

History Of the New Jerusalem Church In the Philippines

Rev. Merlita Rogers

Almost a century ago a New Church we longingly call "New Jerusalem Church", was prominent among the New Church members in the Philippines. The main church, referred to as the New Jerusalem Church, General Assembly, was the central church, located in Solis, Tondo, Manila, the capital city of the Philippines. I was told that there were other small New Churches outside the Manila area, such as in Batangas province to the south, one in Laguna to the southwest, and one in Malabon to the North. Nevertheless, there are fourteen districts where the New Churches were located. Each district is called "Balangay", and the Bataan "group" New Church is "Balangay 8".

My father's children grew up in the new Jerusalem Church's teaching, and when I was growing up, I often heard the name Emmanuel Swedenborg, and that the doctrine of the New Church was based on his Writings. But I never did see any of his Writings until I came to the USA.

The first Bishop of the New Jerusalem Church in the Philippines was Rt. Rev. Bishop Pedro Angeles, followed by Rt. Rev. Anastacio Pineda. When Anastacio Pineda passed away his wife, Rev. Felicisma Pineda, became Bishop of the New Jerusalem Church in the Philippines. She was a teacher prior to becoming a Bishop.

The New Jerusalem Church General Assembly in Manila was once a vibrant church. This was where all the "important" services were being held, such as wedding ceremonies, christening of babies, Holy Week services,

Christmas programs and many other important events. This main church also served as a Seminary School where pastors trained and studied the doctrine of the New Church. My father, the late Rt. Rev. Bishop Simeon Baltazar, was one of those students and he was ordained there.

As years went by, there was agitation for decentralization of activities then exclusively carried out in Manila. It was proving very far for other New Church members to travel all the way to Manila for child christening and other church functions, and costly, too. As well, Rt. Rev. Bishop Felicisma Pineda added some more policies and regulations that exacerbated already existing problems. Turmoil developed and my father alienated himself from the main or central church, and most pastors followed. Thus, the local New Church were also affected and slowly started dying. When there is no longer faith and love remaining in a church, the end of that church is imminent, as Swedenborg writes.

When the New Church in Bataan was built and the organization was filed at the Security Exchange Commission, Rev. Simeon Baltazar was elected to be the Bishop there. And to make it clear that this group was separated from the head or central church in Manila, the Bataan New Church was named "Church of Jesus, City of God, New Jerusalem Church". As the "central" church declined, the new New Church in Bataan was raised up, we continued our evangelization and reaching out, spreading the Word and our church's doctrine. Bishop Baltazar baptized several hundreds of souls

into the New Church, ranging from different parts of Bataan and neighboring provinces up to the north in Ilocos and Pangasinan.

I worked with my father, Bishop Baltazar, and I witnessed his love and dedication to the New Church's teaching. "Faith and charity", he used to remind me now and then, "should never be separated for the Church to bear good fruit and grow." "Love," he said, "keeps the church warm and truth waters it." Those simple teachings from the Word, coming from his lips, are not easy to forget.

When Bishop Felicisma Pineda in Manila passed away, leadership remained within her family and her choosing of a leader to succeed her created ever greater turmoil within her family. After two years or so, one of her sons, Doctor Vinson Pineda, a very wealthy business man, started his own church, gathering members from the various New Church groups that were scattered in different places.

Vinson's theological training was, however, in a mainstream Christian seminary and whilst, in response to my request, he willingly supported the church in Bataan, preaching there himself, sending other worship leaders, and also giving financial assistance, the stressing that Faith Alone saves disturbed the New Church members.

I discussed this doctrine with Vinson. There being no satisfactory resolution of discussion about this, and the care of the church in Bataan having been entrusted to me by my father, it seemed to me that there was no alternative but to separate the Bataan New Church from Vinson's. I instructed my brother, Septhan, to resume preaching himself by using our father's sermons. And this is what happened.

Support having been withdrawn, something had to be done urgently, so plans for the fact finding trip with Bishop Louis B. King had to be accelerated — a mission that turned from fact finding to "RESCUE". This took place in the year 2000.

Bishop King's presence in Bataan New church encouraged and uplifted downhearted members, and he gave them a new sense of commitment to the Church. Had Bishop King not been in the Philippines when these things were happening, the New Church members

would have been totally devastated. His presence had a tremendous impact on the minds of those who longed for a trained minister to replace the late Bishop Simeon Baltazar.

After that fact finding trip, Bishop King and I talked very seriously about the situation of the New Jerusalem Church in Bataan. Thus our project began and Ralph Junge and Geraldo Gomes became the driving force in the financial department to accomplish our goals. Once Bishop King told me, "Providence works through the rational judgment and charitable effort of people."

Accomplishment

The following are the things accomplished from the year 2001-2005 through the help of God and of our generous donors: I submitted this report to *California Digest* before my recent trip (Oct. 10-Nov. 7, 2006) to the Philippines.

1. Revived the New Church in Bataan: during the early stage of our project, the Rt. Rev. Bishop Louis King and I traveled back and forth to the Philippines, giving seminars and expounding the Word and the Writings of the New Church. Thus the New Church in Bataan, Philippines, was revived.
2. Baptism into the New Church: Bishop King baptized 88 people into the New Church from the year 2001-2005; the Rev. Ian Arnold of Australia New Church baptized eleven people when he visited the Bataan New church in May of 2005, and Rev. Trevor Moffar baptized 8 when he attended the kindergarten school graduation on April 2, 2006. A total of 107 people have been baptized, NOT including the number of people the Rev. Septhan Baltazar has baptized since his ordination more than a year ago.
3. Three pastors were trained through Dispersed Learning with the help and cooperation of the Australian New Church College, and they were ordained on May 8, 2005. One is still under training.

4. Modernized the chancel. Not only is it more appealing, but it also allowed more room for the congregation.
5. A computer and telephone were installed to allow the theologs to conduct Dispersed Learning with the Australian New Church College in Brisbane.
6. Fixed the leaking roof of the church.
7. Painted the inside of the church.
8. Founded a New Church Kindergarten school: its establishment in Bataan for the poor families enhanced and strengthened the doctrine of love of our church. The school is tuition-free including the school material, and it is a tremendous help for indigent families who cannot afford to send their children to expensive private schools to receive good basic preparatory education. In the Philippine institution of learning, Prep and Kindergarten certificates are required before entering the first grade of school.
9. Paved the Kindergarten school playground and put in equipment. A playground is one of the government requirements for a Kindergarten school.
10. Stocked a library: for the very first time, through the initiative of Bishop King a Church/School library was founded. And for the first time the New Church members in Bataan, Philippines, have access to the Writings of the New Church by His Servant Emanuel Swedenborg. Several sets of the Writings were donated and brought by Bishop King. Mr. Duncan Smith sent some old books, but in mint condition, and also some musical instruments (flutes) for the children. The Australian new Church also donated some books for the library. This library became very useful for members and non-members of our church.
11. Installed air conditioning in the church. The primary purpose was to ease the heat for the visits of Bishop King and others from

abroad. And it has made it more comfortable for the congregations to enjoy the church services. Because of the high cost of electricity, the AC use is limited to service times.

