

Voice

a newsletter for Caritas

October 2001

Volume 2

During the Caritas meeting on July 17th, Michael David and his wife, Lori, gave a worship service. The following was Michael's talk.

Already Knowing

One of the messages that I hear as a man is that I should already know. What I already know, I shouldn't need to find out. I hear that men won't ask directions, and sure enough, it is hard for me too, because, after all, it is my job to already know. Part of it seems to come with being New Church. We are the New Church, the last word is delivered, we are finished acquiring truth, now we just need to get out and do it. This is another reason to be embarrassed about asking directions. Since all the directions have been read to me already, how could I still be lost? I guess I'd better shut up and drive, and pretend I know where I am.

Sometimes when I think I am trying to listen to my wife, I already know: where she's coming from, what she's going to say, what it all means. More often than not, this doesn't work at all. What I already knew was where my stepmother was coming from, what that bully down the road said, what that minister or teacher thought. Because I already know, I am not listening and not hearing my wife. I am hearing somebody else.

We came here tonight to talk about a book, a book about the married love that is possible between a woman and a man. In that book, the Lord says, "Here is what I want to give you." It begins with something called "the church" which is pictured as married to the Lord, and I read that it is from this marriage that a real marriage of woman and man begins.

In listening to the Lord saying this, I find myself already knowing: already knowing what it is to love, what marriage means, what it is to be wise, and what I want if I just behave myself. I already know what that looks like because I have been told, over and over, just what somebody else thinks that looks like. When I think I am trying to listen, I already know what to listen for, and this isn't listening.

Listen to these double expressions in ML 128:

*The Word is the means of conjunction, because
It is from the Lord,
And thus is the Lord.*

*The Word is the means by which
The Lord is conjoined with people
And people with the Lord,*

*Because it is in its essence
Divine truth united to Divine good
And Divine good united to Divine truth.*

In these expressions, I begin to hear something new, something that sounds like a conversation, something with two sides that go back and forth. One of the ways the Lord has come to me is in the recognition that revelation is a two-way conversation, in which I get to ask questions, try hearing something again, and eventually begin to hear something that I did not already know, something that was not part of my pride, my system of rightness, of having the truth and of not asking directions. When I read that the Word is like a body that contains a living soul, or that it is like a clothed person with face and hands uncovered, I see

how receiving revelation is like getting closer to another person, and that closeness happens only when the communication goes both ways.

For me, this two-way conversation did not come from reading the text and deciding it was there. It came from being married, and having to practice it in real life, from slowly learning to listen to my wife instead of always already knowing. For me the conversation with her and the conversation with the book intersect, and maybe they are really the same.

I read in the paper about a Jewish group doing dramatic interpretation of Scripture, and their leader explained that in their mystical tradition, the sacred texts contain "black fire", or the words on the page, and "white fire", the spaces between the words. It is possible to study either, or both.

As a man, born and raised in the book-learned sphere of this church community, the black text had become almost an extension of myself, and my pride in my own knowing. This pride in my own intelligence is so familiar to me that I do not see it or feel it. It is like the air I breathe.

In Married Love 88, I have read:

A man therefore possesses two loves. One, which comes first, is the love of being wise, and the other, which comes later, is the love of wisdom. But if this second love remains with a man, it is a wicked love, called pride in or love of one's own intelligence. It will be proved in the following pages that it has been provided from creation that, to prevent this love being his ruin, it was taken from the man and copied into the woman, so becoming married love which makes him whole again.

Once this sounded strange to me. I wondered if it meant that women exist only to save men from themselves. I heard women object to this and sympathized. What I wasn't seeing was that I was loving myself exactly the way that passage describes, and I had not the slightest sensation of anything wicked or destructive in that, only a sense of being right. It had me completely. And while I can't see that at all, my wife can see it very clearly. Slowly, slowly, I begin to discover that in this her sight is better than mine, that her sight will save me and mine will not. So my conversation with that passage resumes, but now with a sense of gratitude, rather than from trying to impose my ideas of balance and symmetry on it. Now I notice the black text isn't all that's there, and wonder if the white space surrounding it might tell the other side of the story. ❖

Love cannot rest unless it acts, for love is the active force in life; nor can wisdom exist and endure unless it does so from love and together with love whenever love acts. CL 183:3

A Valedictory

The following is a valedictory given by Janie Lemole at the 122nd commencement of the College and Theological School on May 22, 1999, upon her graduation from the MARS Program.

For our class I would like to thank the Program Faculty, who conceived the idea of a Masters of Arts in Religious Studies and carried it to term, as well as others who contributed to this revolutionary concept. What a privilege to dine at the abundant spiritual banquet of the Theological School with its inspiring teachers and curriculum—learning how to research the Writings and from that, see new application to life.

