

Voice

a newsletter for Caritas

April 2001

Volume 1

My hope for this newsletter is that it becomes a forum for the expression of feelings and ideas that would not be printed in any of the other Church publications. 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 affections. Creating a sphere of freedom is tantamount to inviting others into our minds for a while to visit. When fearfulness prevails, the visit is limited, and short.

One of the things that impressed me the most about the Writings was they tell of many, many heavenly societies, and that we will all go to different ones. For me, that created a way for a lot of different people to be right at the same time, meaning that many differing views can be held at the same time. Instead of one thing being right, expression of the spiritual life became more of a jigsaw puzzle, with many pieces needed to fit together, the more pieces, the bigger and better quality of detail. I am not saying that there aren't wrong things, and falsities, but the third stage of preparation is instruction in heavenly things. When people intend well, the Lord will lead the way to see things in clearer heavenly light and feel them in sweeter heavenly warmth.

We struggle here on earth to pull everything into a workable society reflecting these better heavenly things. But we are not fully regenerate. We are not perfect. But we are doing the best we can, and are learning a lot of interesting, loving, and, at times, fun things that are important to the further development of our spirits. If people reading this newsletter were just beginning their spiritual journeys, other considerations might apply. But people reading this are not new to the spiritual journey, on the whole. I hope we treat one another like spiritually intelligent people, joyful and perceiving of more and more of the Lord's wonderful things.

- Helen Kennedy

Everyone there lives satisfied with what he has, and everyone lives satisfied with the respect in which he is held for being righteous and showing love towards the neighbor. AC 7354 (Regarding Mars)

In response to her nomination as president of Caritas, Janie Lemole wrote this online:

Dear Caritas friends:

I have felt a deep conflict about certain issues that have come up -- and since I have been nominated for president of Caritas, I need to make it clear, as clear as I can to myself as well, where I stand. I heartily agree with the tenets of the Statement of Purpose and feel we must explore whether we can work with and serve the Church as we know it - assuming its willingness to include us in discussions in these issues of growth and change. The subject of women priests in my mind is a valid one and one with which the Church must grapple in the future by discussion and doctrinal study. This I hope would be in the spirit of truth with love and not in defensiveness. But I don't see this as the initial deal breaker or the sine qua non of Caritas. We have to begin somewhere by gradual steps within the Church or break away and start some new entity. I prefer to attempt the first -- to offer a hand in friendship to the Church to see if there is a desire to include the laity in a meaningful way; to help the Church recognize the off-balance of masculine/feminine in the organization; and to build a "spirit-filled" Church where we work together and wish each other well, including those whose interpretation of doctrine may differ from our own.

I love the way a recent e-mail was signed and it highlighted my conflict with Caritas. "In the love of our God and Savior Jesus Christ." It is my Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, whom I worship. He is who my God looks like. *We ought to have faith in God the Savior, Jesus Christ, because that is faith in the visible God in Whom is the invisible; and faith in the visible God, Who is at once Man -- (homo) and God, enters into man (homo). For while faith is spiritual, in order to be anything with a person, it is received by her or him in what is natural.* (TCR 339) I see the essence of God as having masculine and feminine qualities, and from essence to person as the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have enjoyed reading Michael David's "God as Mother and Father" and see God as Father and the Church as Mother -- but a Mother loving, warm, nurturing, and caring for her children. I feel fine about others seeing God in a female form as Goddess. It just isn't what I believe and if that is what Caritas stands for now -- God as Goddess -- and the ordination of

women first and foremost, I am not a good representative.

Let's think about what we can do to create the Church as describe in AC 2385: *Were it received as a principle, that love to the Lord and charity to the neighbor are what the whole law hangs on and are what all the Prophets speak of, and thus are the essentials of all doctrine and worship, then the mind would be enlightened in innumerable things in the Word, which otherwise lie hidden in the obscurity of a false principle. In fact, heresies would be scattered then, and out of many, one Church would come to be, however the doctrines flowing therefrom or leading thereto, and the rituals, might differ. Were the case so all people would be governed as a single human being by the Lord; for all would be as members and organs of one body, which, similar in form and function though they are, still have relation to one heart only, wherein they each and all depend. Then, in whatever doctrine or outward worship one might be, one would say of another, "This person is my sister or brother. I see that she or he worships the Lord, and that she or he is a good person."*

I don't kid myself that the General Church is going to welcome Caritas with open arms; however, instead they may open a door and participate in discussion. I know I wouldn't be waiting around for this group to ordain me if I wanted to be a minister now. I would go to theological school elsewhere and at the same time work for change in ways here, if that was my heart's desire.

A plan might be:

- 1) Ask for a meeting with representatives from the General Church. Bishop King just told me about how the General Conference of the New Church dealt with this in 1992. They made a thorough study of three possible positions,

gathering appropriate numbers from Scripture and the Writings and gave a presentation to their laity. In conclusion, they published *A New Pattern of Ministry For Both Men and Women...* It may be just the starting place we need.