12. The New Church membership in Bataan New Church in the Philippines has increased threefold since the "revival" of the New Church was started in that part of the world. The New Church there has now four pastors and one under training.

Phase 1 of our projects was really very challenging, especially the revival of the New Church, having pastors trained, and founding of a Kindergarten school. Without the Lord's guidance, and the financial help of our donors, and the cooperation of the Australian new Church College, these things would have been impossible to materialize. But the Lord God in His Divine Providence and His Divine Mercy gathered together His good people to work together for His Kingdom in that part of the world. And what a marvelous accomplishment He has done with all of us working together as ONE. And yet our task has just began after accomplishing the impossible dream.

Phase #2: Present and Future

At present there are six separate New Church groups gathering in six separate locations that the pastors and laymen have formed to conduct their Bible/Writings studies. Four groups in Bataan Province: Orani, Samal, Lalawigan and Bagac; one group in Manila, and one group in Cavite. Last year when Bishop King and I visited the New Church there, the least number of people who attended regularly for bible study in each group in Bataan Province was 16 and the largest number was 45. The two groups in Cavite and Manila were started a few months ago, and I was told that the number of regular attendees in Cavite is 8, and 6 in Manila. These groups are under the leadership of each pastor with the guidance and help of their theolog teacher, the Rev. Ian Arnold of the Australian New Church College, and yours

truly, Merlita Rogers as Head Pastor, all under the supervision of the Rt. Rev. Bishop Louis King.

Upon my instruction, each outreach group is being visited by a pastor and a layman once a week for a Bible/New Church Writings study. They travel by public transportation. Ian Arnold of the Australian New Church had the opportunity to visit the group in the town of Bagac in Bataan Province.

As for the Kindergarten School: in the first three years, more than 120 students graduated. With 51 in the fourth year class graduated recently, April 2, 2006, a total of 171 pupils have graduated since our school started. Several of our students have gone to the "sped section" (advanced) of grade school because of their high scores. Overall, our school pupils have tested highest in all of Bataan Province in the Department of Education and Culture examinations. This is due to the dedication of the teachers to their duties and their love of children. The teachers are members of the New Church, and religion is a part of the curriculum. I am happy to report to our donors that their financial help is not in vain, for our school is very well known in the community. It is well known not only because of its excellent academic ratings, but also because of the "social behavior" of our pupils having been instructed in learning about God, the love of God and love to



HOPE

(a sermon given at the Church of the Good Shepherd)

Rev. John Maine

Last Sunday we talked about the new James Bond movie and how it was an example of the stories we love. We also saw that all our stories have, as their deeper meaning, a vision of the "hero's journey." This, we said, is the universal human story, our call to be "regenerated," as we say in the New Church, a life-long effort to make it through to the person we're meant to be.

Of course, as our world changes, so do the details of how that happens. Our stories are

neighbors. Listening to a boy of girl four year old leading the Lord's Prayer is very heart warming indeed. The school year in the Philippines begins in the month of June. I was told that a lot of applicants were turned down again this year because the quota was quickly filled up and many parents went home feeling sad.

I trust that this Phase #2 of our project, which is the continuation of the achievements on Phase #1, is not going to be as demanding financially as the First Phase. The most expensive project of our donors or contributors, which was the schooling of the three pastors, has been completed; the one still under training will graduate very soon.

Women pastors working in the Lord's vineyard could be as successful as male pastors, and perhaps even more, for women pastors are very intuitive and have a good sense and foresight. Dealing with people, there are things that women pastors can say and do, especially in the field of evangelization, that their male counterparts are weak to do. I am talking from experience.

With love and affection,

Merlita Rogers ❖

(Head Pastor of Bataan New Church
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like a mirror showing us who we are, where we've come from, and even where we're going. This is certainly true with the ongoing saga of James Bond, and I was reminded of this just after the service last week. You see, one person came up to me and said, "Hey, you forgot to mention all the beautiful girls!"

Ah, yes, the "Bond girls," also known by some writers on the subject — and probably more accurately — as the "Bond bunnies." How can we ever forget them? Their presence in these films provides us with a whole sub-text on the relationship of men and women, those two very different halves of the human race.

In "Goldfinger," women, if they have any kind of profile in the story at all, are typically

mincing, vacant-eyed beauties with simpering smiles. Present either as good girls or sultry temptresses, they tend to be highly emotional, easily confused and not very effective. They have no life independent of men and no power except to be desirable to men, to whom they look for guidance and support.

Of course, the one they look to most is our hero, James Bond. As the ideal man, at least back in 1964, we see Bond as cool and sophisticated, always in control and never, ever emotionally vulnerable. In fact, he hardly breaks a sweat. This Bond has no ongoing relationships and makes no commitments, except to his job. Women in his life are rather like trophies he wins in his contests with the bad guys. They accessorize the Bond lifestyle, but otherwise have no place in what is clearly a very male-oriented world.

Perhaps the classic illustration of this in "Goldfinger" comes when a male colleague approaches Bond with information about a new mission. On seeing him, Sean Connery, in the title role, turns to the adoring, bikini-clad young woman he's with and dismisses her with a pat on the bottom, saying, "Run along now, darling, this is man talk."

Oh, please!

Well, okay, so that was the Bond story some forty years ago. But just look at how that story gets told today! In "Casino Royale", the first and biggest difference is not the portrayal of Bond by newcomer-to-the-role, Daniel Craig. It's the women! Forget the "Bond bunnies" — the two key women characters in the movie are portrayed as powerful, intelligent and independent of men. They're clearly Bond's equals. One of them, in fact, is the enigmatic "M", his superior. As played by Judi Dench, "M" is the archetype of the crone or wise woman figure of ancient myth. It's her wisdom and vision that guides our hero on his mission.

As for the other woman, yes, she's young and gorgeous, as we might expect, but she's also portrayed as brilliant and courageous. At one point she even saves Bond's life when he himself is helpless and dying.

And what is the response of the "new James Bond" to all this? Well, it isn't a case of making

another conquest of another pretty girl. Rather, he develops a relationship with her and falls in love. He even throws over his career as 007, just to be with her!

What happened to the suave, emotionally-detached playboy with all the clever techno-gadgetry at his command? That Bond is gone. Instead we're shown a man who's intensely physical and present. He runs a lot in this movie and, when he does, he goes all out. He fights the same way, too, still on the side of the angels, but with a kind of desperate, savage energy. This Bond is a passionate man, committed to his goals but, at the same time, open to following his heart. He can be playful and even mischievous; he can make mistakes and learn from them. Above all, he can give himself completely to a moment and risk himself completely with someone he loves.

As a depiction of the ideal man, this is a much more complex and compelling portrait, a veritable liberation from that two-dimensional character of the early films. But what's really key here is the fact that this liberation of the male has come about through the liberation of the female. Because women in the story are allowed to be full human beings, with their own vision and voice, the men can drop the "macho cool" act and come into their own true selves. When women are free, men are free also, and then both are free for a truer, deeper relationship with one another. And when that happens, that's when everything else changes, too, a new day inaugurating the New Jerusalem.

