both adults and children in the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

The work of this group is currently being financed by several individuals of the General Church, and its immediate areas of operation are Mexico, the Philippines, and Spanish- and Tagalog-speaking individuals and groups in the San Diego area.

The following is excerpted from a paper by Merlita B. Rogers, who is head pastor of the San Diego Tagalog New Jerusalem Church, which holds worship services in the

San Diego same church building. She writes that the main church in the Philippines was located in the central area of Manila. It was referred to as The New Jerusalem General Assembly Church, and also had smaller, satellite churches, plus a Seminary School where pastors were trained to study the Bible and the doctrines of the New Jerusalem General Assembly Church. Swedenborg's teachings had a great influence in this church and it is where Merlita Roger's father, the late Bishop Simeon Baltazar, studied and became an ordained minister.

Basically there were four separate New Jerusalem church organizations in the Philippines, all located in central Luzon island: the New Jerusalem General Assembly Church in Manila (Pastor Baltazar's group); a small church in Batangas province in the south; a church in Laguna to the southwest; a church in Malabon to the north.

Pastor Baltazar used to travel long distances to the province of Bataan, doing missionary work. The people there had no building in which to meet. In his lifetime he baptized hundreds into the New Jerusalem General Assembly Church. In the late 60s a church building was built for him in Bataan. He still continued traveling and sharing the Word of God in different towns in Bataan and adjoining provinces and rural areas. At times he would speak in an open field if the number of attendees could not be accommodated in a home. In his sermons, he explained the Holy Scriptures in the spiritual sense.

As to the origin of the New Jerusalem General Assembly Church, Pastor Merlita Rogers does not know. She knows the first Bishop in the Philippines was Bishop Pedro Angeles. Atanacio Pineda followed him, and when Bishop Pineda passed away, his wife

Felicisma Pineda became the bishop. During her administration she added many rules and regulations that threatened to compromise the truths. The New Jerusalem General Assembly Church started going in different directions, which negatively affected its members. Also, some people were excommunicated from the church.

Reverend Baltazar and some other pastors were in disagreement, and eventually separated themselves. Reverend Baltazar changed the name of his church but kept the doctrines of faith and charity, of the Oneness of God and of His Second Coming the same. When Bishop Felicisima Pineda died, her youngest daughter, Ida, became bishop. Eventually other groups broke their ties with the New Jerusalem General Assembly Church.

Later, Dr. Vinson Pineda, Felicisima's second youngest son, reached out and invited members from the different groups to join him. Although both his parents were bishops, he was not a serious church member in his youth and said the calling to preach came later. At her request, Vinson Pineda helped Merlita's brother, Septhan, to become a minister to the church people in Bataan. The church in Bataan became alive again.

Since Vinson did not have enough knowledge of the Word, and there were no books of the Writings to learn from, he enrolled at the Asian Seminary Institute where they do not teach the Bible according to the spiritual sense. Sometime later he sent Pastor Morante to Bataan to preach there. His sermons on salvation by faith alone and God in three persons disturbed many of the people. Septhan talked with Pastor Morante and Vinson Pineda and saw that the doctrine of the church was changing. Shortly after he noticed *New Jerusalem Church* was no longer printed in the letterhead of their programs. Septhan acted quickly, separating the Bataan New

Church from Vinson's ministry and resumed preaching himself by using the sermons of his late father, Bishop Baltazar. This was in October, 2000. Two months after the separation, Vinson Pineda's church in Manila was formally affiliated and accepted into the Church of God. Vinson's church members had no knowledge of the coming affiliation and were powerless to stop it. The older members, who remember teachings according to the spiritual sense, are confused by the doctrine of the Church of God. They are very much troubled with this situation. Yet it is not feasible for them to go from Manila to Bataan every Sunday, a four or five hour drive each way. Pastor Merlita Rogers says the situation is very sad. The flock is scattered and must be gathered into the fold, as they are the Lord's lost sheep. She says that church will die, and many members are hungry and thirsty for the genuine doctrine of the Lord. *And they were scattered because there is no shepherd; and they became meat to all the beasts of the field when they were scattered upon the face of the earth. And none did search or seek after them.* (Ezek. 34:5-7)

During this darkest hour, when it separated itself rather than compromise its doctrine, the hand of God has been working mysteriously to save His church. There was a providential meeting between Bishop Baltazar, who had retired to San Diego, and Rev. Cedric King. As a result, Bishop Louis King and his wife, Freya, made a visit, bringing them a set of the Arcana, the first books of the Writings the people in Bataan had ever seen. This was in November, 2000. Bishop King's timing was perfect. His presence encouraged and uplifted the members of the Bataan New Church, giving them a sense of commitment. They now feel they have a guardian they can turn to for help as they continue in their service to the Lord. Since then, Rev. Grant Schnarr and

his staff at the General Church in Bryn Athyn have sent more books, but they are still in need of Sunday School materials for teachers and students.

Pastor Merlita Rogers is heartened to experience the commitment of love being evidenced by members of the San Diego Society, with special thanks to Vice Chairman Ralph Junge. Also thanks to the many supporters in Bryn Athyn. These forces will help assure that the New Church in the Philippines and Bataan will once again become a vibrant and shining beacon of the Doctrines in that country.

Bishop King goes to the Philippines every month. There he holds a Tuesday class for Bible study with adults, a Thursday class for Bible study, and a Sunday School class for children (held on Saturday morning). In addition, there are theological study groups. Three of the adults in this group are being trained by Bishop King and soon will become very good leaders. In the meantime Pastor Merlita Rogers travels back and forth between Bataan and Manila.

*Compiled by Lynne H. Smith and Helen Kennedy*

*If you wish to support these efforts, please contact Mr. Ralph Junge, 5131 Krenning St., San Diego, Calif. 92105 Rjunge@juno.com.*

F F F F F

- God is one, in whom is the Divine Trinity, and He is the Lord God the Saviour Jesus Christ.
- Faith leading to salvation is believing in Him.
- Evil actions must not be done because they are the work of the devil and come from him.
- Good actions must be done because they are the work of God and come from Him.
- A person must perform these actions as if they were his own, but he must believe they come from the Lord working in him and through him.