- 2) Inquire with the Theological School how MARS graduates might best serve them and the Church.
- 3) Work with the Pastor to see how women may be included in new ways in the life of the Church, i.e., reading in services as is done in other Churches (some churches do not ordain women but welcome them to read, also, to assist in the Holy Supper). There could be early morning services, 7:30-8:30, in which people could come to the Cathedral for prayer at the start of the day. There could be music and perhaps reading from the Psalms.
- 4) An outreach of women could be trained by the Church to have a specific ministry to visit the sick, nursing homes, or just visit those who would relish closer contact with the Church (a number of Churches have these training programs for their laity.)

There are many positive ways to serve and, in return, feel a part of the Church. If we wish our words to turn into actions, we must make a plan and act.

I often wonder what our Caritas members really want -- for themselves, Caritas, the Church, or the Church that they envision? Where is Caritas going? Are we enough of one mind -- a lot of common ground with a variety of ideas -- or little common ground with deep disagreement? Singleness of eye and unity of purpose is what changes things and gets things done, even when there are differences about

how and when. Differences of why lie close to the bone and are without common vision.

I picture a Church that reflects a beautiful balance between the masculine and feminine -- one that truly needs its members and its members need it; one that if you didn't appear for a few weeks or months or a few years, or stopped contributing, would give you a call of care and concern. I envision pastors who minister to their flock and don't believe "priests aren't social workers" -- because actually they are; it's all about loving each other and that in my mind is "social work". Leading to the good of life falls right into this. An early New Churchman, William H. Holcombe, M.D., wrote in *Letters on Spiritual Subjects*, "The man who supposes that the church was founded for the instruction and salvation of his individual soul, or to draw down the divine influx into forms of praying, singing, preaching, etc., has missed the genuine use of the church altogether. The church was established that each and all may take hold of it to promote the social and spiritual welfare of others. In its highest sense the church is the heart and lungs of the world, deriving its life from the living Word, the Divine Humanity, and distributing the love and wisdom of this Humanity to all creatures."

I had to clarify my thoughts and don't feel I can honestly represent an organization if I don't hold the same beliefs or priorities as the majority of the group.

With all good wishes to each and everyone of you, alive, caring, bright, articulate, truth and good seekers that you are,

Love,
Janie

What is your vote for a name for this Newsletter? Do you like Voice, just Caritas, Voice of Caritas, or Vox Caritatis? Any other suggestions?

EMOTION AS INNER MEANING

And Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this that you have done to me? Why did you not point out to me that she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister'? And I would have taken her for my woman. And now look: your wife; take her and go." (Genesis 12:18-19)

The fact that he said, "What is this that you have done to me?" means that it caused him anguish can be seen from the outrage itself with which the words are said. The anguish, then, is explicitly voiced in these words. The inner meaning is such that the actual emotion implicit in the words is what makes up their inner meaning. (*Secrets of Heaven 1492*)

Secrets of Heaven, Swedenborg's exegesis of Genesis and Exodus, offers many different methods of discovering the inner meaning of the Bible story. Most of the time it gives the correspondential meaning of several key words in a verse and then weaves them together into a coherent idea. Sometimes it refers to the general train of thought for the explanation. On rare occasions it describes the inner sense as opposite to the literal. But imagine looking for inner meaning in the *emotion* behind the words!

The word I translated as "emotion" in the quote from *Secrets of Heaven* is the Latin word *affectio*. It is related to the verb *afficere*, or "affect", and means a being-affected-by. We tend to think of an emotion or feeling as something that comes from inside us and goes outward toward its object: love, affection, dislike, or hatred - they all express

our attitude toward something "out there". But Latin looks at a feeling as the effect that the object has on us. So the resentment that charges Pharaoh's words here can be seen less as an outpouring of anger than as a response to the loss that now touches his life.

This is a useful way to view emotions, in my experience. The more I see my negative emotions as my own private reaction to external stimuli, the more clearly I see that I have no direct control over them. And the more I give up trying to control them, the less control they have over me.

Those "affections", those indications of the effects that angels and evil spirits have on our souls, must be hiding behind every word of revelation, waiting to be discovered. What rich meaning the Word would have for us if only we could open our eyes to the emotions within it!

- Lisa Cooper

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Heaven wants us to give our feelings to God

In my near death experience I... (learned) our emotions can either direct us toward the will of God or away from the will of God. Emotions are the engine that drives us. Emotions are the force that desires to make us Christ-like or turn us into the adversary of God. We are not controlled by our emotions. Feelings of happiness, pleasure, pain, anxiety, anger and despair can lead us to greater appreciation of God and a life of thanksgiving... How we use our emotions is our choice.

Anger about injustice can motivate you to resist evil and conquer evil. Feelings of sexual desire bond man and woman into an intimacy and trust between partners. Jesus expressed emotions when He had compassion for the woman caught in adultery, when He used anger to cleanse the temple, when He felt pleasure eating with outcasts of society, when He wept at the death of Lazarus, and when He felt power to perform miracles. During my time in eternity with Jesus, I felt His complete empathy with me.

- Howard Storm *My Descent Into Death*

Until we see the affection as well as the thought from which the words of Scripture are spoken, the interior life of the Word, the Divine Mind itself, is but obscurely revealed... In the Word it is not so easy to see the affections that are in it, as it is to see the thoughts or truths... Hence the application of this law as a rule of exposition will be somewhat difficult. Still it is important to know this is one of the general principles by which the spirit of the Word is revealed and its interior life made known, even though the perception of its operation be obscure, and its application be attended with difficulty... A consideration of this law, that affection is the primary essential of the Word, cannot well be left out in any treatise on the exposition of the Word.