When I entered the program three years ago as a part-time student, it was the first time that laity, (including women) were invited to formally study doctrine at this level. It has been engaging, rigorous and challenging. Disciplined study brings focus and clarity. We are deeply grateful for the opportunity.

Many have asked me what next? There are, of course, all the intangible blessings of a deeper understanding and greater knowledge. Some obvious benefits are for teaching, giving talks, writing, and hospital chaplaincy. Beyond that I see this program as a role to complement and assist the priesthood in bringing the practice of spiritual life to the Church. We are all on a spiritual journey whether we realize it or not. Our paths are similar to one another's and yet each one is different. It is this spiritual path that leads us home to Heaven. The clergy is there to assist on the way—by teaching us the truth, the why, and by "leading to the good of life", showing us how. Perhaps we can be of service here.

Spiritual practice takes religion from the intellect to the life—from the head to the heart and thence to the hands. This message is the central theme of the Writings. The doing of good—from the Lord and to the Lord. Reading the Word, prayer, meditation and music, are endless expressions of man's cry to God.

My dear friend, Dr. McLanahan, captures this essence in her poem on Spiritual Practice:

*Raindrops become rivulets, become rivers; become
shining seas, creating
an ocean of habit.*

*Wear this habit, not merely the external
Black or red or orange one*

*Patience, you tell us,
Is not merely sitting on a cushion
But, rather, the hard, slow task
Of maintaining the Presence of love
Under all conditions.*

*Moving from the mine fields of self
To bring forth the blossoms of Others.
Since influx is always according to efflux
We begin by turning away from reflex.*

*Staying in This, The Practice of the
Presence of God,
Requires constant vigilance
To be aware of pugilence
To think first in silence
"What would an angel do here?"
Foot, where are you traveling?
Head, what are you thinking?
Heart, what is your wisdom?
Soul, where is the voice of Spirit
In all of this busyness?*

If you want to hear that music:

- 1. Start.*
- 2. Persist.*

Listen beyond the visible

*Act towards the eternal
And you will hear the wings of the dry bones
And dance forever in the Morning of
Blazing Glory.*

Our class: Both men and women, from different countries, a wide range of ages--these have brought depth and strength to our class. As in a kaleidoscope, that variety creates magical surprise and beauty. With every goodbye there follows hello. Life has an integral pattern—the necessity of change. The need for loss, and good-byes, before the next hello. The quintessential goodbye and hello for Christians is the Crucifixion and Resurrection. We need to let go before we move to a higher place. Our program is in its infancy. It is filled with promise and possibilities. "If this is the dawn, imagine the day."

(Dr. McLanahan is a family practitioner who incorporates yoga and alternative medicine into her practice. A book of hers on surgical alternatives is being published, and she has also written books of poetry.)

Do Buildings Work the Way They're Supposed To?

Julia Williams Robinson is a full professor of Architecture at the Univ. of Minnesota, and also in a Ph.D. program at Delft Technical University in the Netherlands. (Just to make things complicated) she is both a teacher and a student in architecture. A book she has co-edited has just been published, The Discipline of Architecture, edited by Andrzej Piotrowski and Julia Williams Robinson, The Univ. of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN. Julia feels her interest in the topic is related to being a New Church person and a woman, and having a concern for architecture as a field that should serve people. She is also a member of Caritas.

As an architecture student I was greatly frustrated because the leadership of the field was and remains predominantly directed at form-making rather than serving people. At the time I was a student, during the late 60's, there was a movement in architecture to use social science knowledge to inform decision-making. I became committed to that approach, but because it didn't yield formal changes in buildings, that is to say it didn't create any particular stylistic innovations, the human-based approach went out of fashion. Historic preservation, by contrast, generated an interest in history that led to post-modern pastiches of historical styles, and this energy led to technological innovations that changed the appearance of buildings such as earth berming.

Nevertheless, a group of people within the profession remained committed to research in the broadest sense, and to research about people in the narrower sense. So after I finished my professional degree and began to practice, I returned to get a degree in anthropology so that I would have credentials to do research about buildings and people. Because I developed that expertise, I found a home at the University as a teacher and researcher and have been developing an approach to architecture that is founded on research knowledge of all kinds. During that time I worked on research, took part in research organizations, and taught courses on a variety of issues pertaining to architectural knowledge, especially that involving people and buildings.

If you believe that research knowledge should direct the field of architecture (as it does for medicine, for example), you realize that

architecture is not just a profession but also a discipline, and that the field needs to nourish its disciplinary base. But up until rather recently, architecture has placed all of its eggs in the professional practice basket, and the research infrastructure of the field hasn't been developed very much at all. Only in the last 20 years or so have universities begun to develop research institutes related to architecture, and to see research as an important part of the field. Even so, practicing architects and academics still tend to see the field as a profession, and to see the role of academia as training professionals. The book that I and my colleague, Andrzej Piotrowski, edited is a compilation of different perspectives on what it might mean to conceive of architecture as a discipline as well as a profession.