TCR 3:2

## How Does Fundamentalism Affect Us?

*By Beryl Simonetti*

What follows is a collection of thoughts which may be controversial but which have the value of connecting ideas in ways that are new to me. I ask that you please read them with an inquiring attitude.

Since September 11, my thinking has been stimulated by several penetrating articles and interviews in the New York Times magazine on topics relating to fundamentalism, terrorism and the place of women in the world.

Fundamentalism is "a movement or attitude stressing strict and literal

adherence to a set of basic principles" according to Webster's Collegiate Dictionary.

Those who adhere to a "set of basic principles" separate themselves from those whom they perceive as lowering their standards and compromising with outside influences. Thus, one concept that underlies fundamentalism is the division of all people into WE and THEY. In the General Church, this often has taken the form of "WE are New Church and THEY are Old Church," or, "WE have the TRUTH and THEY do not."

The implication, whether implied or stated, is that WE are RIGHT and THEY are WRONG. Taken one step further, WE are GOOD and THEY are EVIL.

WE stand together and THEY are foreign to us, outside of our close-knit group. THEY are "the Other." This attitude is shown in the following description of what happened in New York on September 11, 2001.

"People deeply enclosed in their sanctified worldviews were carrying out what they experienced as a sacred command to annihilate the Other." (From "The Villains" by Robert Stone, in NYTimes magazine 9-23-01, p. 22)

While the General Church has never approached the extreme of terrorism, it has some qualities that are associated with fundamentalism.

Does the "set of basic principles" aspired to in the General Church have to do with "absolute truth," or can it be seen as somewhat arbitrary? Is it possible to separate the absolute from the relative, to always interpret things correctly? Is a "sanctified worldview" a goal for the General Church?

Fundamentalism emphasizes the necessity of one clear position of truth which must dominate all other positions. By definition, all other positions are false. If someone brings out a different point of view, it threatens the basic principles that have been agreed upon in the past. For the believer, it threatens the position of TRUTH.

Martin E. Marty addresses the question of a single point of view: "The fundamentalist... says there was a moment in history when a particular book, leader and original social community was perfect, which in my opinion never existed. In the period of the early Christians, Paul and Peter are fighting like mad in Acts already. But fundamentalists teach that there was that

perfect moment, and in their selective retrieval they go back to that perfect moment. They say, 'We don't change at all,' and people say, 'Yeah, while all the other people are compromising with modernity, these people really reach deep.' But the hymnity, the songs, the scriptural base—it's all a very particular interpretation, and the fundamentalist convinces us that it's always been there." (From "Sacred Battles—questions for Martin E. Marty," an interview by Paul Scott, in NYTimes magazine 9-30-01 p. 19)

I'm reminded of a quote from the Jan. 20, 2001 Governance meeting: "The General Church is never unclear about what it stands for!" It seems the General Church "perfect moment" was at the time of its founding.

\* \* \* \*

Fundamentalism affects not only our view of the world and the church, but also our view of the relationships between men and women. The fundamentalist mindset gravitates toward WE and THEY, and the most natural division of human beings is into males and females.

In spite of the New Church ideals and goals which work toward the joining of good and truth or of husband and wife in marriage, the mindset of fundamentalism encourages their separation.

How can this be so? What forces are at work that try to separate the masculine from the feminine?

In Conjugal Love 33 we read, "Nothing in the two sexes is the same, although there is nevertheless a capacity for conjunction in every detail. Indeed, masculinity in the male is masculine in every part, even in the least part of his body, and also in every idea of his thought, and in every bit of his affection. So, too, with femininity in the female." Taken literally and simplistically, this leads to the notion that men and women

have absolutely nothing in common, and that suggesting otherwise is heresy.

Those who wish to emphasize the differences between men and women rather than the similarities prefer to think of men as purely rational beings and women as purely affectional ones. Sometimes reference to a man's affectional "feminine side" or a woman's rational "masculine side" is condemned by reference to Conjugal Love 33 above, saying there can be no such thing.

If a man believes this wholeheartedly how would he go about showing that he is masculine in every least part? He would want to become rational and objective by separating from his loves. Seen from this point of view, a man's separation of his rational faculties from his emotions is a good thing. This is the way he hopes to see truth from a "higher light" without bias. (see Conjugal Love 165)

Recently this has been expressed in New Church Life as follows:

"The main gift of the male understanding is its ability to separate itself from those things which its will loves, to see truth apart from those loves." (New Church Life Sep '97 p. 397)

In the General Church, Rationality is prized above all else. This is "a religion that MAKES SENSE."

The culture teaches when men have feelings that are irrational, they are afraid of them and want to get rid of them. Emotion and irrationality belong to women. Men are supposed to be objective at all times.

Bishop Benade expressed this idea in extreme terms. He stated that in women "the will or cupidity rules over the understanding; such is every disposition of their fibers, such is their nature: but the masculine sex is so formed, that the understanding or the reason rules; and reason makes up man's nature and every

fiber of his being." (Quoted in Connections II, p 45)

Sometimes we see a progression of ideas about men and women which gradually lead from a moderate view to one which is more extreme. Heaven and Hell 369 clearly teaches that both men and women have both will and understanding. But as we consider also the teaching of Conjugal Love 33 as interpreted by Benade above, women go from having will predominate (Heaven and Hell 369) to being irrational (NOT having understanding predominate), to being ruled by cupidities (Benade's formulation) to being evil.

Men, on the other hand, go from having understanding predominate (Heaven and Hell 369) to being rational and objective (NOT having will predominate), to separating from their proprial loves, to being good.

Strange ideas. Where could they have come from? This is obviously an extreme case, and no one is likely to subscribe to this whole progression, but it comes uncomfortably close to some of the thinking I have heard about and read of. (We have also inherited a similar construction from the Christian church which holds that evil came into the world because of Eve.)