- W. F. Pendleton 'Science of Exposition'

NEEDED - A CHURCH FOR GROWNUPS

The Episcopal form of governance calls for an organization where all meaningful decisions as to the future of the church are made by bishops. This leads to an organization which trusts the parent (bishop) to make decisions for the children (church members). What the General Church needs in order to allow members to become adult is to provide them with a voice in the process of governance.

The General Church was formed many years ago as a group of priests joined together to lead its members. Some time after it began, Bishop Benade decided that the Lord was giving him special and exclusive knowledge of the right decisions for the organization. Rather than attempting to remove Bishop Benade from office, other members of the clergy resigned and re-formed into an organization which recognized the voices of others.

As Beryl Simonetti pointed out in her letter to Bishop Buss in December 2000, the first two paragraphs of the Statement of Order and Organization of the General Church are crucial to future plans.

1) "The following is not a written constitution. It is a statement of governmental principles and practices of the General Church of the New Jerusalem at the present time as interpreted by the

Executive Bishop in consultation with his consistory." (emphasis mine)

2) "As the General Church is a living body developing under the leading of Providence, it is anticipated that in the future other statements will be called for. It is to be understood, therefore, that nothing in this statement is intended to bind the future."

There have been recent conversations with Bishop Buss where he has emphasized the importance of the first paragraph, and stated that his interpretation of what decisions are needed for the church must be its moving force. What needs to be honored at the present time is the second paragraph, wherein it was anticipated there would be necessary changes in the organization as it grows.

Am I advocating that the responsible members of the clergy resign and re-form? Hardly. But I do feel that what is needed soon, and clearly stated, is that we will not remain a church for children, that all voices will be heard and given consideration for all decisions made in the future. If Episcopal governance is chosen for the General Church, it must be modified so that all adult members will influence the decisions made for the organization, and that the consent of the governed will be honored.

- Ruth Cranch Wyland

Our Divine Creator's greatest concern has been, and always is, the protection of our freedom, including the freedom of thought and inquiry. With that view in mind, we present the following excerpts from six papers on the feminine qualities in God.

This is not to compel or induce persuasive belief, but to ponder and thoughtfully consider the Christian tradition that believes the Old Testament teaches the masculine virtues and, when Jesus came on earth, He taught the feminine ones. Now that we have a New Revelation, what is to be true for us?

How does the Supreme Being, capable of vast outward and inward creations, encompass both feminine and masculine within His essence. And how do His created beings, who are living with Him to eternity, view such things?

What of us on earth who are only beginning to learn of eternal truths? How are we to perceive and manifest something like this in our lives?

If the New Revelation is to be believed, there is nothing more important than the bringing together of feminine and masculine, love and wisdom, in every part of our lives.

Synopsis of Master's Thesis

We are cautioned in AR 611:7 to think about the Lord from essence to person to avoid thinking materially about the Lord. Most of us will agree that God's divine essence transcends gender. The Lord's essence is life itself, a perfect divine marriage of goodness and truth (DLW 33-35). These qualities of uncreated, infinite God obviously transcend mere finite humanity, and gender. We created humans are consistent as to gender from our souls to every cell of our bodies (CL 33). Since we are created in the image of God, the same must be true of the Lord. God's person, to be consistent with that, in the divine essence which is reflected as gender in created humans, must also transcend gender. I believe that this is the case, difficult as it may be for us limited human beings to visualize what a gender-transcendent person looks like.

The Lord's person is consistently referred to in the Writings in non-gender terms. *Deus Homo*, *Divinum Humanum* and *Ipse* are all terms that do not specify gender. God's person is said to contain all the parts of a

human being in infinite perfection, lacking nothing (DLW 18). The fact that the divine human is first reflected in created humanity as the great person of heaven who contains both male and female reproductive organs (AC 5053), is evidence to me that the Lord, including the divine human or person of God, is gender transcendent.

While on earth, Jesus undeniably used masculine imagery to describe himself, and his relationship with the divine essence within him. The Writings consistently state that the elements of the divine trinity are *called* what they are in the letter of the Word because of what they represent. The Father represents the divine love, the Son represents the divine truth (AC 2803). I do not hear the Writings teaching that this correspondential language was used because God is literally a Father or a Son, or even literally male. Rather, I hear the Writings emphasizing the correspondential use of language in the Word, including the masculine imagery the Lord (another masculine imagery term) used for the trinity. Similarly, terms such as lamb and bridegroom is as with the divine qualities of God. The apparent masculinity of the Lord as the bridegroom is as divinely metaphorical as the apparent femininity of the church. Yet the church at any level is not literally female, and similarly

the Lord is not literally male on any level. If this is so, then why is masculine imagery used to embody the realities of the trinity of God? Why not gender inclusive words like *heavenly parent* and *child of God*?