Now one might ask what this has to do with being a New Church person, or perhaps it is obvious. If one sees the primary role of architecture as creating buildings that serve society as both functional and symbolic artifacts, it is important to know how they actually perform. If you look at architecture as an art object, which is the predominant view, it can be construed to be a medium for the expression of the designer. Although most ordinary practitioners view this expression as involving the view of the client and user as well, the "star" architects, seen as leaders of the field, often see themselves as artists whose aesthetic ideas should take precedence over the more practical concerns of clients and users. This gives aspiring architects a very confusing message. And since there has been no culture of research in the field, buildings are often awarded honors before the test of time has proven them. Furthermore, no one then wants to go back and see whether the awarded buildings actually do function as intended because it would be an embarrassment to find that they don't. The tendency has been to make buildings that look good in the magazines so that they will receive awards, and then to use the award-winning status to get publicity and jobs. Research on past construction is received with some hesitancy. My work, then, has been to contribute to building evaluation and to design techniques that support the use of research. Parallel to this I have worked with students in my design and theory courses to develop attitudes

that will be receptive of research. Presently, for example, students in my large lecture course do building evaluations and I sometimes have architects contribute their own projects to this effort. I then invite the architects (sometimes my former students) do participate in evaluating the student work. This permits the students to

be exposed to the designers and the designers to learn about their projects from student research. These professionals come to appreciate how research might contribute to improved design. ❖

Letter to New Church Life

(I did not expect this letter to get printed in New Church Life, but I feel validated that it was. I would also like to have those who read Voice see what I had to say.)

To the Editor of New Church Life:

This is a commentary on the article by Eric Sandstrom, Sr., on *The Priesthood and the Doctrine of the Church* (NCL July 2001). Because of the style of the presentation, it is difficult to make comments. In effect, Mr. Sandstrom is saying, "As an ordained male priest I believe my job is to teach the laity to understand doctrine". Following this are pages of interpretation of revelation giving reference to this "fact" and that "fact" and finding in conclusion that "it follows that" this is true. Since I find the "facts" not valid or convincing, it is unlikely that I will find Mr. Sandstrom's "conclusions" valid either.

As a senior attending the Academy of the New Church college in 1990, I wrote an essay. The abstract reads as follows:

The major premise of this essay is that the Lord in His infinite wisdom provides truth to every person born on this earth so that the person can prepare (or chose not to prepare) for life after death.

I believe fully in Wilson Van Dusen's conclusion, in *The Presence of Other Worlds*, that the largest church of all consists of those who "live the truth they know". I do not feel the need of any help from the priesthood in understanding my belief that this is true.

Sincerely,
Ruth Cranch Wyland

Excerpted from Ruth's Senior Essay:

In his book, *The Presence of Other Worlds*, Wilson Van Dusen says, "Swedenborg is not an exclusive revelation. Though it is unique in some ways, [Swedenborg] is talking about the heart of all religions." Van Dusen also says:

Many of Swedenborg's followers who established churches tended to miss the great universality of what Swedenborg was pointing to... I belong to the group of scholars that feels that the Church of the New Jerusalem is well established, the largest church of all, the community of all those different cultures, languages, creeds and styles of living who act by the good they know...

Is there any way you can know that what you are in touch with is Reality? Here is one sign: what you perceive does not fit into any formula whether given by another or created by yourself. It simply cannot be put into words. So what can teachers do? They can bring to your notice what is unreal; they cannot show you Reality. They can destroy your formulas; they cannot make you see what the formula is pointing to. They can indicate your error; they cannot put you in possession of the Truth. They can, at the most, point in the direction of Reality; they cannot tell you what to see. You will have to walk out there all alone and see for yourself.

Anthony DeMello The Way of Wisdom..

It is the nature of love to share with another, indeed to confer joys upon another whom it loves from the heart, and to seek its own joys in return from doing so, and this being the case, infinitely more...does the Divine love in the Lord will to confer joys upon mankind whom He created to be recipients of both love and wisdom from Him.

CL180

MARRIAGE LOVE; HURTS AND CONFUSION

By Roslyn Taylor

Last summer, I was part of a group of women who read some of the book, *Marriage Love*. I allowed myself to notice and experience fully my emotional and cognitive reactions to the book, so that I could start to heal my pain about the teachings in it, and come to see how it could possibly fit into the scheme of revelation. With the loving support of the other group members, I was able to identify in what ways the book (or how I had come to understand it), was hurtful and confusing, and then to see it in newer, less hurtful ways.