The complete separation of a man's rational side from his affections and emotions, which seems to be desirable for his pursuit of truth, has some serious consequences. Taken to the extreme, it is called dissociation by psychologists.

Colin Ross in his work Dissociative Identity Disorder discusses the origin in a single person of multiple personalities which sometimes do not even know of each other's existence. "The demon alter [alternate personality with negative connotations], I believe, occurs in our culture because of a fundamental dissociation of religious consciousness from the physical body.... In Christian culture the spontaneous, pagan

sources of physical vitality, including but not limited to sexuality, are dissociated and disavowed. They are then identified as evil and undesirable, needing to be fought and contained." (p. 118)

Dissociation is not necessarily so complete as to produce multiple personalities, but results from the desire to separate from unacceptable parts of oneself.

"It is no accident that contemporary evangelical preachers are so often chronic, frequent abusers of prostitutes. They are highly dissociated men. Their religion is dissociated from their sexuality" (Ross, p. 181)

Dissociation has been linked to the use of pornography. In a fundamentalist Christian book, An Affair of the Mind: One woman's courageous battle to salvage her family from the devastation of pornography, Laurie Hall says: "Because the other guys in his unit knew he was a Christian, Jack bought and used his magazines secretly. He told himself he didn't want to wreck his testimony. He reasoned that it was okay for him to do something in private that, if done publicly, would be instantly recognized as an out-of-character action for a Christian. This convoluted reasoning led him to craft a public persona that fit the general expectations others have of Christians, and a private persona that was in direct conflict to his public life. He was so good at separating his two lives that he effectively disassociated himself from himself for more than 20 years. One of the greatest struggles in his recovery has been to 'pull himself together' again." (p. 16)

Later in the book Laurie Hall laments the wide-spread use of pornography by Christians: "A recent survey by Promise Keepers of those who attend their conferences revealed that more than 50 per cent of the men who attend a Promise Keepers event have been exposed to

pornography within the week before that event. This fact only demonstrates how pervasive the problem is within the Christian world." (Hall, p. 236)

What this shows is how pervasive the problem is within the fundamentalist Christian world of the Promise Keepers.

Does the dissociation described in these two books have anything in common with the GENERAL CHURCH anxiety about being objective? The perceived wisdom is that men are objective and women are not, so it is necessary to dissociate from women, passions, emotions, uncertainty, or any manifestation of these when a man "rises into higher light" in pursuit of absolute truth.

Fundamentalism with its need for absolute truth produces another need—to get rid of, or at least to dominate, any form of subjective, relative thinking. Men may deny such things in themselves, project them onto women, and congratulate themselves for attaining a non-biased understanding of truth.

A connection between pornography and fundamentalist Christianity is suggested by Susan Griffin in Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge Against Nature. She points out that "the metaphysics of Christianity and the metaphysics of pornography are the same." (p. 14) She explains this as follows:

"These two minds [the religious and the pornographic], ... move by the same mechanisms. And these are the mechanisms of projection and denial.... In Totem and Taboo, Freud tells us that the knowledge we wish not to know is 'ejected from internal perception into the external world.' We deny a part of ourselves, and deny knowledge of this part, but just as we deny this, we see this knowledge outside us as part of the world. What we detach from ourselves is, in Freud's language, "pushed onto someone else".

"Both the church and pornography have chosen the same victim on which to push this denied knowledge. In these twin cultures, a woman is a blank screen. The nature of her real being is erased, as if her cultural image had been prepared for a clear projection of an image, and she comes to stand for all that man would deny in himself." (p. 19)

These are astounding and accusatory words. Is this connection between Christianity and pornography a valid one? According to Griffin, a man detaches and dissociates from those things he would like to deny in himself, (sin and lust for instance) and projects them onto women in general or a particular woman. He then depersonalizes her and punishes her in place of himself. The examples of pornography Griffin discusses in this book are literary manifestations of this process.

What, if anything, can we learn from the connection of all these ideas? These are tentative and incomplete thoughts. Lest I be regarded as going off

*One of the chief reasons we have so much anguish and difficulty facing death is that we ignore the truth of impermanence. We so desperately want everything to continue as it is, that we have to believe that things will always stay the same. But this is only make-believe... No matter how much the truth keeps interrupting, we prefer to go on trying, with hopeless bravado, to keep up our pretense.*

*...We assume, stubbornly and unquestioningly, that permanence provides security and impermanence does not. But, in fact, impermanence is like some of the people we meet in life—difficult and disturbing at first, but on a deeper acquaintance far friendlier and less unnerving than we...imagined.*

*The Tibetan Book of the Living and Dying*  
Sogyal Rinpoche 1991 p. 61

the deep end (or, in New Church jargon, "taking up with crazes,") let me say that I am not at all sure about these connections. I came across them in my day-to-day reading and they jumped out at me to the point where I couldn't ignore them. I need to put them out there for consideration and response. This is just the beginning. I would like to consider related topics in future issues of this newsletter. What are your thoughts?

*(I didn't prepare a bibliography for this. If you have any questions about my sources, e-mail me at [PJSim@aol.com](mailto:PJSim@aol.com). I'm looking at how people interpret Sacred Texts. Another article I intend to write is about how much dissociation or separation is needed for regeneration in both sexes.)*

DDD

The idea that there is one people in possession of the truth, one answer to the world's ills or one solution to humanity's needs has done untold harm throughout history.

*Kofi Anan, United Nations Secretary-General, in his speech on receiving the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize.*

DDD

# Cultural Masculinity: The Dilemma of Initiation, Struggle, and Brotherly Love

By Linda Simonetti Odhner

Pondering the above, I came across two quotes from C. S. Forester's Hornblower series, about a British naval hero during the Napoleonic wars, that struck me as relevant.