What we're talking about here is a basic insight and teaching of the New Church. But to understand that, we need to backtrack and talk about love for a moment. It was revealed to Emmanuel Swedenborg that the greatest love, the foundation of all the others, is what he called "marriage love." Now don't go jumping to an image of wedding bells and bride and groom — not yet anyway! Swedenborg was an engineer before he was a mystic, and he often used the word "marriage" in the more technical sense of any two components that are meant to "marry" or join together, to form one unit.

So when Swedenborg talks of "marriage love," he means a love that unites in itself two things, namely what you know is true and good and your

will to actually do it. In other words, you "walk the talk." Marriage love is love made real because it's lived, not just wished for or talked about. That kind of love changes lives and worlds. The pre-eminent example is Jesus, who not only embodies God's love but lived it for others. It's also symbolized by us here, as a church. We join together in the Spirit, to learn what love is and to practice living it, so it can become real and change our lives. This is "marriage love."

But the biggest illustration of it in our world, says Swedenborg, has to do with the fact that God made us as human beings into two opposite, and often opposing, sexes. As it says in Genesis, "So God created humankind in his image, in his image he created them, male and female he created them."

God did this, says Swedenborg, because the two genders, like everything on this physical plane, correspond to the spiritual reality from which they originate. In this case, since we're made in the image of God, our two genders correspond to the two aspects of who God is. The male principle represents truth, all the knowing and understanding of what is right and good. The female, on the other hand, represents the love of what is right and good and, since we do what we love, the female also represents our will to do good.

In God, the infinite truth of love and the infinite will to share it are fused together in one eternal outpouring of the Spirit that takes physical form as the Creation, including us. Well, here on the human level, that same fusing is expressed as male and female humanity, intended to dwell as one in a mutual, loving partnership.

Now in the narrowest, most particular sense, this means monogamous unions of man and woman, the ideal of a loving marriage. But in a



Speak Lord

Wendy Hoo

So little Samuel did reply when the Lord called him to service. But I would like to go

broader, deeper sense, Swedenborg is talking about the coming together of everything male and everything female, these two very different ways of seeing and being in the world, into one fully human way of live. Spiritually, that is the hallmark of the New Jerusalem to come.

So why hasn't it come yet? In a word, because we haven't been ready for this full and equal partnership of male and female. For centuries we've exalted the male dimension and "take" on things, and demeaned the female. We've privileged the knowing and understanding of things, the raising up of knowledge and science. But we've rebelled against any higher love than self-interest to guide its use. And we see the results. A world where every increase in knowledge seems to become part of an endless competition for power and control. We fight each other and we rape the earth.

It is past time for another way, one where the male quest for knowledge and understanding is contextualized and directed by the female love for what is truly good and life-affirming to do. It's rather like, to return to the movies for a moment, James Bond being guided and directed by the female "M." That doesn't make Bond less masculine or, for that matter, "M" less feminine. On the contrary, it made both more real, more fully human and, together, they had the power to save the world.

Let us take that as another small sign of hope for us, on this Sunday of Hope in Advent. Because if the world's stories are changing, it's because the story-tellers are changing also. And this is the work of our God, the Spirit leading us in the task of joining male and female at last, that together we might birth the Miracle of our new beginning. Amen. ❖

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back in the story to Hannah, his mother who was so jealous of Penninah, the other wife of Elkana, for being able to bear children. She wanted a child, perhaps partly because that was the way women gained acceptance in her world, and she prayed for years and years.

Why couldn't she be like others she saw everywhere who were able to find their place in the world through motherhood? She prayed at the temple where Eli thought she was drunk because she was so passionately involved in prayer.

Some of us have known our life's purpose from an early age. Others take most of their life to find it, and some feel they never do. Some are jealous of others who seem to know their calling, some pray and hope and search for answers. Others suffer great agony in their quest, giving over huge amounts of time and money in self-discovery journeys trying to find the answer to why God planted them on this earth. Those more practical citizens of the planet may look on these people and say, what's the big deal, why don't you just sober up, get an ordinary job and be content?

Eli was compassionate, and spent enough time with Hannah to find out the real issue. By this time Hannah was pure in her desire to be a mother, promising to give the child back to the Lord if only she could have the great joy of birthing, loving, nursing and knowing him. Eli saw that this was a request the Lord would grant, and sent her on her way. Hannah's wish was fulfilled and she did not forget her promise to the Lord, but gladly brought him to the uses of the Lord when he was old enough.

I have interviewed artists about where their creativity comes from. Every developed musician, painter, or dancer I spoke to believed they were a vessel of some higher energy that initiated their creations, which they then birth. Some came to this conclusion by being in the process of creativity and realizing they could not, of themselves, do great work. They came to realize their part was preparation - putting themselves in the right place with the right frame of mind and body - and then they could receive. In Howard Gardner's book, *Creating Minds*, he interviews successful people in a variety of professions, who seem to be saying the same thing: the scientist who went beyond others in their discoveries, the doctor who astounded colleagues with their powers. I am convinced that to come into the full joy of one's use in this world, one must acknowledge the outside force of inspiration that guides and leads,

whether or not one does so consciously or publicly.

Hannah made a white coat for Samuel every year. She even brought presents to Eli when she came to deliver Samuel. Her attitude in mothering Samuel was one of gratitude, generosity, and continued support. She was very sure that Samuel was just a gift that flowed through her, giving her happiness and purpose. She was finally content in this world.

How do we go about finding and nurturing our gifts? Why do some seem to find their use early, while others debate and wonder? Is there a final answer to the question, or does each answer bring with it more questions? How do we know the answers are coming from the right place?

There is a big business in career, life, and dream coaching these days. Thousands of books, a variety of gurus and companies are available to those who can't seem to figure out their life's passion. Techniques range from a practical study of the jobs available that the client is qualified for, to more psychologically or spiritually based methods to help them find deeper clues to the problem at hand. From *Monster.com* to *What Color is your Parachute?*, there are lots of places to go to help find answers.

Hannah might have gone to a fertility specialist if she lived today. But she turned to prayer, which may have involved years of doubt and temptations until she reached the point of knowing why she really wanted a child. If she had had a child earlier, it might have been many years before she realized that doing what made her accepted by her husband and others wasn't necessarily what would make her happy. By the time she reached her goal, she knew that happiness would come from being an instrument of the Lord's uses.

I knew I wanted to be a teacher when I was four and discovered kindergarten. I remember coming home every day and setting my younger brother and sister up as my students, happy to teach them whatever I learned that day. Teachers were there all through my childhood to give me role models and food for thought about what kind of teacher I wanted to be. Along with art, my other love, teaching as a future was always

somewhere in my mind. I cannot remember really ever not doing some kind of teaching as I progressed from teaching siblings and neighborhood children to assisting my teacher mother in her classroom at age 11. As a teenager, I taught in summer camps. When it was time for me to start getting credentials for teaching, I detoured for a while, rebelling from the model of my mother and my own childish dreams. No, instead I would be something much more glamorous, and more my own — I would be an artist.