What hurt me the most was that, in the book, a woman is defined by men in terms of her essence, form, purpose, and spirituality (ML 32, 33, 63, 66, 75, 88, 125, 320). Men are not defined in terms of women in the same ways, but in terms that are independent of women or a marriage relationship. I was hurt by these teachings because I know that I am a whole person with my own individuality, whether single or married. I have been hurt by defining myself in terms of other people, especially my husband. I experience my own relationship with the Lord, and my own understanding of theology, and I value these parts of me. I have done significant healing work to establish my self boundaries. It hurts me to hear myself being defined by my husband's wisdom, and existing to prevent his spiritual ruin.

What confused me, and posed the most significant challenges to my understanding of the content, was the distinction between gender differences and human commonalities. How can a woman's innermost be wisdom and her covering love (ML 32), when all human beings have an essence of their own loves and a form of the corresponding wisdom (SS 100, ML 34-36)? Is the essence of wisdom-form of love formulation about women (ML 32), or about celestial angels of both genders (ML 64)? Similarly, is the essence of love-form of wisdom formulation about men (ML 32) or about spiritual angels of both genders (ML 64)? How do the teachings about female essence and form line up with general teachings about human beings? For instance, "everyone receives truth

from the Lord, who adds good to it" (ML 122). Everyone has their own truth and good, and doesn't need a spouse in order to receive love or wisdom. A person's gender is defined independently of their spouse's reception or use of wisdom and love. Yet women are also defined strongly in terms of their husbands.

By the end of a summer of study and prayer about *Marriage Love*, I was blessed with some insights about how to resolve some of my concerns. The most important of these for me was that *Marriage Love* is a theological work about the marriage of good and truth, most perfectly or divinely in the Lord, then reflected in the spiritual world, and finally seen in the created universe in many ways. This book focuses on how true marriage (between good and truth) manifests in relationship between husbands and wives. I found it helpful to read "marriage of good and truth" for "true married love" or "love truly conjugal" in the book, instead of limiting its meaning to a romantic bond between two people.

Another insight that helped me was that the context of the teachings limits their content. The descriptions of men and women and their relationships is given in terms of how the good and truth in marriage works between them, not in terms of their individual humanness. The context limits the content of what is said about them. Hurtful statements about a woman's essence, form, purpose and spirituality have meaning in this context, but not as complete summaries of the reality of womanhood.

Another helpful insight for me was that we are all whole people. Despite how it might appear, the wholeness of each partner is assumed. The internal marriage of good and truth within each spouse through regeneration is also assumed. Each spouse's individual marriage or church relationship with the Lord is assumed. But the focus is on their love and wisdom function in a marriage relationship.

Finally, it was helpful for me to see that each spouse brings something to the relationship. For a marriage of love and wisdom between spouses, one has to bring love to the relationship, the other has to bring wisdom. For people of spiritual nature, wisdom is how men receive and experience the Lord's presence/life, and love is how women receive and experience the Lord's presence/life. In terms of their relationship, women "are" love and men "are" the wisdom that matches and bonds to women's love (ML 32,89)

A "church" is defined in *Marriage Love* as the reception and joining of truth and then good from

the Lord within a person or group of people. In a group of two who are wife and husband, first the husband brings the wisdom element to the church between them, from his own spiritual growth. Then the wife brings the love element from her own spiritual growth, and where there is a match, a church is formed and perfected between them. In this sense, the husband brings the church to the relationship and to his wife, because his wisdom is what defines the parameters of the church between them (but not within each spouse).

The healing I received was in being able to accept that all of the incomplete statements about a woman and her role in marriage, when taken together with other teachings in the Writings, generate a picture of a whole female human being. She is conscious of life first in her will, then offers love to her marriage relationship to make it a sacred reflection of the holy marriage of divine love and wisdom in the Lord. ❖

A woman feels the delights of her warmth in the wisdom of a man, because wisdom is what receives it, and love has its pleasures and delights when it finds this reception in something corresponding to itself. CL 189

Doctrine of the Wife for Husbands
A Spiritual Practice
for Achieving Unity
by Leon James

I use this expression to designate a philosophy of doing for husbands based on the Writings of Swedenborg. In essence, this doctrine says that the husband's regeneration efforts, to be successful, must be focused on his wife and through his wife. She is the seeing eye in the marriage relationship and he needs to voluntarily and willingly subjugate all his resistances to her wisdom and inner perception. Swedenborg explains the mechanism whereby God gives perception to

each wife about her husband's affections which is not given to the husband, the purpose being, obviously, to make the husband's regeneration dependent on his reliance on his wife. This is called *cleaving to the wife* and is a commandment of God enjoined on every husband. Without this commandment the husband cannot be regenerated, hence cannot have an eternal marriage with this or any other wife.