*He had lost his integrity, and that meant he had lost his self-respect. In his life he had made mistakes, whose memory could still make him writhe, but this time he had done far more. He had committed a breach of duty. He had connived at—he had actually contrived—the escape of a deserter, of a criminal. He had violated his sworn oath, and he had done so from mere personal reasons, out of sheer self-indulgence. Not for the good of the service, not for his country's cause, but because he was a soft-hearted sentimentalist. He was ashamed of himself, and the shame was all the more acute when his pitiless self-analysis brought up the conviction that, if he could relive those past hours, he would do the same again.*

—C. S. Forester, *Hornblower and the Hotspur*, p. 255.

*"Mutinous dogs," said St. Vincent.*

*Maybe they were, thought Hornblower. But they had a right to be, he also thought. He could imagine perfectly well the sort of treatment to which they had been subjected, the unending wanton cruelty added to the normal hardships of life in a ship on blockading service; miseries which only death or mutiny could bring to an end—no other way out at all.*

*Faced with the certainty of a flogging in the immediate future, they had risen in mutiny, and he could not blame them. He had seen enough backs cut to ribbons; he knew that he himself would do anything, literally anything, to avoid such torture for himself if he were faced with the prospect of it. His flesh crept as he made himself seriously consider how he would feel if he knew he were to be flogged next week. The men had moral right on their side; it was not a matter of justice, but one of expediency, that they should be punished for their justifiable crime. The national existence of the country depended greatly on seizing the mutineers, hanging the ringleaders, flogging the rest; cauterising before the disease could spread further this new plague spot which had appeared in England's right arm. They must be hanged, morally innocent or not—it was a part of war, like the killing of Frenchmen who were possibly admirable husbands and fathers. But it would be as well not to let St. Vincent guess at his sentiments—the First Lord obviously hated mutineers just as mutineers, without troubling to think more deeply about their case.*

—C. S. Forester, *Lord Hornblower*, p. 12

These passages describe two instances where Hornblower's sense of compassion and justice are in direct conflict with his sworn loyalty to the British Royal Navy and obedience to orders. In the first case, where his personal steward has struck a superior officer and is doomed to hang for it,

he follows his heart in allowing the man to escape in secret, but labels it self-indulgence and brands himself a soft-hearted sentimentalist, despising himself for his lack of integrity. In the second, a dozen years later, he ponders the necessity (as he sees

it) of sacrificing innocent men for the prospect of a greater good.

Reading Forester's books, more than any other single thing, brought home to me the literal truth that war is hell: not so much because of the dying, and the risking of life; more because of the killing, which is far worse. But most of all, war is hell because a man may be called upon to turn upon another man with whom he has sworn blood brotherhood, for whom he might gladly have risked his life, and treat him as an enemy or a criminal. Hornblower must repeatedly harden himself against his instinctive recoil at being made a party to injustice and brutality, not only toward his enemies, but even toward his friends and compatriots. Some men deal with this dilemma by denying the brutality and injustice, and as a result becoming brutal and unjust themselves; others, like Hornblower, retreat behind the justification of necessity. This repeated hardening, and the habitual suppression of compassionate feeling, begin to distort his character. This situation finds an apt expression in Montgomery's *Anne's House of Dreams* (of all books), where Anne says to her friend Leslie, "The life you have had to live has warped you a little, perhaps. But it would have ruined a nature less fine and noble than yours." How many good men have been so warped? And how many others have allowed themselves to be so ruined?

And what if Hornblower allowed himself to question the necessity of what he is ordered to do? A ship's captain wields absolute power over his subordinates, but a power bound by the Articles of War. He must show independent initiative and judgment in carrying out his orders, but not individual conscience. A naval officer, in swearing allegiance to the Service, must hand over his conscience, and trust that it will be in good keeping. If he finds that it is not, his career, his livelihood, the brotherhood into which he has been initiated at such a

high cost—perhaps the entire fabric of his life—may be at stake. Many men, especially military men, spend their lives groping for the least among a myriad of evils with every difficult choice they face. And there is no assurance that things are not just as bad as they were two hundred years ago.

I have heard it said that we will wound each other no matter how hard we try to avoid it, but that when it becomes inevitable we should try to do it as well as possible. Hornblower, whose wrongs at the hands of unfeeling senior officers early in his career have formed a determination in him to take as much thought for the comfort and well-being of his subordinates as he can, succeeds in wounding them as well as possible.

\*\*\*

*The ability to act with deliberateness—a word implying liberation—must be refined over time. Without refinement, we simply repeat our errors or hold fast to principles that may have been applicable in one context or period of our life, but have since become, as the poet William Carlos Williams puts it, "like the memory of success that has stopped succeeding...." To choose well and wisely how you want to conduct your life, to act from a compelling sense of what is yours to do, is at the heart of what it means to live deliberately. A Map To the End of Time Ronald Manheimer p.136*

\*\*\*

*VOICE welcomes the submission of articles, poems, essays, etc. Do you agree or disagree with anything? Letters or articles in response to ideas and feelings expressed are encouraged.*

# Belonging

by Wendy Hoo

A horrible scandal has plastered the newspapers these first weeks in March, causing confusion and pain to those connected with the Catholic Church. This betrayal, in the form of sexual abuse, happened to hundreds of children by dozens of accused priests. For those involved, it is analogous to the impact of September 11<sup>th</sup>.

I teach at Nativity School run by Jesuit Priests in Boston. For these kind men, who work with young boys every day, the tragedy hit close to home. At a recent retreat with teachers and priests, held at a beautiful old monastery on the Atlantic coast, I spoke to some of the men devastated by the uncoverings. These deplorable crimes were done by individuals (some of them were close friends and roommates of the priests), and also by the Church government that hid the perpetrators.

The priests spoke of the shame they felt going out in public with their priestly collars showing, and admitted to covering them up in restaurants. That symbol of goodness has become a cause for suspicion, and a reminder of mankind's lowest acts. The parishioners who once told priests all their troubles and asked for guidance, look to them now with hesitant eyes, fear filling the faces that were once open and trusting. The entire profession of the clergy is now precarious, and it affects not only Catholics but all religions by association.