But one cannot deny one's true self forever, and after ten years I realized I didn't want to make a living drawing pictures other people demanded of me. I followed my son to his after-school program as a volunteer and let fate drag me back to my true love.

Glamour became less important as the demands of motherhood and fatigue with the emptiness of the secular work world took over. I found work as an art teacher and went down in income but increased my job satisfaction. It made it possible for me to raise my children without daycare, and melded well with mothering as I experimented on my children with my art projects. I accepted that parenting was a higher priority for the time being. Later when they needed me less, I went back to school and got the credentials I had given up on in early life.

But my jobs started to feel empty. What difference did it make if I entertained a handful of privileged children with arts and crafts every afternoon — how was that making the world a better place? I turned towards more sophisticated art teaching - fine arts skills and art as a tool of self-discovery. I dreamed of being a guru who helped guide the lost with expressionist art games, or at least a more legitimate teacher who taught fine arts skills. Meanwhile, my bad marriage had brought me to poor health, low self-esteem and financial instability.

I prayed that I would find a way to bring my spirit and joy into my jobs. Unexpectedly the Lord brought me to a job in an inner city school, where I saw I could use art teaching to help students survive and transcend their difficult lives. By this time I was ready to trade mild satisfaction for a real mission. I

didn't care how hard or stressful the work was, as long as I could wake up every day anxious to go to work, and go to sleep every night with the feeling I was making a difference in the world. The job saved my life. The power of this gift from the Lord pulled me out of my miserable marriage and poor health, and offered some financial stability.

I know the Lord led me to this job. Now I face another turn in the road. The stress of the work has caught up with me, on top of the difficulty of ending a marriage and leaving my home of 34 years. I feel ready for the Lord to find me a new life, and now I know I need to just pray and wait. Soon the answer will come.

While I wait I am contemplating the connection between spiritual growth and work. I look back at my career path and see how sometimes I made choices based on others' needs, sometimes on my ego and selfish needs. I have taken jobs that paid lots of money and made me feel like a prostitute. I have done others for no pay except inner peace. I have stayed in jobs that I should have quit years before, but waited because of fear the Lord would leave me jobless. I have been distracted by potential glory and fame, and other times did work that offered nothing except the chance to serve others. While the quiet stream of knowing my true love is teaching has always flowed gently in my back yard, sometimes the clouds or even hurricanes of life's trials have sent me running for cover to unstable or dangerous shelters.

A friend sent me a young person by e-mail for counsel on her career in the arts. She asked me about my choices and told of her efforts and doubts. She seemed to want advice about what degree programs or jobs to pursue, and I tried to supply this. Eventually I realized she wanted more than that. She wanted someone to tell her that she should let her guiding light be an inner voice. She wanted me to tell her to ignore all the advice she was getting from "experts" like me and follow her true guides, the good spirits that spoke to her gently and were being obliterated by the noise of the world. So I told her what she needed to hear and she thanked me.

I need to follow that advice myself right now. I am thinking about the little white coat

that Hannah brought to Samuel every year, as I review the years of my work life. I think that as Hannah went about the rest of her life, the household chores that probably filled up her days, she had a deep knowledge that Samuel was out there somewhere serving the Lord, and that she had but a small part in the miracle of his life. Perhaps she started working on the white coat a few weeks before her annual visit, thinking how he might have grown. The white fabric might have been sometimes a rough linen, perhaps other times a piece of silk she found in the marketplace and traded precious currency for. She was in acceptance of her role as supporter of the servant of the Lord, one who loved the Lord through the token gift of a white coat each year, knowing that she would never know exactly what Samuel was doing, where he was going at a given moment. But she believed that she had fulfilled her purpose in life, and in that she felt joy.

If only I could be that humble about my own use. I often aggrandize my role in the scheme of my student's lives, but usually the Lord gently puts me in my place soon enough. Things go better when I just do the grunt work of getting to work on time, getting out the art supplies, contemplating my students' needs of the day, and reflecting honestly on the effectiveness of my efforts. I accept more and more that most of what I am doing will not show results. I can create my little white coat — the lessons and support I give the students — but will rarely have the chance to see them wear the coat in their daily lives or the future. They might even forget where the coat came from. No, my best bet is to try to determine each day what the Lord wants me to do, and be open for ideas that are not my own. Less and less do I focus on flashy art shows to emphasize how great a teacher I am, and more on following through on a student's special need of the day — a little extra encouragement, a little push in the right direction, a creative challenge perfect for that student. The more I disappear in my work, the more satisfying it seems to be. I want to hear the quiet voice and reply, "Here I am, at your service, Lord." ❀

Mythos and Logos in the New Church A Workshop Presented at the General Church Assembly, June 2005

Beryl Simonetti

The theme of this assembly is "Renewing our Purpose." My personal idea of what this might mean is "Seeking truth for the sake of living a better life."

In the *General Church*, we have become accustomed to thinking that the only *reliable* source of truth is what we read in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the heavenly doctrines written through Emanuel Swedenborg. Anything else, we have been taught, is suspect. But what of some teachings from that very written revelation that teach otherwise? For example how do we regard this passage from TCR 8?

"There is a universal influx from God into the souls of men [human beings] of the truth that there is a God, and that He [God] is one."

This implies to me that the influx is present whether or not we have read about it. There is an internal, subjective process going on. How do we comprehend and express the meaning that truth has for us? Is truth a personal thing for the individual? Or is it outside of us, not at all affected by our process of understanding it? Are we preoccupied with the *letter* of revelation (the part that is definitely outside of us) rather than its *spirit* (the part that affects our interiors)?

This brings us to the topic of this workshop: *Mythos and Logos in the New Church*. As I am using these two terms here, *Logos* concerns the letter of revelation while *Mythos* has to do with its spirit.

The letter of revelation is written in books for anyone to examine from the outside. The meaning of revelation is much more individual and internal. It's harder to define and agree upon. Both are important. They are complementary. Meaning — the spirit — needs to be anchored in external realities. On the other hand, the letter is always to be seen in its relation to peoples' lives:

"The Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath." Mark 2:27

So I propose to examine both *Logos* - the letter - and *Mythos* - the meaning or spirit of revelation.

Mythos is often associated with art, music and poetry, while science and technology have more in common with *Logos*. *Mythos* deals with internal experience and non-verbal images, while *Logos* has to do with external observation and verbal texts.

Logos - the letter of revelation - tends to be rational, intellectual, impersonal, objective, logical, absolute, and certain. *Mythos* - the spirit of revelation - may be mystical, intuitive, affectional, personal, subjective, relative, vague, uncertain, emotional, and perhaps irrational.