CL 159 clearly shows that the conjugal couple makes up a single angel in that the husband's understanding is no longer united to his own will but to his wife's will. This is the essential idea in the Doctrine of the Wife. Even though men are born understandings and receive wisdom from the Lord, they cannot hold on to this wisdom or make it their own, unless and until they love their wife's judgment above their own judgment. The husband's wisdom, when genuine, is to know this. The husband's conjugal love is to love this.

The reason for this is that the wife's wisdom is inmost and celestial, from the Lord. The wife's conjugal love is to love the husband's wisdom to the extent it is genuine. Until the husband accepts the Doctrine of the Wife, he is in the delusion that he has genuine understanding of his own, from the Lord, independently of the wife. This delusion is confirmed by doctrinal heresies they fabricate from the literal of the Writings. In this state of mind they (men) discriminate against women, discount women's judgement, and abuse women. This men refuse to recognize. Thus they are trapped. The Doctrine of the Wife for Husbands is my way of sharing with them what I have learned and what I was given to discover. In this way I invite all husbands to follow the practices enjoined by the Doctrine of the Wife so that they may have conjugal love, and thus eternal union with their wife.

It is believed that if the husband applies himself to following the commandments, his wisdom will grow from the Lord, and the wife will be able to love his wisdom even more, and thus the couple is conjoined. But this is the WRONG order! It is NOT the case that the husband gains wisdom implanted from the Lord BY HIMSELF, that is, apart from his wife, through his own independent effort and striving to follow the Lord's commandments. This is a FANTASY, as I have discovered.

There is only one way the husband can grow in wisdom, and that is through receiving it from the Lord. True. But the Lord can only give as much as the husband can receive—this is recognized by everyone. Hence the question is: When can the husband receive more interior truths or deeper wisdom from the Lord? NOT as he strives independently to follow the Lord's commandments and to receive deeper wisdom which she can then love and conjoin with. There is no deeper wisdom

for her to conjoin with just because the husband strives to improve by following the commandments. Striving to improve is not sufficient for the husband to receive more interior truths from the Lord. Why? Because this striving is from his proprium. His only salvation is to love the wife's judgement above his own, to love the wife's wisdom above his own. This is the Doctrine of the Wife. ❖

The above are excerpts from a comprehensive article by the same title and published on the Web at: soc.hawaii.edu/leonj/leonj/leonpsy/instructor/gloss/wife.html



Inspirational Quotes

By Kris Earle

Reading CL with a group of women interested me when I started to see this book was being used to suppress people. It became clear to me that as we tread on unfamiliar territory and explore 'non-traditional' roles for women, some people quote CL to tell us what we are supposed to do and how we should behave. One of the first times this happened to me personally was when I enthusiastically supported high school students in leading school worship. In a conversation I said that, growing up in a single-parent home, it was inspirational to have mother lead us in family worship. What a wonderful opportunity for girls to take the initiative in this spiritual endeavor!

But I was told that girls were not to be included in leading school worship, just the boys, "As is stated in CL#." (I'm sorry that I forgot the number quoted, not that it really matters.) What is important to me is that we see this work, this concept of conjugal love, as a liberating force that empowers people to seek this beautiful gift of unfathomable love for the Lord!

In a few places in the newsletter are inspirational quotes that my group discovered as we delved into the text. The following are more. What gems of hope and great beauty they are!

...those things which are of natural light vanish away in the light of heaven; for natural light is like shade or cloud, and heavenly light is like the glory and the brightness when the cloud is taken away. (AC 9031)

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Love with friendship adjoined remains and is steadfast. CL 214

❖ ❖
Regarded in its origin and correspondence, this love is celestial, spiritual, holy, pure and clean, more so than any other love which exists from the Lord in angels of heaven or people of the Church... Conjugal love is of such a character from its origin, which is the marriage between good and truth. CL 64

Soon-IL writes: I feel the Writings teach: ...men essentially have the tendency to grow in light, but must also present that light more warmly; women have the tendency to grow in heat, but must strive to present that heat more brightly. Therefore, while men and women have their strengths, both must strive to be rational and loving.

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Alison Longstaff writes: Woman is born to be love and man is born to be wise about her love.

OPOPOPOP

Vision of marriage love

by Helen Kennedy

(Last summer on the Caritas List I was asked to explain how I saw the book, *Conjugal Love*.)

This is where I'm coming to for myself: the Lord insists that each person created by Him spend her-his lifetime on earth becoming a complete, fully functioning human being independent of co-dependencies. To this comes a love that both the woman and man are in awe of. To know that other intimately and personally will be the most exciting and heartwarming thing that can ever happen. And although life is happy, the other will add to it, for married love is a vitalizing love, bringing with it (mentally) active and energizing states of life (CL 249). It is a love of independence and choosing, then the merging of the will of the one with the will of the other (CL 248). It is different from the love for children, which is a love of those who are dependent.