I grew up as a daughter of, and niece of, ministers. When young, I heard story after story about the politics, scandals and complexities of the church, some public, and some only insiders knew about. I loved to eavesdrop on my dad and uncles as they talked long into the night after Ministers Meetings or Church Conventions. With their shoes off and lounging on couches with bowls

of ice cream on their laps, they let go of their official demeanor and "let it all hang out." In this way I learned from an early age that ministers have a private side where they are not always as compassionate, patient and understanding as their roles dictate they should be. They had deep frustrations with their colleagues and their difficult parishioners, as well as disagreements with the administration. Some of the problems were personal issues, and part of the rap session's purpose was to weed out which was which, while struggling to choose the best solution. I gained an image of ministers that included a great deal of human frailty, and it did nothing to diminish my respect for the men or their profession. This only made me feel closer to them and more able to share my own problems.

The Catholic Church's mistake is their efforts to cover up the crimes committed by their priests. Their belief in the need to create a pristine image surrounding the profession sadly has overcome the more important principle of protecting innocents. By arrogantly assuming they could best handle their own problems without help from the law, psychiatry, or public opinion, they may have contributed a final blow to the integrity of their entire Church. What falsities influenced them to make these mistakes?

To my mind the first one is the idea that we all want perfect people to be our pastors and ministers. Another is that we want the Church to protect us from the realities of the business operations. This results in the Church's still attempting a larger version of perfection. I don't believe that most people want superhuman ministers, except in the sense that the humans under the liturgical garb are superbly human. Jesus Himself was subject to attacks by the hells. It is very hard for us to accept hypocrisy in our leaders when we are struggling hard to be honest and repentant.

The changes that will inevitably happen in the church organizations will happen more through these stories about human nature than by any political force, I believe. This is God's hand in bringing about the resurrection of the world. Our job is to spend our time in personal repentance and devotion to truth, and kindness in our business and personal lives. The circumstances will naturally evolve for the better when we go about our lives this way, with the belief in our hearts that God is daily making the people of his church on earth into a wiser receptacle of Divine Love.

By our various jobs and talents we do God's ministering. We strive to bring our best selves to the work we love. We suffer when we see ourselves stumble because of inexperience, selfishness, or ignorance. We despair when we inadvertently hurt others or ourselves in our efforts to channel God's love and truth. Women, who do most of the world's nurturing and healing, often understand that the Christian and New Christian uses are not about building mighty towers of perfection. They know that only through trials of the body, mind and spirit can meaning be found in our callings—whether it be teacher, evangelist, musician, hospice worker, creator of rituals, or advisor to those in need. People who suffered oppression and discrimination know enough not to pretend to have all the answers. Instead they perceive that the best way to move forward is through gracious humility, always walking side by side with those they serve, never raising themselves above others and risking that deadly fall.

The good work of the Jesuits at the school for inner city boys will survive this recent crisis. But it is possible at some point the Jesuits will feel the need to hide their association with the school? Will they be advised by the board to erase their name from the school's brochures and websites?

The Jesuits, because of their humble nature will do so if necessary to protect the higher use of their work.

Any earthly, man-made organization has the potential to lose its image in the seconds it takes for modern media to spread a story. But the work of God's church is impervious to all worldly interference. We will do best if we serve God's mission first, as we feel it in our hearts, and to regard the institutions we are associated with as helpful, sometimes fragile tools necessary in accomplishing that work.

Gaining the acceptance of a governing body may seem like the answer to the problem of legitimacy when pursuing an occupation. However, adherence to Divine dictate and dedication to excellence in one's uses is a far more stable shoulder to lean on. This approach avoids the pitfall of having to choose one's conscience over an organization's official position, and it can survive attacks on the group's integrity. A good organization will eventually be drawn to the work of individuals who enhance and mirror its own goals. Should they form a bond, the character of the individual will improve the organization's effectiveness and strength. Then the individuals can use the organization to support their uses without forming too dependent a relationship.

I will return to my school on Monday and my own ministry of teaching spiritual principles to at-risk boys. But if the pressures of politics destroy the place where I am doing this work, it never will destroy my love of the work, or the good intentions of the Jesuits who founded the school. These uses are above the problems of this world and will eventually find an outlet, without concern for time and place. God's work is eternal and timeless, always peaceful, always active, waiting for us to rise up and embrace its joy.

# How Our Swedenborgian Theology Uniquely Speaks to the Post-Modern World

*The following talk was given at the Year 2001 Annual Session of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in St. Paul, MN, by Rev. Susannah Currie, pastor of the church at Temenos. The letters MINSU stand for MINistries Support Unit—an elected body of Convention.*

I recently went on an Odyssey, with the support of MINSU, to New Orleans to a gathering entitled the *Pastoral Summit*. It was a gathering of Protestant and Catholic churches from all over the country, where “the best and the brightest” were chosen to speak and share what was working well within their congregations. I was impressed by many of the ideas that were shared, and touched by the evidence of dedication, energy, creativity, community-spirit and following the Lord’s leading.

However, what made the most impact on me, and what I’d like to share with you today, was one presenter’s historical overview of Christianity, putting into our minds the concepts of the pre-modern, modern and post-modern eras and what those worldviews mean in terms of our perception of our churches and our willingness to expand our awareness of ourselves, recognize our weaknesses and prepare to open to greater good.

Briefly and simply described, the Christian pre-modern era was the time before the reformation when the priest was the sole authority on the worldview, he held the answers to the eternal human questions: Who am I? Why am I here? What is a human being? Who is God?

The Christian modern era began with the reformation and enlightenment when the developing sciences brought to the human mind some very physical answers to these same questions that were answered by a new authority, the scientist.

We live today in the “post-modern” era. We have reached an incredibly high degree of scientific and technological inquiry and have discovered that beyond the scientific answers lie more questions, ones that we are now returning to religious sources to explore. We have now, as Emmanuel Swedenborg so aptly put it, “permission to enter into the mysteries of faith with reason”.