I believe that in the General Church many people are uneasy with *Mythos*. When we look at its characteristics we find words that have negative connotations for people who seek for the truth. Of the characteristics we have listed, we distrust what is relative rather than absolute. We distrust anything that is subjective or personal or has to do with the *self*. And we worry about ideas that are not rational or subject to proof.

The spirit is not easy to pin down. We prefer the seeming safety of objectivity, of certainty. We don't dare to trust our personal processes. Personal truth is not safe or reliable because we were born with a tendency toward evil and we'll go toward it if we are not sure of our correct direction. Emotional involvement may get us into trouble because we have evil loves. So we fear emotional involvement. We want a totally rational religion. We fear anything that is subjective or personal, or anything that is relative rather than absolute.

Now we can understand why we're uneasy with *Mythos*, why we value *Logos* over *Mythos*: it's safer for us wayward human beings who are easily led astray.

The General Church is not alone in its tendency to raise the importance of *Logos* over that of *Mythos*. Many churches want to know truth objectively and want to have a common understanding which is the same for all members.

We are afraid of *Mythos*, but what happens when we depend on *Logos* and reject *Mythos*?

Karen Armstrong, in *The Battle For God: A History of Fundamentalism*, describes what she calls "The lust for certainty" which appears repeatedly in different forms in different organizations. Many sacred texts - the Koran, the Torah, the Christian Bible - are regarded by believers as perfect expressions of God's truth, each with only one obvious, correct interpretation.

Fundamentalists want to be correct in a rational way, but the *desire* for correctness is an emotional thing. Some people have an emotional need - you could call it an irrational need - for a single correct interpretation of their sacred text. What a paradox - an irrational need for rationality!

Armstrong observes:

Because by the end of the nineteenth century science and rationalism were the watchwords of the day, religion had to be rational too if it was to be taken seriously. Some Protestants were determined to make their faith logical and scientifically sound. (p. 140)

However, when Protestant fundamentalists attempted to interpret the Bible as factually true throughout, they created a caricature of both religion and science.

In the General Church we have progressed beyond the literal interpretation of the Old and New Testaments and look to their inner meaning as revealed through Swedenborg, but then we stop short and regard the Writings as infallible and correct for all time. We hear that "the Writings mean exactly what they say." Do we have the same problem with the letter of the Writings that fundamentalist Protestants have with the letter of the Old and New Testaments? Are we reluctant to deal with inconsistencies and paradoxes and cultural biases that we observe in the Writings? Do we have "the lust for certainty"?

We destroy religious organizations if we insist on correctness and certainty and infallibility for one point of view. This was illustrated in the early Academy movement when Benade insisted that his view of the Writings was the only correct one. (See R.R. Gladish, *Bishop William Henry Benade*, Bryn Athyn, ANC, 1984, especially Chapter IX, sections 9 to 28)

We have a serious dilemma.

We are afraid of *Mythos*: afraid of relative truth, afraid of uncertainty, afraid of emotional responses which might be manifestations of the love of self.

On the other hand, *Logos* has not delivered on its promise to be all things to all people, to provide for certainty, objectivity, and the correct interpretation of sacred texts.

What is the problem?

As Karen Armstrong puts it:

This is the dilemma that Jews, Christians and Muslims have all had to face in the twentieth century: between the fundamentalists and those who adopt a more positive attitude to the modern secular world there is an impassable gulf. The different groups simply cannot see things from the same point of view. Rational arguments are of no avail, because the divergence springs from a deeper and more instinctual level of the mind. (p. 204)

The materialist scientific investigator says: "In the subjective realm, there are no absolutes. There is no certainty. Therefore I will examine everything objectively from the outside. I will look at things from all angles. I will only look at what I can be sure about. No one will be able to argue with me."

He has given up on *Mythos*. (Actually, he has given up on it by deciding it doesn't exist, or at least that it has no importance.)

The religious fundamentalist says: "There is absolute truth and I will find it by scientific, logical methods. We can know it objectively. There will be certainty. No one will be able to argue with me."

He has also given up on *Mythos*. (Rather, he claims he doesn't need it because he will describe it completely in the objective terms of *Logos*.)

So, both the religious fundamentalists and the materialist scientists have distanced themselves from the uncomfortable uncertainty of *Mythos*. They both have difficulty constructing a satisfactory way of looking at reality, but they are poles apart in how they see the world.

I propose that it is *Mythos* itself that holds the key to unraveling this dilemma.

While I was studying for this workshop, I picked up a book I had bought several years

ago, but had never read — Ken Wilber's *A Brief History of Everything*. In it he looks at the search for truth and its history from as many points of view as he could find. What he found has profound implications for science, for philosophy, for religion, and for any organized system of knowledge.

He divides knowledge into four domains, or quadrants. I'll just consider two of them for now. One is what I have called *Mythos*, which is characterized by interior experience and subjective feelings. The other I have called *Logos*, which deals with exterior descriptions that are objective and rational.

Wilber describes these domains, and insists that neither of these forms of truth can be reduced to the other.

Very few people respect intuitive interior experiences, which you can't really transfer from one person to another, as reliable sources for "the truth". But here is a statement from Wilber to ponder:

"I can study your brain forever, and I will never know your mind. I can know your brain by objective study, but I can only know your mind by *talking to you*." (p. 87, emphasis added)

For example, a behaviorist cannot understand a person's interior experience solely by looking at his external behavior — or even at the physiological manifestations of that behavior.

Most of the time we look at things from the *outside*. We describe what we see and hear and sense with our five senses. We observe the surfaces of things. We objectively study the workings of the brain, map its blood flow, observe the connections that are made as the brain is used. We accumulate objective facts about the external world. We can repeat experiments and get the same results. This is real information - we call it truth — but it is not the only information we can acquire.

When we examine things from the outside, are we in touch with the whole of reality? No, we have ignored human beings' interior experience, their subjective feelings, and their consciousness.

Spiritual experience does not take place in the domain of externals. Rather it is a matter

of internals, which cannot be expressed in completely objective and rational terms.

What about interior, subjective experiences? The only way to find out about someone's experiences is to talk about them with him. We can't claim that what we are talking about is truth. What we look for instead is *truthfulness*. Is the person telling us his own personal truth? When we communicate with another we look for sincerity, integrity, trustworthiness.

We can't be *certain* about these things but the better and more deeply we communicate, the more we become convinced of the worth and the validity of the information we receive. There is truth to be found in subjective processes.

Descriptions of these processes are found in many passages of Swedenborg's Writings.

We may gather how great angels' wisdom is from the fact that in heaven there is a communication that involves everyone. The intelligence and wisdom of one individual is shared with another: heaven is where everyone shares everything of value. This is because the very nature of heavenly love is to want what is one's own to belong to another; so no one in heaven regards his or her good as authentically good unless it is someone else's as well. This is also the basis of heaven's happiness. (HH 268)

Should we not attempt this heavenly form of communication on earth because we are fearful that we might share only our evils? We could give up on the attempt, but what would we accomplish by refusing to participate with others in the search for good and true interpretations of the letter of the revelation we have been given? How can we make this search and be reasonably confident that we are moving in a good direction? The Writings have passages that address this situation.