There are many ways to respond to this question. One is that perhaps in the times in which Jesus lived on earth, *father* was used loosely to mean parent, as in the usage of *forefathers* in English, even though there was a word for parent. Similarly, *son* was perhaps used loosely for *child* in a culture that valued female children less. Another explanation stems from the teachings in the Writings about appearances and accommodation. The Lord appears to everyone in a form that is consistent with their character, spiritual state, concept of God, and ability to receive the Lord (AC 6832, 1838 *et al*). Perhaps the use of male imagery to correspondentially describe the trinity was an accommodation suited to the state and mindset of the people Jesus was teaching. But in the Writings, we are given teachings that can point us, if we are willing, to a concept of God that transcends gender. When we write and speak, we can choose to reflect these teachings by choosing gender-transcendent language.

- Roslyn Taylor

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First Page of: *God As Mother and Father*

As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you... Is 66:13

How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings... Matt 23:37

...the Divine Essence, which is the Creatress, is Divine Love and Divine Wisdom. DLW 33

"The Lord is our Father and the Church our Mother" and "The Marriage of the Lord and the Church" are very familiar phrases in our church. Our picture of the Lord and the Church and of this marriage are significant because they are our highest symbols of fathering and mothering, and of marriage. The

meanings we give to these terms and symbols affect our approach to marriage and to parenting. It is easy to think of "the Lord" as purely Divine, infinite and separate from us, and of "the Church" as merely human, finite and identified with us. The Word gives us a different picture, however. "The Lord is God with us, in human form (AC 14). "The Church" is also God with us:

...when the Church and Heaven are mentioned, what is meant is the Lord's Divinity in those who are there. (AC 10125)

We know from the Word that human beings, male and female, are created in the image and likeness of God, and so embody qualities and uses that are in God: "So God created a human being (*adam*, red) in God's own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (*Gen 1:27*). The word *adam* becomes *homo* (human being) in the Latin of the Writings: "It is from the Lord's Divine Humanity that Heaven as a whole and in part resembles a human being (*HH 78*). Everything human comes from the human form of God expressed in us, so everything that we call "masculine" or "feminine" reflects something of God. In the *Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture 67* we learn about some meanings of the fourth commandment, "Honor your father and mother":

By "father" and "mother" a mortal (homo) understands father and mother on earth, also all those who act in the place of a father and mother, and by "honor", to respect and obey them. But a spiritual angel understands by "father" the Lord, by "mother" the church, and by "honor" to love them. Moreover, a heavenly (celestial) angel understands by "father" the Lord's Divine Love, by "mother" the Lord's Divine Wisdom, and by "honor" to do good from Him.

Our one God is both our Father and Mother. In everything God does, Love and Wisdom, Fathering and Mothering are perfectly united.

- Michael David

Letters in response to ideas, thoughts and feelings expressed are encouraged.

Excerpts from Goddess (a conversation)

Virginia: "Most people know God is spirit, and many say they don't picture God as man or woman when they pray. Thinking about God with a neuter image is fairly easy. But I question whether many people are able to relate emotionally to a 'sexless' being. Whenever people express love or praise in prayer - whenever they seek solace or help, I believe they usually have some sense of a 'person' to whom they are relating." ☼

Helen: What I need most is the truth being said to me, no matter what way it comes. It helps me sort through the conflicting feelings invading and fighting a war in my mind. I am comforted with the truth being told, no matter how, and the love being seen from within that truth. The Being speaking always seems male, but then I am drawn up into the realm where God is love and wisdom, and male and female qualities drop down into nothingness. I guess my first need is for a protecting God, capable and competent, protecting me from the craziness and confusion. ☼

Peggy: Most times I feel comfortable saying, "Our Father" and thinking of Jesus as male. I picture myself being enfolded in the loving arms of the biggest, warmest, wisest Father of all. In modern times, while we're defining our femininity, I've been questioning if this is OK. It is OK.

Also, more and more I appreciate the "feminine" aspect of the Divine Providence, taking care of all the details. As to saying "Our Father", we use a parallel of "Mother Earth" when speaking of the world of nature. When I say "Our Father", it doesn't restrict my capacity to hold and

reflect God. I have not heard men change the phrase *Mother Earth* to clarify their inclusion as natural human beings. ☼

Linda: Look at the God and the Goddess. God means what is transcendent where the Goddess means what is immanent. In other words, a God that is without, and a God that is within. The immanent God permeates all things the way the mother is all of the universe to the baby. ☼

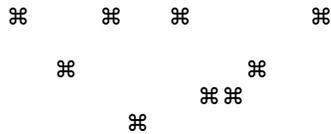
Claudia: When I say *her* and other female pronouns, I am drawn right in and feel the nurturing love. When I say *Goddess* I picture White Eagle Woman, an older, native American woman who comes to me in my meditation or quiet times when I need our Mother. There is lots of color and she wears white ceremonial garb, and has white wings twice the length of her body. I always see her standing at the top of a cliff, and I stand beside her. She always wraps her wings around me. White Eagle Woman mostly listens to me and I feel extremely comforted in her presence. She'll give me wisdom after I spill out what's on my mind, give commentary about it, or make suggestions. She gives me an overview, literally inviting me to take a new perspective from her vantage point. ☼

Steve: I believe God doesn't have a gender, but the ways God functions corresponds to both male and female. We see this especially when we use biology for a guide. God exists both outside of and within us. Our "selfhood" comes from the freedom that occurs when these intersect.