But you might be asking yourself, didn’t Swedenborg live at the very dawn of the modern era? What was he doing talking about the dynamics of the “post-modern” era? Quite simply, because he was a prophet. As the prophets of old, he spoke about what was to come to pass, to shine a light on a path, to give a vision and a goal that would lead us through the modern era of purely scientific answers into today’s new worldview.

So our Swedenborgian theology is a prophecy of the worldview for the post-modern era. It is a theology for today. And around us, people everywhere are asking the eternal questions in a way that evidences this.

Who am I? I am a physical being, *with* spiritual dimension.

Why am I here? There seem to be things I must do and accomplish in the world, *but also* ways in which I am called to develop internally, to be a better person.

What is a human being? We seem to be unique with different abilities and choices we make, *and* creatures of

community who are interdependent and live together in the world.

Who is God? I have a feeling about the Divine *as well as* intuitions of understanding.

Did you notice the conjunctions in those answers? With, but also, and, as well as. The post-modern era is the both/and era. We have journeyed from the pre-modern era, where the will of the heart leaned on the authority of the priest, to the modern era, where the understanding of the mind leaned on the authority of the scientist, to the post-modern era. In this both/and era, the will

*with the rational, the intentions but also the understanding, the love and the wisdom, the heart as well as the head are working together to explore in all directions the ways we can connect with the Divine.*

And with this in mind, I'd now share with you some of the characteristics that were shared with me about "post-modern" people and what they are looking for in a church. See if you find yourself resonating with this worldview. And I'll give a few examples from my own experience where I see this to be true.

Post-modern people prefer:

- Collaboration between clergy and laity—committees as the authority.
- Openness to new forms of worship—blend of old and new in worship
- Involvement in the community and the environment—service to others as growth for us
- Hospitality towards all, whether they stay or not—church's job is to "be there"
- Ecumenism dialoging and interacting with other faith traditions—interfaith worship
- Intimacy that is authentic and honest as well as safe and caring—small group sharing
- Inclusion and invitation to newcomers to become leaders—old members mentoring newcomers to church life.
- Passion and creativity respected and encouraged—risk taking affirmed—Show and Tell
- Inquiry allowing free expression of the faith journeys of all—questions asked in worship
- Fellow journeying where the community spirit is built on many growing relationships.

Now, this isn't to say that we all have made the transition to being "post-modern" people. Some of you may not have resonated with these words. But be forewarned of the dangers of unthinkingly and unfeelingly clinging to their opposites: reliance on sole authority, insularity, non-participation, self-directedness, denomination isolation, emotional distancing, exclusion, reservation, un-questioning and self-involvement. They are the symptoms of a spiritual hunger that will not grow you or your church community.

We have the legacy of the blessing of the prophecies of Swedenborg and have

access to a worldview that uniquely speaks to the post-modern world. WE have a full larder. Our theology uniquely feeds the post-modern world's hunger for a spiritual community and a theological truth that fits their worldview. However, we ARE the post-modern world and it's not only OUT THERE, where people are spiritually hungry. We too are hungry, and the funny thing about hunger is, it's the time when we are most at risk of thinking there isn't enough food, at risk of panicking and hoarding what we have for fear that we'll be hungry again. And yet by that very action, we perpetuate the spiritual hunger we have to give and participate

and serve and reach beyond ourselves that is our true need. If we can see the spiritual hunger in others to receive, this can bring us true fulfillment. We must face that we are suffering from a spiritual hunger to give. It is a call to faithfulness, and a call to truth in the Lord's leading. It is a powerful faith that remembers God provides all we need in the midst of times of hunger. And it is a powerful charity that gives in hunger, knowing that God knows our sacrifices and has provided already.

And this may be the call that we are given as a church towards making a new step into our group regeneration. For if we're honest in our self-evaluation, all of us can all see that we have pockets of "old worldviews", ways in which we limit ourselves to a perception that "only the religious authority, or the scientific authority", has the answer to a particular question. Ask yourself if you are open to a "both/and" answer.

If not, it may seem like swimming upstream towards the New Jerusalem, to remain in a worldview of solely the heart or the head. We may think we know the way through our theological understanding or that we have experienced the way through the heavenly community in our churches. Guess what, both are true. And yet this is not accessible to the majority of the post-modern population unless we use as the acid test, the test of usefulness, of Divine activity moving through us into the world. For the Holy Spirit, the Divine Proceeding is "both/and". The Holy Spirit is distinguishably one with our "both/and" worldview, the operative word being ONE. Charity and faith in ACTION require we move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and reach out to people who are outside our denominational ranks, outside our comfort zone, and even, dare I say, to truly

believe there is only US and no longer WE and THEM. We do this through making our theology life-practical and accessible through printed materials, church ministries, community presence, web sites, worship, and music, and most especially in the lives of each of us.

I hope by sharing with you about these thoughts on the historical "odyssey of worldview" I have shed some light on our Swedenborgian odyssey thus far. I hope it has opened up some possibilities for you to consider in your own thinking the challenges and opportunities we as Swedenborgians face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Let us accept the legacy of the prophecy that Swedenborg left to us. Let us, with collaboration, openness, involvement, hospitality, ecumenism, intimacy, inclusion, passion, inquiry, and fellow journeying allow God to work through us, and feed us, as we set the Lord's table for the new world.

/ •

*The Church is the whole people of God, not just the hierarchy, clergy and religious. Also, the ministry provided by church members who are not ordained is a direct participation in the mission of the Church, and not simply a sharing in the mission of the hierarchy.*

*Encyclopedia of Catholicism*

*...hence it is that various forms of worship are of scarcely any importance provided there be charity in all. SD 4535*

# Why a New Translation?

By Lisa Cooper

In April of 1999, the Swedenborg Foundation held a luncheon at Glencairn to introduce the Bryn Athyn community to its new edition of Swedenborg's writings. As one of the translators for this series (the New Century Edition), I was asked to give a brief talk, and I chose to frame it as an open letter to my parents. The following is the text of that letter.