...What that revelation is like which comes to those governed by good and consequently by an affection for truth is not easy to describe. It is not something overt, nor is it something altogether hidden; rather it is a kind of inclination, coming from within, to accept that a thing is true, or not to accept it if it is not true. When it is the inclination to accept, the mind is at rest and is tranquil; and in that state there exists the acknowledgment that goes with faith. (AC 8694.3)

Even if we are in a good state, and we have the intuitive sense that something we are thinking is true, we cannot be *sure* we are on the right track. What the Writings describe here is an experience that is intuitive and that is not immediately transferable to any other person. The only way we can explore it for validity is to talk about the experience with other people. Other people will have their own experiences, which will be different from ours, and which will add to our understanding. Perhaps the understanding of a priest will be accepted more readily than that of lay men and women, perhaps not. Each of us is responsible for our own interpretation, which comes from our own internal process, and is made to the best of our ability at the time. This is a process involving *Mythos* — subjective, intuitive, uncertain. It cannot be otherwise.

The reason why awareness of [such things as correspondences and the internal sense of the Word] has perished is a lack of belief that what is spiritual has any real existence. (AC 9011.7)

We can see how the lack of belief in what is spiritual came about. So many people have come to disregard and dissociate from their subjective internals and to believe that all things can be encompassed from the outside — the objective, rational, logical *Logos*.

In the New Church, we certainly believe that the spiritual has real existence. But we still struggle to incorporate *Mythos* into our thinking. There is an illusion that simply because a person has a strong sense of what is true and perceives it clearly in him or herself, that it has objective reality and can be transferred to other people by means of words — by means of *Logos*. Interior, intuitive experiences are not directly and accurately transferable from one person to another. If they were, it would not be far-fetched to assume that a trained clergyman could empty his superior concepts and correct interpretations of doctrine into the waiting, open minds of his congregation, and that this is the way to teach doctrine and lead to the good of life. The belief in this possibility, as far as I'm concerned, is one of the most unfortunate assumptions made in the General

Church. It is not that simple. We read in the Arcana that:

One person's truth cannot be transferred to another, for when it is transferred it passes into the form that is peculiar to the recipient and takes on a different appearance. But this arcanum demands exploration which is too deep to enable it to be revealed in just a few words... (AC 4149)

What happens to a church organization when *Mythos* is devalued?

First, the organization may become preoccupied with the correctness of doctrine. For example, are priests more effective when they wear linen garments than when their robes are made of polyester? (I think we have gotten past this one, but a few years ago - no, a generation or two ago - this was a *huge* question.) Another question that comes up is this: is it all right to use grape juice instead of wine for the Holy Supper? There is some contention around this one, with a felt need for the "correct interpretation." Do we need to have a definitive answer for this, or is it possible to decide each case on its own merits, in its own time? Second, we may use ideals in ways that are not appropriate. One of the functions of *Mythos* in a person's spiritual life is to form ideals. We realize that they are often unattainable, but they guide us and we can use them to measure our progress, or at least our direction. We may wish to have an ideal marriage, or to provide an ideal environment for our growing children. But if we decide in advance exactly how things should be, if we turn ideals into *Logos* and try to apply them in specific ways, we may consider them essentials rather than guides for living, and we cannot forgive ourselves or others when we fall short. If we think to ourselves, "I will never get a divorce," or "I will never use birth control," or "I will always go to church on Sundays," and then find ourselves unable to follow through, we may get into destructive spiritual judgments. This is particularly the case when a community decides to abide by certain ideals, and when those who are apparently unable to conform are shunned.

As the late Rev. Horand Gutfeldt said many years ago in an address he gave at the college

in Bryn Athyn, "We must not make idols of our ideals."

Third, finding the truth may become more important to us than paying attention to love and charity. In our emphasis on "a religion that makes sense" have we perhaps ignored or de-emphasized some ways of relating to a loving God and to our fellow human beings which are often spoken of in the Writings? Have these ideas been overlooked in our anxiety to have correct interpretations and to have logical reasons for all our actions?

I wonder how we have used the often quoted passage in TCR 508: "Nunc Licet" — *Now it is permitted to enter with the understanding into the mysteries of faith.* For one thing, it says "now it is permitted." It doesn't say "now it is commanded." It's fine if that's what interests us, but it is not essential. "Now it is permitted" does not necessarily mean that we can trade in any vague, mystical, affectional, personal ideas about religion and spirituality for a definite, intellectual belief, which can serve us much better. Some of us have always been afraid of emotional involvement with religion, fearful that we would be "carried away" in disorderly ways. This passage may be used to give us "permission" to avoid emotion in our spiritual lives.

Surely we are not expected to give up the rituals that have meaning for us, or the allegories and stories that are so powerful for our children (and for us as well), or the religious art and music that enriches us. "Now it is permitted" implies to me that we can still use the *Mythos* — the stories and their representations — the perception and deep experiences — of religion. Now we can balance them with the *Logos* of understanding and intellect and integrate them in ways that were impossible before Swedenborg's revelation. "Now it is permitted" does not imply that we can substitute understanding and certainty for the *Mythos* that still holds meaning for us. The concepts of *Mythos* and *Logos* can help us to sort out the valuable ideas in both areas. Both kinds of truth are valid and indispensable for living a life of religion.

Discussion

The workshop included an opportunity for the participants to consider and discuss the following questions:

Do you have ideas for specific things we could do to balance and integrate *Mythos* and *Logos* in the General Church? Or do you feel that *Mythos* and *Logos* are already in balance in our organization?

How do you experience *Mythos* in your spiritual life? Do you pay attention to intuitive feelings?

How do you experience *Logos* in your spiritual life? Do you expect to find answers to all your questions if you persist in searching?

Conclusion

When I started thinking about this workshop, I expected to zero in on fundamentalism as Karen Armstrong has described it — an unhealthy substitution of *Logos* for *Mythos* in the truth people seek for use in their spiritual lives.

What I discovered as I explored this topic was a problem that was much deeper and more widespread. Fundamentalists of all the types Armstrong examines — Jewish, Islamic and Christian — are not the only people suffering from a misapprehension about *Mythos*, the intuitive, subjective, interior kind of truth.

Others who have problems are the materialist scientists and people who subscribe to the Enlightenment structures of rational thought (sometimes called Modern.) Also, Postmodernists who dismiss the possibility of meaning — *any* meaning! All of these are suffering and circumscribed and limited by their refusal to validate subjective thought and consciousness. There is a desire for everything to be described in terms of a reality that can be touched and sensed from the outside. Anything that can't be described this way must have no existence at all! Confusion about the value of *Mythos* has been a problem for a great many people.

In the General Church, we have many opportunities to experience *Mythos*. We have powerful rituals, such as the Holy Supper, we

have pageants, we have wedding processions with candles and flowers, we have magnificent music. These are full of meaning for us. Much of this meaning is derived from the revelation — the sacred text or *Logos* — that we study. We are enriched by the experience of these things, yet we rarely talk with each other about what affects us. We have seen that personal expression is suspect because of the evils we may be involved in. We fear the personal. Priests are encouraged to give us "The Truth" without telling us how they are affected personally by that truth.

