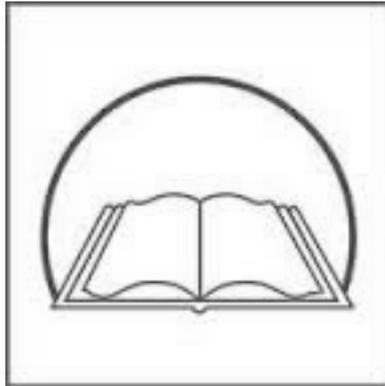


THE NEW AGE

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2020 Spiritual Vision: Transcending Time and Space 26 - 28 June 2020

Friends,

Please include this invitation in your next newsletter issue, or email distribution, or social media, or event. The Virtual Convention is entirely online and is free of charge. I have attached two logos, and a printable flyer in .png and .pdf formats, that you can also use as space and technology permits.

From 26-28 June 2020, we are bringing people together in a virtual community from around the world to learn about Swedenborgian spirituality and to worship together. From a Keynote address by Rev. Dr. George Dole, "From Here to Peace: the Pandemic and Divine Providence," to seven mini courses by the 3 professors at the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (Dr. Devin Zuber, Dr. Rebecca Kline Esterson, Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence,) author and church planter Rev. Anna Woofenden, Helen Keller historian Rev. Sage Cole, spiritual entrepreneur Rev. Rich Tafel and writer and theologian Rev. Dr. David Fekete, people will find something to enjoy and feast on. Wonderful worship services, including a special service by teenagers in the Swedenborgian Church Youth League, will help us create community with the heavenly host. All are welcome! Look for more information at

www.facebook.com/SwedenborgConvention/, www.swedenborg.org, and in the June 2020 issue of the Messenger.

Shalom,

Rev. Roslyn Taylor

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EDITORIAL

Here's another issue of The New Age, this issue is for Winter, a time associated with going within, resting-up, reflection and hot casseroles. It can be a time where we read more than at other times, so the invitation is for you to read this issue in "winter".

Sometimes, when we read things, one sentence or even one phrase can jump off the page and strike us as hugely important, monumental, summing it all up, or "that changed my life from then on..." You have probably had several occasions where such an unexpected event happened for you. But you can never contrive one!

While I can't promise that this "hit between the eyes" will happen to you when you read this issue, hopefully it will, in some way, and induce in you a feeling of gratitude and delight at being so affected.

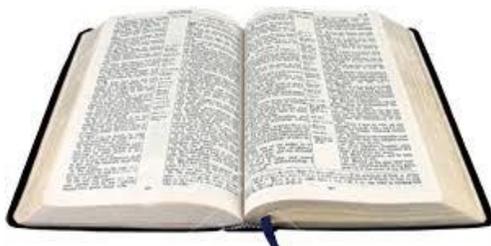
But what exactly is going on when it happens? Someone else might read the same few lines and look at you in astonishment, "It doesn't do much for me!" Or they might jump up and down but you are left stone cold. It's really a spiritual event, and it works according to our current state or need or recent train of thought or some feeling and affection. The phrase is like touch-paper and a circuit is made.

Heaven (and yes, hell) are always trying to influence us in various ways. Most of it we don't know anything about but it really pays to note that it is happening. Angels are trying to strengthen us, remind us, bring up long-buried thoughts and memories and give us spiritual delights. One spiritual delight is the whammy of a phrase. They do it and we are in the right state or mind-frame to get it and perhaps wonder where that came from. "From heaven" is a perfectly accurate answer, because angels waft heavenly material wherever they can.

Keep a lookout, whatever and wherever you read, for such things come unexpected, and come when you're right and when you need them. And let it do its magic.

Sermon: "The Power of the Word"

by Rev. Geoffrey Childs



There are times in our daily living when we find ourselves swamped by irritations. They come from ordinary and unexciting problems, from things like failure to get ahead in our

job; difficulties with our children; too intimate a connection with people whom we don't mix well with. Irritations like these and others, facing us day after day, can take away a feeling of happiness in living and can lead us into states we find hard to bear.