Dear Mom and Dad,

I am so thrilled to be working on the New Century Edition, and I know that you're thrilled for me, for which I'm very grateful. I don't know whether you have any idea why I'm so excited, but that doesn't really matter; like good Swedenborgians you find that joy in another is joy in yourselves, so if I'm happy, you're happy. Still, maybe I could share with you some of the reasons for my excitement.

I studied the Writings throughout high school and college, where I found them intellectually stimulating, occasionally moving, and very hard to read, especially in large doses. (I'd like to be able to say, by the way, that I also found them useful in my life, but I hadn't gotten around to trying that yet.) It helped that I had teachers who would describe the overall structure of the work, providing a setting for the individual passages I was reading. It also helped that I had grades hanging over my head; that forced me through longer stretches of reading than I could have sustained otherwise.

*I always felt vaguely guilty for not finding the readings easier (and for not seeing how they really did apply to my life), especially since I was aware that new readers of these works sometimes responded to them the way a person dying*

*of thirst would respond to a drink of water. From time to time I wondered whether I could have gotten more emotionally involved if I'd first come across the material as an adult rather than growing up with it all my life. I thought the inadequacy was mine.*

Of course it was partly mine. It's impossible to feel the full impact of Swedenborg's message until you've lived a little, and my mind was as much on my social as my spiritual life. But I've come to feel that the fault was not all mine; the medium had been blunting the message.

I'm sure I've told you before about the experience I had after taking a year to study classical Latin. I remember sitting in the apartment I was housesitting the following summer and reading one of the works—it may have been *Heaven and Hell*—in Latin and being almost horrified at how unsophisticated the language was. I kid you not, the book struck me as being almost like a kindergarten reader after Cicero and Virgil. That's the first thing that was missing from the translations: simplicity.

Then about six or seven years ago I started reading *Arcana Coelestia* in the original Latin as consultant to John Elliott on his new translation. Some of his methods opened my eyes to what constitutes *real* translation. He would find ways of using genuine English idiom to express the Latin. Suddenly the English began to come alive.

But even more strikingly, I began to find myself utterly moved by the Latin itself—even to the point of tears, on occasion. I discovered that the whole spiritual world was there in the text, waiting to exert its influence!

On Easter you asked me what I thought of a particular new translation; I forget which of the works it was. I got a laugh when I said that translations are

too hard for me to read. This is true even though all the new translations are much closer to presenting a truly faithful view of the text. I'm afraid our efforts will also fail to convey fully the beauty and the emotional content of the original. I wish everyone could read these writings in Latin! Want me to come over and teach you?

Failing that, I do have a request. You may be very happy with the older translations that you already know, and if so I would never ask you to give them up. But it's possible that there's something for you too in the new style. What I ask is that you try reading a volume or two with an open mind, just to see what happens. You can even look at them as completely separate works from the standard

TTTTTTTTTT

## Review

*Heaven Sent* by Alison Longstaff

Have you ever wondered what it would be like if a novel was written with a Swedenborgian frame of reference? Well, wonder no more, *Heaven Sent*, by Alison Longstaff, meets and exceeds any expectations one might have had of a "Swedenborgian fiction" genre. At the same time, the story is one easily identified by many Christian congregations who struggle with difficult personalities and situations as they learn to live and work together.

*Heaven Sent* is a real page-turner of a novel. It was hard to put down as I became engrossed with the authentic-

edition. You don't necessarily have to choose between. I hope you'll find all the intellectual content you ever had, in more digestible form, with the notes and prefaces providing a context like that which my professors once provided for me. But more especially, I hope you'll find all the living color, all the urgency, warmth, and joy that were missing for me in the older translations.

I bless you every day for the heritage you've given me. I hope my work will give a little something back.

Much love,  
Lisa

We seek out people who tell us we are right and shut out people who tell us we are wrong. *Geo Dole Freedom and Evil*

seeming characters and situations. Setting the novel in Kitchener, Ontario, with descriptions of local places and realistic weather descriptions, works well for those of us who live here but also gives some insight to armchair travellers. Cliffside Chapel is the fictional church central to the story. To those who know it, it may look like Carmel Church in Kitchener from the cover art, but that is as far as it goes. This book holds a world richly imagined.

The story follows the ups and downs of a young widow, Susan Rennie: her turmoil as she comes to understand what was missing in her first marriage and her growing attraction to the new assistant minister in her congregation. Jonathan Haley, the new minister, struggles with

issues from his past and his adjustment to a new congregation that is not always supportive. An authentic cast of family and friends touches the lives of the two central characters. Life at Cliffside Chapel is as happy, sad, complex and mundane as are most lives.

How these personal stories play out in the context of a congregation dealing with its own difficulties make this story suspenseful as well as tender. Longstaff's thoughtful analysis of congregation and community dynamics makes the underlying themes—the difficulty of reaching a common vision even when there is a common belief system, and the orderly transfer of vision from one generation to the next—very believable.

It is the sensitive portrayal of both individual and group dynamics, along with the vividly described setting, that make *Heaven Sent* a great first novel and one which I highly recommend. The author promises that there will be more books about Cliffside Chapel to come. I can hardly wait.

*Elizabeth Waters Heinrichs*

OP

*Heaven Sent* retails for \$12.95 U.S.

*Heaven Sent* is available:

- through the Bryn Athyn Book Room ([BookStore@newchurch.edu](mailto:BookStore@newchurch.edu))
- at the Cathedral
- through James P. Cole in Bryn Athyn ([jpcole@newchurch.edu](mailto:jpcole@newchurch.edu))
- at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)
- or from the author herself ([rangerally@newearth.org](mailto:rangerally@newearth.org))

## Fountain Publishing Update

It was fun for Jon and me to work on our latest Fountain Publishing book, *The Path: the Inner Life of Jesus Christ*, with author Geoffrey S. Childs. His first draft was very long, and so doctrinal that it seemed only those who had been through Theological School could follow it. We worked to shorten it, to define New Church terms, and to see that every chapter has some sense of the Lord as a person. Geoffrey's love for the imagery of the stories in Genesis was already present. This process was wonderful for me, in that I realized as never before how the struggles and feelings of Jesus are reflected in the words and actions of all the characters in Genesis—both men and women! Seeing how Sarah, Hagar, Rebekah, Rachel, Leah, Dinah and Tamar all reflect aspects of Jesus made me feel closer to the Lord. It's marvelous to look at the process Jesus went through to forge a path for us to follow. The full love of God toward us is beyond our comprehension, but reading this book is a wonderful way to begin to understand, and I highly recommend doing so!