That of God outside us flows in through experience and knowledge, and particularly through the Word. In this mode, God communicates the ways of love and wisdom to the conscious mind where we have our freedom to choose. I see this aspect of God to be like the male function in procreation - going forward outside of itself to "otherness", depositing seeds of spiritual life.

God within is the life force that constitutes our very being, what we feel as our own. This aspect of God is feminine, since it receives and responds to the Word in all its forms. It is the part that intuits the truth and gives birth to *truly* loving thoughts, feelings and actions. Yet God's love and wisdom isn't manifest in us until we consciously practice the ways of love and wisdom. When we do, the aspect of God within responds and joins itself to that of God outside of us. When these come together, we experience the Divine marriage. We experience the joy, the strength, and the peace of God's life as our very own. ☼

- Helen Kennedy



Shakti

The Celts are Indo-Europeans, an extensive family group that includes the Aryans of northern India. Here we come to something close to women's hearts. All Brahmin mythology appears to be based on the fact that the male divinity can do nothing alone, but must be complemented by a female divinity. There is no unique male god, jealous of his authority, among the Indians, nor among the other early Indo-Europeans. A summary of the theogony of the Vedas will make things clear. In the beginning was Brahma, the immaterial Whole, the Absolute, which, being absolute, was incapable of action. For this Absolute and Immaterial divinity to have a relationship with its creation, a phase of Brahma is enacted, and this is Siva. [Christians have God the father, and son, Jesus] But since there can exist no being without its opposite or its complement, and Siva is male and the typical legislator of a patriarchal society, he can exist and be effective only when opposed by a feminine principle. She is Shakti.

In Brahman mythology, Shakti takes on the face of the very ancient, and pre-Aryan goddess Kali. She is Siva's wife, and etymologically, that is, tracing her name back, it means 'energy in action'. While Siva sits in inner contemplation, outside time and space, the passive aspect of eternity, it is Kali who sets him in motion as the active aspect of eternity. At the Art Museum downtown, if you go into

the wing that has paintings from India, there is a painting of Kali with eight arms spinning round. Wielding a weapon in each arm, she is destroying all the evil that besets humankind. The description of the painting says, "The male gods could not effect anything, so they invented the female goddess Kali."

So here, what are regarded as the normal roles for men and women have been reversed. The concept of active femininity never for one instant occurs to men who believe they dominate the world and regulate the established order. Yet it may well explain why, in those languages that have retained traces of earlier epochs, the Germanic, Celtic and Semitic to name a few, the sun is feminine and the moon masculine. Some say the sun represents love and the moon truth. This illustration of the feminine activity of love and the masculine reaction towards it may be an echo of earlier beliefs.

It goes without saying that the concept of Shakti is behind the many realistic representations of sexual union on Brahmin temples, all of which evoke, to varying degrees, the union of Siva and Kali. Theirs is the hierogamos towards which people unconsciously aspire. We in our culture see this as pornographic, but seen as marrying the two concepts of the Divine - love and truth, it takes on different meaning.

- Brighde (Brigid), Her Folklore and Mythology by Janet E. McCrickard

Excerpts From a Sufi Talk About the Journey

The masculine journey is really turning away from the illusions of this world and going inward, focusing on the beyond and putting one step in front of the other, relentlessly crossing the bridge into the other world... so really, the masculine begins with the idea that God is not here, and we have to make this journey to find God, to go away from the world of illusion. But for the feminine, God is always present. The feminine is the sacred presence within life. The feminine contains it, and knows God is. This is the deepest instinctual knowledge, the sacred nature of the feminine because it carries the mystery of creation which is the sacred wholeness. So for the feminine, God is present in everything, always was and always will be. So there can be no journey. But the work of the feminine is to make this instinctual knowledge conscious, to bring into consciousness

this deep inner understanding, deep inner wholeness, deep inner knowledge.

The nature of the feminine is what is hidden, what is invisible, what is unknown. And to bring something into the light of consciousness is very painful for the feminine. Consciousness itself necessitates separation, subject and object - but for the feminine there is always wholeness. And so to bring this inner knowledge of wholeness, of oneness, of the sacredness of all life into consciousness appears to break the circle, to break the wholeness into the opposite, and this can feel like a violation of the feminine. This can be sort of torture for it. To bring it into the consciousness of time and space, with all of the limitations, appears to lose that very oneness, that very wholeness, and that is part of the feminine journey. That is to lose, or appear to lose, this sacred wholeness.

You see, the masculine path takes the journeyer from the world of duality behind the veils of creation inward into the experience of oneness. The masculine path is a journey from multiplicity to oneness. And the feminine path begins with the oneness but has to bring that oneness into a consciousness. And deeper than that, she has to break the taboo that what she knows must be kept hidden, must not be told. This is the taboo of the Great Mother that keeps everything in the unconscious, everything unknown, everything hidden. For the feminine, breaking that taboo means enduring all of the guilt feeling that goes with that.