To this I will add what I've garnered from reading the book. The highest love we can have is to love the Lord (which for some reason rarely is mentioned when people talk of CL) Springing directly from the Lord is love and wisdom, good and truth joined together. From that comes married love, which is the highest (or deepest) love that can be shared

by human beings. Because it is so very deep, it has to be contained within boundaries; in other words, it can only be shared by one man and one woman, and not broadcast promiscuously. But when a human is only starting out on her/his path toward that deepest love, the first concept the sensual mind can grasp is this latter, promiscuous love called by Swedenborg 'love of the sex'.

When love of the sex begins to be modified and narrowed, deeper elements are added to it. The woman begins to be able to receive genuine married love from the Lord. The man begins to be able to receive genuine wisdom, or truths from the Lord that are capable of keeping married love pure and unhurt. (The main truth of this wisdom is to shun adulteries as sins.) The woman loves the wisdom in her husband that protects and values her love. What woman wouldn't?

In the spiritual heaven, in general the man receives truths and the woman receives love, and that is how Married Love is ultimated there, because the hallmark of the spiritual heaven is wisdom.

In the celestial heaven, in general the woman is in the knowledge and wisdom of love (AC 8994:4) and the man in the love of her wisdom—because the hallmark of the celestial heaven is love.

Further, because marriage is a special, bounded relationship, it is not applicable to the wider scope of men and women interacting in the church in general, or in society at large. By this I mean it isn't possible to extract things that work only in a marriage relationship and apply them to all relationships between men and women, as the GC has done.

The bigger problem is not in the intentions of the GC, which I think are sincere. When anything is abstracted from its deeper,

internal things and objectified to be able to be taught, it suffers from being de-personalized or made available to the intellect and therefore removed from the life situation. This happens when the English language is taught to children. English the way it was spoken at the time of Ben Johnson was abstracted and taught as the right way for English to be spoken and written.

So let us get back to the sacredness and mystery of married love, the love that is so special to the Lord's heart. Hopefully, in the church men and women can talk about this love with dialogue drawn from revelation and personal experiences. Once we accept that no one individual or group knows all that much about married love, we can look forward to a future of learning from one another to eternity.

The poet, Rumi, says, *Human beings are discourse. That flowing moves through you whether you say anything or not. Everything that happens is filled with pleasure and warmth because of the delight of the discourse that's always going on.*

Rumi - Discourse 53

True married love progresses toward conjunction by continually more interior openings of their minds. There is, moreover, no love which strives for these openings more intensely. CL 302

Victorian Wives, Transcendental Women

One of the most serious threats to serenity in Victorian love was the possibility of exposure. Men worried that women would talk about them to other women. By idealizing women so assiduously, men isolated them from normal contact with members of the opposite sex and drove them into conspiracy with members of their own. A woman couldn't relax while being holier and purer than all the males she knew, but with her women friends she could loosen her stays, admit her shortcomings, discuss her depressions and confusions. She looked for support, compared notes, and formed passionate attachments based on the intimacy of a shared secret with women. Female attachments were often supercharged with misplaced resentments, jealousies, and anger that could not be

expressed between a Victorian husband and his ideal wife. So Abba [Alcott]'s relations with females, especially the relation she was to have with her daughter Louisa, were characterized by an intensity that was denied in her marriage...

...[The Transcendentalist idea of women as spiritually higher than men] both denied women full development and also divided them unnaturally from men. For Abba, marriage meant improvement, and improvement meant working on her submission, docility, and gentleness. It meant denying her emotionalism and her temper. An aggressive woman, she wrestled wretchedly for years with characteristics that she couldn't accept and that the dream informed her were bad *and* unfeminine. The exaggerated respect for the ideal woman implied a commensurate distaste for the real one. The gap between the real and the ideal could produce exhilaration and challenge, but also despair, as Abba tried to shroud her lively nature in passivity.

A common result of the oppressive demands of delicate virtue was illness. Neurasthenia, which covered everything from itching to writer's cramp, from dyspepsia to hopelessness, became women's most popular pastime. So, deprived of most avenues of expression, women frequently adopted invalidism as a way of life. Ailing women were regarded with approbation, particularly if their illness caused them to become frail and interesting. Pulmonary tuberculosis, which killed Emerson's first wife, was especially romantic because the patient remained optimistic and alert while wasting away.

- from *Louisa May: A Modern Biography of Louisa May Alcott*, by Martha Saxon (1977), pp. 61-62, 63-64.
Excerpted by LSO ❖

Ideals easily become a high-minded imaginative substitute for action. They split the will from the deed. They are the moral expression of the self-centered who pride themselves on attaining, at the expense of action, to more refined states of consciousness. They create a polarity between themselves and the impulses they are supposed to govern. Because they are alienated from the evil in the world, they cannot control it.