Our next Fountain Publishing project is a new edition of *Grandmothers and Grandfathers* by Helen Kennedy. It is a wonderful novel about a new mother who is visited by the spirits of many of her Irish ancestors. They tell the stories of their lives on earth, and also of their experiences after death. This book is in the layout stages right now. Stay tuned as to when it will be available!

*Karin Childs*

*The Path* is available at the Genreal Church Book Center, or from Fountain Publishing at 877-736-8598

[www.fountainpublishing@aol.com](http://www.fountainpublishing@aol.com)

## A Sneak Peek Into "Healing Words: A Theology of Wholeness"

Caritas is producing an edited volume about wholeness theology. This theology is grounded in the biblical concept of the wholeness of all persons, and the balance of goodness and truth in every situation touched by God's presence. The potential for this theological framework is found in all forms of revelation, but to date has not been well developed.

The initial manuscripts for "Healing Words" have almost all made the first round of reading and revision. When that phase is finished, they will be submitted to the Swedenborg Foundation for possible further editing and publication. The book is by no means an exhaustive or systematic development of wholeness theology, but is rather a collection of essays about aspects of this emerging theology, written from the unique perspectives of various women and men in Caritas. After an introductory chapter that suggests a doctrinal foundation for a wholeness framework, the chapters are grouped into three tiers: individual, communal and spiritual wholeness.

To whet your appetite for the book, we are offering a sneak peek into two of the chapters. From Wendy Hoo, we read:

"What is the connection between spirituality and creativity? We may know what the world has lost by pushing these things to the side, but do we know how to bring these things back without losing what we feel we have gained in "civilization"? Can spirituality enhance our creative lives, and can creativity help connect us to our spirits? The bridge between our art selves and our heavenly selves forms a dynamic synergy, leading back to the integrated beings we all once

were, and can be again. We sometimes see this phenomenon plainly in older people who are carefree, spontaneous, and deeply happy, calling it "second childhood". In the highest heavens, angels appear as little children. This does not mean they are helpless and useless, only that they have come into alignment with their utter dependence on God, and their true heavenly uses. We sometimes have a hard time imagining what angels do all day, and this is because the uses they perform are ineffably creative, intricately intertwined spiritual activities."

From Dewey Odhner, we have:

"Suppose someone does come up with a theology that again revolutionizes our thought as General Relativity did in physics...Relativity and Quantum Mechanics are both grand visions that encompass and go beyond Newton's theory in breathtakingly superb ways, and paradoxically conflict with each other. So we have advanced beyond a neat and consistent system to a superior view that has fundamental open questions.

"Do we need a new great theology of which Swedenborg's will become a limiting case? I can't claim that we do. Perhaps questions and paradoxes are more important than answers and solutions. When I contemplate the origin of evil, I see now a paradox that I don't know how to solve. But when I let go of a rigid belief in Swedenborg's solution, and let it be a paradox, my life improved. I am no longer controlled by the fear of heaven inevitably losing some of our sisters and brothers. I am happier and better able to love other people. And that, after all, is the main thing I need theology for."

## Caritas Newsletter

Editor: Helen Kennedy  
2313 Romig Road  
Roslyn, PA 19001  
[HmKennedy@aol.com](mailto:HmKennedy@aol.com)

Ass't Ed: Linda Simonetti Odhner  
439 Avenue A  
Horsham, PA 19044  
[Dewey@mipg.upenn.edu](mailto:Dewey@mipg.upenn.edu)

Distribution Mgr: Peggy Mergen  
601 Barrett Ave.  
Huntingdon Vly., PA 19006  
215-938-1978  
[Pegannpm@voicenet.com](mailto:Pegannpm@voicenet.com)

Treasurer: Lynne Smith  
Box 3  
Bryn Athyn, PA 19009  
[Pbranden@Newearth.org](mailto:Pbranden@Newearth.org)

### *Subscriptions and Contributions*

We are grateful for the support we have received: in articles, feedback and contributions.

Estimated cost of the Voice is \$3.00 per issue.

If you are interested in supporting this effort, we would appreciate contributions of any amount.

To get the next issue (Oct./Nov. 02), please clip this and send (along with your contribution, if able) to the address at the bottom of the page. For a year's subscription, send \$6.00.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Comments or suggestions:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# **CARITAS** NEWSLETTER

c/o Lynne H. Smith  
Box 3  
Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

TO:

*The problem is the illusion.* Dr. Wayne Dyer

## Table of Contents

Kris Earle	Do Not Fear	p. 1
Dewey Odhner	Male and Female In the Writings	p. 2
Helen Kennedy	Going Nearer To the Lord	p. 4
Linda Simonetti Odhner	Johann Sebastian Bach: The Musical Expression Of True Marriage	p. 6
Lynne Smith & Helen Kennedy	The New Church In the Philippines	p. 9
Beryl Simonetti	How Does Fundamentalism Affect Us?	p. 11
Linda Simonetti Odhner	Cultural Masculinity: the Dilemma of Initiation, Struggle and Brotherly Love	p. 16
Wendy Hoo	Belonging	p. 18
Rev. Susannah Currie	How Our Swedenborgian Theology Uniquely Speaks To the Post-Modern World	p. 20
Lisa Cooper	Why A New Translation?	P. 23
Elizabeth Waters Heinrichs	Review of <i>Heaven Sent</i> by Alison Longstaff	p. 24
Karin Alfelt Childs	Fountain Publishing Update	p. 25
Roslyn Taylor	A Sneak Peek into "Healing Words: A Theology Of Wholeness	p. 26
	Subscription Information	p. 27