In order to come to know her own oneness, the feminine has to bear the cruelty of consciousness. She has to learn to contain the contradictions of a world in which her instinctual oneness appears lost. One of the difficulties of exploring these two aspects of the path is really that

most of the sacred texts we have were written by men. They emphasize the masculine path, they emphasize the path of renunciation, of turning away from the world, of seeking this invisible goal. The feminine mysteries that were taught for 2,000 years in ancient Greece were never written down. Because again, verbal recording of anything is masculine. But now, after 2,000 years of a sort of masculine, to rediscover the feminine is more difficult. But yet, like Rumi says, "We need two wings to fly." We need the two aspects of the path. The real journey is a spiral path - it goes in one direction, but it also moves with the circular motion of the feminine. What I have found on the inner journey is you go on times of focusing on the goal within yourself, and then you go on times of inclusion when you don't focus but include parts of yourself. It's like in-breathing and out-breathing. There are times when you need to change from focusing to inclusion. The feminine is fluid and moving. This is another quality you need on the path - to be able to flow, to be able to change, not to be caught in a certain identity or a certain pattern and to allow yourself to be changed.

- Sufi Master Llewellyn

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Excerpts from *The Maid-Servant and the Stained Glass Ceiling*

Communication is an essential aspect of spiritual service to others, and (the psycholinguist D. Tanner) indicates that men and women have different approaches, but they are equally valuable. For example, women have a tendency to develop "rapport" with people by making emotional connections, while men tend to prefer to give a "report" with people, such as offering a sermon on doctrinal concepts. Both are useful, but the female style of

communicating has been belittled and undervalued. In the past, authoritarian leaders were expected to be objective, somewhat aloof, and to create a dependency on their role: "report-talk". This fit the male style of communicating. However, many people in modern times need "rapport-talk" with their spiritual leaders: someone they can confide in. Perhaps there is a need for both types of spiritual leader in our congregations: those who give reports (sermons, classes and lectures), and those who build rapport (counseling, support groups, listening)...

The words of Jesus in the book of Matthew describe the six ways to serve the neighbor, and the first one mentioned is giving food to the hungry. The Bible says that when we feed the people we are feeding Him. This has been explained in Swedenborg's Writings to mean that the spiritually hungry long for goodness and love from the Lord (AE 403:21, AE 386, AE 617). Therefore, it is apparent that the primary need of parishioners is their spiritual longing for goodness and love. Love cannot exist in a vacuum but is most evident in relationships, so responsive ministers would do well to emphasize healthy relationships with their body, the environment and other people. Goodness is manifested in the form of altruistic caring for something or someone outside of oneself. Spiritual leaders can help people remember when they do this with a loving heart, it is a means of leading them up to the most important relationship of all: their relationship with God. The highest heaven is made up of angels whose primary focus is love.

The second way to serve the neighbor, according to Jesus in Matthew 25, is to offer water to the thirsty. Swedenborg indicates that

spiritual thirst is a longing for the truth (AC 1460) Ministers quench this longing for truth when they teach doctrines through classes or sermons. In addition, they can satisfy parishioners' longing for useful information about the natural world (and) the social world when they offer people an education. Secular learning is enhanced when taught with a message that knowledge about the natural and social worlds helps one understand and appreciate God. (AC 9688)...

- Soni Werner

If anyone wants to read an entire paper, please contact the author. Addresses are at end of newsletter.

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Does anyone have a paper they would like to make a synopsis of to be included in this section with a note from you to request the full paper, if wanted?

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Next Newsletter:

Conjugal Love and how individual people are affected by it. Please send any letters, essays, or comments you would like to share.

Also, we are interested in thoughts on the book, *Return to Modesty*, by Wendy Shalit.

Book Recommendations:

GWINNA by Barbara Helen Berger is actually a picture book written for middle grade students, but it carries a very profound message, especially for those of us trying to follow our calling. The pictures are truly luminescent and will delight your spirit. At the same time, the story will speak to your heart.

Gwinna is a young girl who has some very special gifts that those around her are afraid of, and try to deny. Fortunately Gwinna herself sets off to discover the way to use her gifts in spite of those who would like to stop her.

Read this story whether or not you have children, and let your heart soar as Gwinna learns to fly and finds her song.

GWINNA is published by Philomel Books, copyright 1990. The ISBN is: 0-399-21738-X.

Another book that I'd like to recommend is THE TREE THAT SURVIVED THE WINTER, by Mary Fahy. Once again, this book seems at first glance to be written for children. In reality it is a beautiful allegory for all of us who have survived any tragedy, crisis of faith, or other difficult times. The story of the tree will bring you comfort and hope. It is a wonderful example of how God turns seemingly terrible events to a good end.

THE TREE THAT SURVIVED THE WINTER was published in 1989 by Paulist Press. Its ISBN is: 0-8091-0432-6. Your best bet for finding this book may be a secondhand bookstore, a religious bookstore, or an on-line search.

- Marie Odhner

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JADE by Sally Watson

She calls herself Jade, though her given name is Melanie. Growing up in 18th century colonial America, she looks for ways to fight the oppression of women and slaves. She openly defies the rules laid down for her conduct, and secretly learns fencing. In a slave market one day she sees a young woman whose eyes express a pride and rebellion akin to her own. She begs her father to buy the girl, not because she wants a personal slave, but in the hope of someday setting her free.