Sometimes states of discontent come from more basic things. For example, perhaps all our lives we have wished for a little bit more luxury, a little more of the ease and respect that money can bring. We feel unhappy with what we have. Or perhaps we haven't discovered the happiness in marriage that we expected.

Whatever form unhappiness takes, it is axiomatic that a person's deepest annoyance will always stem from his ruling evil. All of us tend to have some chief evil ambition in life, some false goal we value highly. Yet, in Providence, we find many things blocking us from obtaining that goal. Then, although we go ahead living our daily life, a feeling of unrest plagues us. We feel restless to get what we are after, restless because things stand in the way of our ambition.

The temptation then is to indulge our evils to soothe our unrest, to do everything we can to remove our unhappiness, everything except face the true reason for our discontent. The true reason is revealed in the teaching that all unhappiness originates in hell. Therefore, the states of unhappiness that burden us arise from our own proprium, from the hell that is within us.

So, if a person is honest with himself, he can see that his irritation over not getting ahead in his work is caused basically by the frustration of evil

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ambition. He can see that his shortness with his children is due to selfish impatience. He can even see that his personal frictions with other people are due to evils within himself as well as within them. And yet, even though we know these things, even though we know that our dissatisfactions arise from our own evils, we still feel discontent. For we do not wish to admit our actual evils.

Sometimes, in the desire to put the blame for discontent on others, people shift all the blame to hereditary evils. They imply that without an evil inheritance, there would be no such thing as unhappiness. Yet through His Divine plan of mediate goods, through progressions from lesser to greater goods, the Lord has provided that hereditary evils bring people no unhappiness. It is only those evil tendencies that a person confirms – makes his own – that cause him misery. Actual evil, not hereditary evil, is the cause of all unrest.

Knowing then he can only blame himself, a person often feels hopelessly surrounded by his own pettiness and selfishness. He feels the burden of confirmed evil upon himself as a great weight, producing irritation and restlessness within his heart. All people feel this to some degree; yet we can do much to escape this burden if we turn to the Lord for help.

For when the Lord said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), He was speaking directly to us in our moods of despair. He is the way out of our discontent to honest happiness; He is the truth that leads us along this way; and He is the Life to Whom this path leads. The Lord doesn't leave us alone, surrounded by the hell of our proprium, He does not leave us cursed in a sea of unhappiness. For He has given us a great gift, a gift so beautiful that it counterbalances completely the weight of hereditary evil and of actual evil.

The Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church call this gift... "remains". What are "remains"? They are not secret and hidden theological things, of which we are entirely unaware. Rather, they are all the heavenly affections implanted in a person from infancy to the end of

his life. And we can be acutely aware of these affections. Our love for the Lord is such an affection. And so, too, is our love for spiritual truth, for the truth of the Heavenly Doctrines.

Remains are the most human and poignant things in our life. Any sincere and genuine love we feel towards another person is a part of our remains. So, too, is our affection for our husband or wife. Loyalty to country, loyalty to an organization in which we believe, these are also good spiritual affections or remains given to us by the Lord. When a person finds himself overwhelmed by annoyances and unhappiness in his day-to-day living, he should acknowledge that his discontent arises from his actual evils. And then, instead of concentrating on his unhappiness, he should turn his back upon it and compel himself to think of the affirmative side of his life, forcing himself to recall his affection for the Lord and the Word, his love for his friends and the things he believes in.

And from these remains he can fight the evils which are tempting him and causing him discontent. If, instead, he dwells only on his unhappiness, he is doing exactly what the evil spirits wish. Secretly, then, deceitful spirits can lead him onward to morbid depression, despair, and finally defeat. In honest conscience, a person should force himself to look away from his unrest and discontent, to concentrate rather on the heavenly remains the Lord has implanted within him.