The Religion of Dostoevsky A. Boyce Gibson p. 17

Thoughts While Translating

By Lisa Hyatt Cooper

And may fear of you and terror of you be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky. As for everything that the ground creeps with, and all the fish of the sea, into your hands let them be given. (Gen 9:2)



Our inner self is not afraid of evil or frightened of falsity; only our outer self is. So the present verse says that "fear of you and terror of you" will be on "every beast of the earth and every bird of the sky," that is, on all the cravings symbolized by a beast and on the falsities symbolized by a bird of the sky.

*The fear and the terror seem to be ours, but this is the actual situation: as said before, we each have with us at least two angels connecting us to heaven and two evil spirits connecting us to hell. (See *Secrets of Heaven* 697 [LHC]) When the angels are in charge, as they are in a person reborn, the evil spirits that are present do not dare to make the slightest assault on goodness or truth, because they are in chains then. When they do try to do anything bad or say anything false—or rather try to goad us into doing so—a hellish fear and terror immediately fall on them. Their fear and terror is what we feel when we face anything that violates conscience. In consequence, as soon as we do or say anything that offends conscience, we undergo inner struggle and suffer pangs of conscience. In other words, we experience a kind of torment that feels like hell. (*Secrets of Heaven* 986:2)*

Leave It To Lovers

By Linda Simonetti Odhner

"The reason why joining yourself with a companion out of love for uniting good and truth has the sense of touch {as its particular sense} is that this sense participates in all the senses, and so it draws tribute from them. It is a well-known fact that this love carries all the senses...along with it and attaches itself to their pleasures.

"We can see that the sense of touch belongs to married love and is intrinsic in it, due to its extraordinary and exquisite intensity whenever it comes into play. But I will leave it to lovers to explain this further." ML 210

Many people have a hard time defining pornography. They use adjectives: dirty, indecent, lewd, obscene. But what do they mean by them? Anything that shows or describes sexual activity or nudity, especially if it causes sexual arousal? Are these by definition indecent? What about the honored place held by the nude in visual art?

We in the New Church have good news: sex isn't dirty. At least not unless we make it so. And it follows from this that erotica and pornography are not the same thing, though I have never seen the two distinguished in a clear and meaningful way. That is a lack I would like to make good.

One of my daughters recently asked me what pornography is. Having thought about it, with the help of the back section of ML, I had a satisfactory answer ready. Pornography is anything that glorifies adultery, rape, promiscuity, seduction, defloration, or prostitution, and makes them seem good and delightful. (Pornography literally means "writing about prostitutes.") Anything that makes use of actual children engaging in sexual activities or being exposed provocatively, or anything that sexually objectifies, exploits, or violates any person, is pornography.

This definition, by being narrow and specific, leaves plenty of room for the possibility of clean erotica—art forms that glorify the physical expression of true marriage love, of which pornography is the perversion. There is also a middle ground where the question arises as to whether a particular depiction of sexual disorder presents it in a positive light and is therefore pornographic; or whether an act of fornication between sympathetic characters looks toward marriage or its opposite.

We in the New Church are uniquely equipped to find and create clean erotica, because we know from the Writings why and how the marriage bed

is chaste. About the sense of touch in marriage we read, "But I will leave it to lovers to explain this further." Could this be an invitation to do just what I am suggesting? "Lovers explaining this further" seems to be something for which we haven't yet found a real place. Turning what we have learned from experience into fiction—stories, poetry, and pictures—might be more useful and acceptable to others than intimate revelations about our personal lives, and might add substance and meaning to factual information.

Something else that lovers might explain further is the erotic element in the arts in general; indeed, in life in general. Love and wisdom are joining in marriage everywhere we look. The tension and release of a musical or narrative climax, the satisfaction of composing a sonnet, and the flash of insight when an idea suddenly becomes clear, all have a kinship with orgasm. The ML number quoted above says that the sense of touch draws tribute from all the senses, and that married love "carries all the senses with it and attaches itself to their pleasures." Among those pleasures are listed symmetry and beauty for the sense of sight, and harmony for hearing.

In a future article I would like to discuss some specific examples of erotica and erotic responses to art. I welcome your thoughts, and I'd be happy to discuss these issues personally with anyone who wants to contact me at: 215-675-5506 439 Avenue A, Horsham, PA 19044 Dewey@mipg.upenn.edu

Sexuality in Celtic Myths

The god of life mating with the goddess of death...is a strong expression of the great universal forces, represented in anthropomorphic form for human understanding. It seems very likely that this coarse but vital tone ran through much of Celtic mythology, and we need to realize that it is naturally wedded with symbolism and poetry of great subtlety and beauty. There is no implication in Celtic tradition of our modern attitude to sexuality, and certainly no implication of pornography in the myths that employ sexual imagery.