The final break with her old life comes when sixteen-year-old Jade is being shuttled between relatives who

find her hard to live with, and she learns that the ship she has boarded is carrying Africans bound for slavery. She contrives their escape in the dead of night, getting a sword cut in the arm as she eludes capture. The wound eventually gives her away, and while she is being publicly flogged in punishment, the slave ship is overrun by pirates -- led, as Jade discovers when she returns to sore-backed consciousness, by the notorious Anne Bonney.

Joining the pirates is the obvious next step. They accept Jade gladly, not least because of her skill with the rapier, and she is finally free to treat her beloved African companions as equals. Life as an outlaw suits her well as long as the horizon is empty of ships to plunder, but she can't put her heart into committing random violence and robbery. She wants to fight for freedom and justice, not ill-gotten gain.

Jade is one of a series of historical novels for young people written by Sally Watson some thirty to forty years ago, which made a deeply formative impression on me when I read them in my early teens. Jade is the most obviously heroic of Watson's many heroines; she faces pain and danger with strength, courage, and principle, and takes on life's challenges with verve and passion. Race and class prejudice, religious persecution, and sex discrimination are recurring themes in Watson's books. In *Mistress Malapert*, a young girl runs away from home disguised as a boy, finds her way to the Globe Theatre, and acts women's parts in Shakespeare's plays. Watson also wrote a series of three books about the Jews who returned to Israel in the 1940s and founded the first kibbutzim there.

Sally Watson's books are out of print, and used copies are priced at up to \$800 in online markets. Doesn't this indicate that it's time they were reprinted? I was fortunate to pick up two of them before the prices went through the roof, but it is now almost impossible for libraries to replace lost copies. *Jade* and *To Build a Land*, two of the finest, have been missing for years from the BACS library.

- Linda Simonetti Odhner

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Howard Storm *My Descent Into Death* Clairview Books, 2000, ISBN 1 902636

Howard Storm was an atheist who underwent an incredibly interesting NDE. He was very surprised he didn't stop existing. In his consternation, he was misled by

evil spirits who appeared good into a misty area of nothingness, and attacked by them in a cruel way. An inner voice demanded he pray, and in remembering bits of prayers from Sunday School, the Our Father, the Pledge of Allegiance, *Jesus Loves Me*, etc., he drove off the

evil spirits. He then went into an extended time of comfort and learning from the Being of Light Howard knew to be Jesus, and also with angels. I have listened to his account of it on tape over thirty times, and still emotionally learn from it. I got the tape when I was living in Cincinnati and holding meetings for those interested in NDEs. Now he has a book about it. If anyone wants to be put on my list of people to borrow the book, let me know, though it may be quite a while. Or I can lend an audio tape of his experience.

- Helen

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Aristotle drew on his own thinking in what he wrote and devising his philosophy. Thus *the terms he invented and imposed on ideas he thought about were forms of words to describe inward ideas. Also, he was excited to such things by a delight of the affections and by a desire of knowing the things of the thought and the understanding. He had obediently followed the dictates of his spirit. The others proceeded not from thought to terms but from terms to thoughts, which is the wrong way.*

EU 38

Dear friends,

"Samson's Legacy" is not meant to be taken at face value. It

is meant to express a misogynistic and adversarial state of mind imposed by a patriarchal, materialistic society, and some of the distorted messages a man in such a state could get from the story of Samson. I assume the reader knows that real spiritual strength lies in telling the truth, not concealing it, and forgiving, not taking revenge.

- Love, Dewey

Samson's Legacy

What man can do a deed of consequence?
Mere mortal men like me, although we try
With all our might, we cannot hope to be
Half the man that he was in this life.
May all our futile efforts somehow serve
To strengthen us for uses after death.
May God preserve us from that dreadful time
That even Samson's strength could not
prevent

When women's love inexorably gnaws
Our best resolve away and wins our doom.
Let not our faint resistance fail too soon,
Our struggle to conceal our secret truth!
For when our foe entices us to yield,
To give in to that long-resisted urge,
And we in shame lay bare our weary soul,
Thus losing that small share of strength
we've gained,

We must still keep a shred of potency:
A prayer for means to strike against the foe
A slaughter that is greater than our own.

- Dewey Odhner

"But throughout human history the expression of individuality has been felt as a threat to the status quo. For all its expressed championing of the individual, our culture in many ways favors conformity."

"The soul, tradition has taught us for centuries, needs the profound and challenging grace of Mars, who reddens everything in his vicinity with the glow of passionate life, brings a creative edge to every action, and sows the seeds of power in every moment and event. When Mars is overlooked and undervalued, he is forced to appear in fetish and violent behavior. Mars is infinitely greater than personal expression of anger. Creative and destructive, he is life itself poised for the struggle.

- Ts. Moore Care of the Soul

WOMEN'S GOVERNANCE DAY

After the address by Bishop Peter Buss, Bishop Alfred Acton moderated a discussion from the floor. In light of what Peter had said about creating forums where men listen to the feminine perspective, Alfred suggested having women speak first. Here are excerpts of what was said. The first is by women.