I would like to consider some statements from the Writings and notice one possible way of responding to them.

The one great Truth the Church possesses is that love to the Lord and love towards the neighbor are first and foremost. (AC 4776)

That's a statement of truth. What is the experience of that truth? How do we experience it inside ourselves?

Here is another statement:

The ultimate purpose of creation is a heaven from the human race. (DP 323)

What makes it heaven? What makes it heavenly?

Communication of interior experiences has value for the individual and has value for those who participate in the process of communication. As they talk about things together, they can express their ideas more and more accurately. This is a process of mutual discovery which is dependent on *Mythos*.

Heaven is a place where there is love to the Lord and love to the neighbor. This idea was always puzzling to me. How do you know if you love the Lord? Loving the neighbor is a little less confusing, but still puzzling. What helps me to straighten these ideas out is to remember that we are created in the image of God. Each of us receives a limited, different piece. A different part of the image of God. What we are put on this world to do is to communicate with one another our different points of view — to share revelation as we see it to make it more whole for everyone. Each of us has a part to play in this. The more people

whose points of view we become familiar with, the more completely we become conscious of God. This is how we come to "love the Lord." Loving our neighbor is the same as loving the image of God in our neighbor. Loving the Lord develops along with loving the neighbor.

The only way we can make any approach to "the truth" is simultaneously from many points of view — by the intimate communication of mutual love.

The angelic state is such that everyone communicates his own blessedness and happiness to others, for in the next life all affections and thoughts are communicated and perceived faultlessly. Each individual therefore communicates his own joy to all others, and so do all to each individual. Consequently each individual is so to speak the focal point of all. This is the heavenly form. The more there are to constitute the Lord's kingdom therefore, the greater the happiness, for this grows in proportion to the increase in numbers. This is why heavenly happiness is indescribable. (AC 549)

To me, "Renewing our purpose" is not returning to the past. It is returning to the revelation for the New Church as individuals and exploring with others what we find there.

Let us have the courage to go beyond where we have been before — and allow and encourage everyone else to do the same.

We may gather the magnitude of heaven's pleasure simply from the fact that for everyone there it is delightful to share their pleasure and bliss with someone else; and since everyone in the heavens is like this, we can see how immense heaven's pleasure is...There is in heaven a sharing by everyone with each individual, and by each individual with everyone. (HH 399)

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The New Church Newsletter *Hurstville Society March 2006*

Women's Use

by Miss M. M. White

That women have uses to perform, none will deny; but what those uses should be, and their value compared with the uses of men, has been a subject of much contention in the past, and at present it is a matter much discussed in the press, and is actually, in fact, being fought out in the world around us in a veritable war of woman versus man.

Women have risen in revolt during the last half century, and are now endeavouring to demonstrate by actual facts that they, as human beings, are intellectually and practically the equal of men. Will Durant, in an article entitled "The Modern Woman," says: "The outstanding feature of the first quarter of the twentieth century is the change in the status of women. History has rarely seen so startling a transformation in so short a time."

The reason for this is not hard to see, for it has been many years since women were really free — free to live the life of their choice. Since the fall of the Egyptian civilization, or the end of the Ancient Church, until the reception of the New Church doctrines, woman was regarded no otherwise than as the weaker vessel, the property of her male relations. Many cases of happy family connections and true marriages existed as isolated cases, without a doubt, but the general opinion in the world was that the man was lord and master.

During the Greek civilization, Plato pleaded for the equal opportunity of both sexes. But Aristotle classed woman as an arrested development, and explained her as being "nature's failure to make a man." She belonged with the slaves, as naturally subordinate.

In the Hebrew Church, the women were classed with the children - there was no way of entrance for them into the Church. It was not until the Christian Church was established by the Lord that women were accorded equality of membership. By the institution of the Sacrament of baptism, and its application

to both sexes, a door of entrance was made for women, as well as men, into the Church. The status of women generally was thereby considerably raised as the Church grew, and Christian civilization is noted for the comparatively high regard and respect shown by the men towards the women. Still, women were not free; and it is not surprising that, at the end of the Church, when Christian truths were neither seen nor lived, women revolted and insisted on freedom. 'Twas economic freedom they craved. The opportunity came with the coming of machinery. Women could manipulate machines, but they were not willing to do so unless what they earned was legally theirs. Factory owners in England had an Act of Parliament passed, allowing the women to own the money they earned. Thus they obtained the necessary labour required.

This was the great opening for woman's economic freedom; and, for better or worse, woman grasped the opportunity. Avenue after avenue of various uses have opened to her since that time, and she has proved a successful competitor with men in an ever-widening field of uses.

What of the New Church during this time? It has not escaped the controversy, for we find varying views held by its members regarding women's uses and the quality of their intellectual attainments. Some resentment, maybe, has resulted from the repetition of such statements as "women belong to the home," "a woman cannot understand in the same way as a man," and so forth. I venture to suggest that the resentment does not lie so much in the statements themselves, but in the old idea lying behind — that women and their uses are secondary, and that they should rely on the guidance of the men.

New Church women can afford to smile, however, at any recurrence of such ideas, and let a little patience take the place of resentment, realizing that in the New Church they are to reap the heritage that was truly woman's from the beginning of time.

In the Writings of our Church, the relation of men and women has been clearly explained, and great stress has been laid on the freedom

which each must have as a necessity to true existence. There are New Church men and women who have seen the truth on this subject, and are endeavouring to build up a new civilization by its means. They see that the proper recognition of the uses of the wife and husband in the home are vital to the order and happiness therein. The home is the basis of society, and the principles there displayed we find in all the various ramifications of the life of a nation.

We are taught in the Writings that every single person has been born to perform a use which is peculiarly his, and which no other person could so well perform. How precious is each individual soul in the eyes of the Lord! And how precious should our use be in our eyes! How diligently should each seek the special use they are born to perform, and strive to become better and better in its performance.

Women have uses to perform which cannot be done by men, and likewise men have uses which cannot rightly be done by women. The reason is that men and women are complementary to each other; separate, they are not complete. An angel is a married pair in heaven. It follows that the uses of men and women are complementary also. In fact, for a use to be a use, it must have something from both man and woman in it. There is not a single use in the world but needs for its successful accomplishment the efforts of men and women. There are many uses that appear to be done as well by women as men, but where do we find these things isolated? It is the common working together that causes the success. In other uses, common sense shows that men cannot do those things that always have been peculiar to women, and likewise there are things done by men that women, even in their advanced state, would shrink from attempting.

The questions that seem uppermost in New Church people's minds are: Can women think like men? Can they understand and enjoy intellectual accomplishments in any degree, as men can?