Celtic Gods Celtic Goddesses R.J. Stewart P. 125

...in the very moment this love ascends toward the soul, it descends toward the body. CL 302

In the Back of the Book

By Helen Kennedy

Henry Miller, on a trip to London, was taken by a friend to see a play. Afterwards he was asked what he thought. His reply was, "It didn't give me anything to think about". Miller, of course, said this about a play written by an established writer who was just churning out plays on jaded and well-worn subjects guaranteed to please. They had nothing mentally stimulating about them. Not that I think the Writings are jaded and well-worn, but sometimes I think our interpretations of them can be well-worn and limited by our narrow approaches to them.

For this reason I particularly like reading the back of the book in CL because it forces my mind to think. In the chapters Swedenborg gives continual contrasts between evil and good, and, at times the good is more stunning than in other places in the Writings.

Years ago Jimmy Carter, well known for his spiritual and moral stance, said in an interview, "I have lusted in my mind". He meant at times he couldn't help fall prey to the lusts in his mind but never would commit any of them openly. So, too, there are activities of the mind that make us irresponsibly commit evils on the spiritual level and some of them are talked about in the back of the book. We are oblivious to them until the time comes when we reflect on our emotional and unconscious approaches to things. For this reason, I better understand why it is important for people to read about polygamy, rape, adultery, deflowering, etc., for, on unconscious levels, these terrible things are preying on our minds. For me, the purpose of the back of the book is to teach us about these things. In this way I have come to understand they can mean deeper things.

Polygamy: On a less than obvious level it can occur when a man or woman is having an affair and the husband or wife does nothing to stop it, but just lives with it. In a sense, the partner is giving unspoken permission that allows the other spouse to have another sexual partner. There are many examples of this all around us. It thus eliminates the need for intimacy.

This goes even deeper, for the Writings say, *...polygamous marriage in the Christian world profanes the marriage of the Lord and the church, likewise the marriage between goodness and truth (CL339:1)*

Since the soul of marriage is intimacy, if we are to be in the marriage of good and truth, then loving anything evil keeps us from having to be intimate with the Lord.

Adultery: the Writings themselves talk about adultery committed on the spiritual level as being any love that turns us away from the Lord and

toward hell. Anything that I love too much will take my mind off the Lord. The prophet, Hosea, was commanded to take a prostitute for a wife to symbolize the relationship of the Jewish Church with the Lord.

Jealousness: occurs when a person hides his/her affections that he never wants them to be seen. If another approaches or dares touch on them, he responds angrily and jealously guards them.

A parallel can be that Moslem women must be completely hidden away from the eyes of other men. And if a woman does appear in public, she must be fully clothed with a veil over her face.

Conjugal Love 375:2 talks of this kind of jealousy on a spiritual level, saying it is *an imprisonment and suffocation of their thoughts in regard to spiritual matters connected with the Church.*

Rape: when a person forces his/her will onto another, disregarding all thoughts and feelings she

or he has to the contrary; not letting the other person work her or his emotions work out in freedom; not letting the other person's spirit be present.

AC4433:1, in speaking of the rape of Dinah, says, *unless internal things are present within external ones... nothing of the Church (things of a spiritual nature) is there.*

Deflowering: a continual desire to ruin things at their beginning.; not even letting a good thing get started.

Lust for Variety: inability to put limits or boundaries on a natural love so that it focuses on one person and grows into something good.

Continually going from one thing to another. Not standing still.



With so much of the life of the spirit depending on free speech and mental interchange, a place where ideas can be viewed and affections felt is important. Swedenborg did not limit the input of what others said to him. He exercised his freedom of choice to pick and choose, and in this way was not subject to stunted ideas or suffocated feelings. Creating a

sphere of freedom is tantamount to inviting others into our minds for a while to visit. That is the purpose of this newsletter.

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CARITAS STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

To seek the Lord's will as we provide opportunities for women and men to pursue their spiritual growth and change in the New Church, including but not limited to: women in the clergy, governance structure, decision-making and variety in doctrinal interpretation.

To deepen our understanding of the Old and New Testaments and the Writings. To research other religious and secular literature for fresh perspectives. To come to terms with how historical and cultural influences affect our thinking.

To understand the effects on everyone of the suppression of women in the church.

To cultivate tolerance and respect for the variety of spiritual paths, and ways to worship, within the New Church.

To acknowledge the alienation of women and men whose gifts have been lost to the General Church.

To promote a true understanding of the Lord's Second Coming, so that we can help the church on earth to heal and grow.

CARITAS NEWSLETTER
c/o Lynne H. Smith

Box 3
Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

TO:

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