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Churches are growing where men are in leadership positions. Where women are taking over those roles, men stop attending and there is no growth. ❖

I am more interested in how we talk to each other about this issue. Content is important, but how we treat each other is more so. AC 542 states that in world of spirits, some people were experiencing the nature of heaven by being surrounded by spirits that moderate dissent, etc. I hope and pray we are being surrounded by those spirits. ❖

Men and male priests need the influence of women to be good men and priests. I think women and female priests use and carry the sphere of men to be good women and priests. Also, when men internalize, use and own female influence, it becomes masculine in them and vice versa. ❖

As a MARS graduate, I question the interpretation of 'the church from husband into wife' teaching. Is it valid to extrapolate this teaching beyond its context of marriage? What is the church? Not an organization, not a body of doctrine, but conjunction of good and truth, e.g., in a marriage or in a person. ❖

As a teacher of long standing, in the classroom I have led worship in a circle format, as single mothers and sometimes married women also do. *All religion has to do with life*, and everyone teaches religion (negatively or positively) by their attitudes, behaviors, etc. We are all teachers of religion from now to eternity. ❖

My questions about the ordination of women were answered by Bishop King's recent paper in which he reversed his thinking about the same numbers that were quoted today. It's important to have female priests in the GC to bring this for healing, to expand the clergy. Bringing women to the clergy is not competitive, but supportive. If men listened, then women would love masculine wisdom. This would add balance back to the clergy in terms of life wisdom. ❖

I question whether it's right to use CL numbers out of the context of marriage. AC 8994 states the reversal of roles of women

and men in celestial marriages - women are wisdom, men love their wives for their wisdom. This completes the way to look at male-female relationships. We need more than just the spiritual framework. The Bishop's statement that the celestial mode was destroyed in the fall, does not apply here. In the Noah story, a new will is created in the understanding, meaning people can move into affections and good. Women, and all people, need priests that speak to affections, for HH speaks of affections from which comes thought. ❖

As a newcomer, I have a question based on AC 4249. All the thoughts and affections a person has originate in either heaven or hell. If a woman feels a call to priesthood, the church treats her as if it's from hell -- "You're unfit to be a priest. Your call or desire is not only useless, but we need to protect everyone from you." But if a man is called, his call or desire comes from heaven. ❖

We now need to develop new forms that reflect the marriage of good and truth. The Lord leads everyone to the good of life by teaching them truths, and women are already doing that, e.g., lay uses listed today mainly lead to the good of life. The church now looks like a form with a 'male head', but the New Heaven has a balance

of good and truth, without domination. ❖

In the New Testament, reference is made to the fulfillment of prophesy in Jesus. He was a man in order to represent truth/Word to combat falsities. Jesus Christ is held up as our teacher and redeemer. Just as the Lord came as truth, we need a level in the church for guidance and protection. But there were NT women who ministered to the Lord. Woman can do these things, even study doctrine in paid positions, but we need to reserve the priesthood to represent/correspond to what Jesus was when he was in the world. ❖

Men were then heard from:

I am recently married, and my soul is masculine and I am meant to be my wife's husband. Now, many teachings about husbands and wives in marriage are understandable. I question whether teachings about husbands and wives should be applied to other social relationships. Maybe marriage is different from these, so there's a boundary here. We need to define what a *man is* in the church since I see confusion about what men do vs. what priests do in the church. ❖

I question why light is more important in the clergy than warmth? At present, *Light* gets paid, and

this enables the male clergy to spend time ministering. ❖

As a M. Div. student, it is important not to paint one position as doctrinal and others as not. We need to not have judgement about different positions, but rather have the opportunity to learn different interpretations of doctrine. ❖

As a priest, I understand that everyone operates from principles. We gather thoughts and ideas around our principle. We should first be wise from the Word/Lord, not from self, the former is life, the latter is death. In Num. 12, Miriam was punished when she thought she (good) could represent God as Moses did. Maybe the Lord's plan is that men be priests, so it was OK for Aaron (truth) to want to be a priest. ❖

It is often difficult for men to get up and talk in groups like this because of the presence of women. This reminds me of arguments I have with my wife where I can never win. In CL class in school, I recall hearing *women love men's wisdom* which seemed to me to indicate a subservient point of view for women. Can women help us to understand why it isn't a subservient point of view? This discussion today is bringing us together, through a good argument. We need to read and understand the doctrines better,

with the help of priests and each other, but to understand for ourselves. ❖

Postscript to Emotion As Inner Meaning: For more, see the following sections of *Arcana Coelestia*: 2077, 2157, 2543, 2275, 2802, 3839, 6178. I found these references in W. F. Pendleton's *Science of Exposition*, in a chapter on affections, pointed out to me by George Dole. -Lisa

If something is missing that you would like to see covered in this Newsletter, please consider writing it. I hope to cover a full range of topics but my interests lie in a certain directions, and the Newsletter needs input from many other people. In other words, help the Newsletter have vitality and life. -Helen

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CARITAS NEWSLETTER
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TO:

CARITAS STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

To seek the Lord's will as we provide opportunities for women and men to pursue their visiospiritual 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.