To the first I would answer, "No." To the latter, in the affirmative. This would appear to

be a paradox; but the great difference, as I see it, is in the way in which men and women think. Men have immediate influx into their understandings from the Lord. This women have not. They are dependent on the men, as mediate vessels, for their powers to think and understand. The reception by the men of this influx from the Lord creates a sphere which is diffused from their minds, and by means of this sphere women can understand truths and rise to heights of intellectuality equal to men. In women, however, thought is feminine — not masculine. Does this, then, make the man superior? Is there no compensating balance? Yes. The Lord uses women also as a medium of influx. To her is entrusted the most universal of all spheres, something which is more universal than heat and light. If men did not come under the influence of this sphere, through women, the powers of their intellects would be impotent for the performance of any use. This sphere, in its highest sense, is the sphere of the preservation of the created universe, and is called the conjugal sphere. All love of use is in it. Without this sphere from women, men would love the things of their understandings in themselves; that is, they would seek truths, knowledges and facts, without any idea of love of use, but merely for the sake of knowing them. The same would apply on the lower plane of life — the getting of money and property from the love of ownership, not for the sake of extending uses to the neighbour.

This gives us the keynote to women's use. Good women love all those things that preserve natural and spiritual life, and, because of this love, they have a perception of how this is to be done. They also love the means that will enable those uses to become realities. Truth is the universal means of love ultimating itself; and, as man is the medium of the influx of truth from the Lord, good women love truth in men. And when women love truth in men, good men are inspired to seek and obtain it for the sake of the uses loved by the women. What a heritage has woman! What a noble use! She is the guardian of the sacred flame of love — a love that comes to her from the Lord, and which reaches out into every field of usefulness. The home will ever be woman's peculiar shrine. The care and education

of little children, none can accomplish as she can. But if these uses be denied her, and she finds it necessary to earn a living to gain independence, she surely may accomplish it in very many ways. In doing so, she may bring into her usefulness her womanly love of uses, which perhaps was not there in very full measure before.

The statement of the angel regarding himself and his wife, given to us in the Writings, "She is my heart, and I am her lungs," applies to men and women generally. In the church or community, women represent the heart, and men the lungs. And, as the uses of the heart and lungs react to every part of the body, so the uses of men and women reign universally and reciprocally throughout the church and community, when it is in a healthy state.

(Note from Editors of the Hurstville Newsletter: We have reprinted this article for a couple of reasons. Firstly as Mora White features prominently in our "More History" segment it is good to have something from her pen. Secondly the topic is still very current today and it seemed appropriate to have the views of one of the most prominent women lay persons from another era. The article was first published in *The New Age* (Australia), December, 1930 and then again in *New Church Life* April 1931.)

The New Church Newsletter Hurstville Society May 2006 Letter to the Editors

Dear Editors

In the March Newsletter Miss M. M. White is quoted as saying "...men and women ... separate, ... are not complete. An Angel is a married pair in heaven. [F]or a use to be a use, it must have something from both men and women in it. There is not a single use in the world but needs for its successful accomplishment the efforts of men and women."

Miss White is on solid ground in making these assertions for that is what the Writings clearly teach. Yet in the most important use there is, the formulation of doctrine, women

are totally excluded.

The New Church grew out of the Anglican tradition and also became established at a time when women were considered subservient. Those attitudes became part of the thinking of the General Church and have been carried down to the present day: doctrine is held to be a male prerogative, especially a male, priestly prerogative. And men, in drawing doctrine, see what they want to see: they see things from their own perspective, a perspective which does not have the input of the required other half — that of women.

All too often, only the literal sense of the Writings is seen, and so when men and women are mentioned in the Writings, the references are held to be gender issues: this or that applies to men while this or that applies to women. This usually means that men come out "on top", as the "ruling elite", doctrinally speaking.

Such thinking ignores several facts about the Writings which are that they are the Word, the Divine Human of the Lord and are only about the Lord and His glorification and in so far as they apply to humankind, they show us the way to regenerate. Every word that is written in the Writings therefore has to apply equally to everyone in the world, regardless of gender. Further, to take references to men and women as gender references ignores the definitions given in the Arcana (the first books of the Writings to be printed) for men and women and male and female. Despite this, the General Church, by saying that various statements in the Writings concerning men and women are gender-specific, totally ignores the points I have just made and by default this can only mean that there are different regenerative paths for men and women. Yet this cannot be.

I remember when I was a teenager hearing ministers stating emphatically that, because of the differences stated in the Writings between men and women, women should either be in the home or in occupations suited to women such as teaching or nursing. It was held that it was entirely wrong for women to be scientists, mathematicians, accountants and

the like. Thankfully, that doctrine, drawn only by men, is no longer in vogue. One wonders whether it would ever have been acceptable if, as Miss White pointed out, both men and women had been involved in all uses. If women had been able to have input into drawing doctrine, perhaps they would have seen things differently.

Today, the issue is whether or not women should be priests or even be allowed to be lay leaders. The Writings are totally silent on these issues, and the position of the General Church is purely a doctrinal one, drawn only by men, based on history and their own view of life. Ministers have told me that given the differences between men and women (based on the male perspective) women are unlikely to make effective ministers. I find this hard to swallow. What about the men who make ineffective ministers?

As for women not being lay leaders, this again is a view that is difficult to understand. Essentially, a worship service is between the Lord and the individual participant, as is the case with the Holy Supper service. The service is merely a framework which allows the individual to communicate with the Lord. Without that individual communication the service is nothing but sterile theatre. It does not matter whether a man or a woman leads the service or who reads the Word or the sermon written by an ordained minister, or who leads a Holy Supper service.

It is time that the General Church came into a more enlightened view. The doctrine which sets up these gender differences is biased. People, of either gender, should be judged on their actual performance, not on preconceived attitudes based on doctrine which, drawn only by men, is lop-sided.

From AE 316c

"The little horn that came up among them, before which three of the former horns were plucked up by the roots," signifies the complete perversion of the Word by the application of the sense of its letter to confirm the love of dominion."

Best wishes,
Barrie Ridgway, Canberra

Back From Hiatus

Sometimes in life you just need to take a vacation. It has been a while since the last issue of Voice. October, 2004 was when it was last published. Even when we don't speak out loud, all of us still carry things in our minds and hearts that we think about and mull over day to day. The main focus of Voice is to be a vehicle for people who want to support change in the General Church. In reality, it is a newsletter that hopes to include the thoughts and feelings of anyone who considers things deeply and wants to give them expression and share them with like-minded people. We welcome submissions of articles, poetry, letters to the editor, etc., and hope you do not hesitate to submit them.

Subscriptions and Contributions

To get the next issue, please contact Peggy Mergen or send a check to Lynne Smith. A year's subscription costs \$10.00 and to get one issue is \$5.00. When sending us money, please indicate the amount you intend for subscription, and the amount (if any) towards a contribution.

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*Where a calculator on the ENIAC is equipped with 18,000 vacuum tubes and weighs 30 tons,
computers in the future may have only 1,000 vacuum tubes and weigh only 1.5 tons.
(Extract from "Popular Mechanics" March 1949)*

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