For the choice before a person is between an affirmative or negative outlook, which is the choice between good or evil, heaven or hell. The heavenly affections called remains are not a person's own; they are the Lord's, they are the dwelling place of the Lord in the human heart. So, a person can turn to them as to a mountain "from whence comes...help" (Psalm 121:1). And as he does this, he can gain a new philosophy about his evils. He can come to see that his remains are stronger than his hereditary traits or actual evils. He can come to trust in the strength of the mountain of the Lord.

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This is all very well, but in human honesty we may ask, “how do we discover this mountain of the Lord, this source of inspiration, when in our spirit we seem to be lost?” What if all we can see is the level ground of human unhappiness, and there is no way out, no view of anything approximating celestial heights. A person cannot then turn to himself for strength, for in his heart he finds disillusion. To say that he therefore should turn to the Lord is not enough—for how does one find the Lord? The pious admonition that in despair a person should turn to God means nothing unless this truth is defined.



To turn to the Lord is to turn to His Word. When our sphere is negative, then no mental or emotional turning within our own subjective sphere will give us warmth and light. We are in a prison of our own spirit. We must turn to something outside of ourselves, something in which the Lord

Himself may be found. This means simply one thing: we must turn to the Word, to reading it and reflecting upon it with humility and sincerity. It is the direct teaching of the Lord Himself that He may be found in Divine revelation: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:1,4).

The Word – especially the letter of the Word in which the spirit or internal sense is seen – has the power of evoking remains. Where the internal sense is seen in the letter, or where the Old and New Testaments are read in a holy sphere, there the Lord is present. He is present with a fullness of power that will break negative spheres, that will bring the warmth and light of the sun of heaven to where before there had been darkness. This gift will come to those who diligently read and meditate on the Word of God.

To attain inner permanent peace we must be regenerated or be spiritually reborn, a life-long process. And yet if we find ourselves surrounded by unhappiness in our day-to-day life, we need not feel as

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if there is no way out. There is an immediate way out, by turning to the Word, and to the remains that are in us for strength and inspiration, and then by fighting against our evils from the sphere of the Word.

This immediate change is also a matter of attitude. If we are negative in our attitude, as we approach the Word, concentrating only on our own unhappiness, then the Word can bring us no release from our unceasing restlessness. But if we compel ourselves to be affirmative, looking to the Lord alone as we read His Word, then we will be given a miraculous new strength.

This strength is twofold: it is a strength of love re-inspired, and it is a strength of thought. For the Word has two vital functions: to bring order, that is heaven, to a person's affections, and to bring deeper truths to his thoughts. For when a person sees new and deeper truths, he is confronted with the possibility of advancing his regeneration. If he will live these new truths, they will bring higher goods to him—a more complete regeneration.

The commonly accepted axiom that "It doesn't matter what you believe, it is how you live that counts," is a terribly dangerous half-truth. For how you live is always according to some belief, secret or open. And the source of true belief is from the Word.

For the Word has the power to bring heaven to every plane of the mind, to scatter the thousands of disillusion and discontents of earthly life. This is eternally testified to by the song of David: *"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper."* (Psalm 1:1-3) Amen



Mr Wickham, Mr Collins, and Mr Darcy

Jane Austen's novel about the peculiar plight of unmarried women in 19th century English society has long been a favourite in our household. We have enjoyed a great variety of modern adaptations for television and film. There's the BBC's 1995 version, starring Jennifer Ehle and Colin Firth, with Colin Davis' brilliant soundtrack. Ten years later, Keira Knightley and Matthew Macfadyen brought Ms Bennett and Mr Darcy to the movie screen, with another wonderfully expansive, romantic score, by Dario Marianelli, performed by Jean-Yves Thibaudet at the piano with the English Chamber Orchestra. If DVDs could wear out, our copy would be well on its way to requiring replacement. Then there are the more creative versions of the story: Bridget Jones' Diary (2001 - I'll ignore the sequels for the moment), Bride and Prejudice (2004 - the Bollywood version), and who can go past Pride and Prejudice and Zombies (2016 - yes, really, watch it if you haven't already!)?

Miss Elizabeth Bennett's three suitors are very different men whose characters unfold before our eyes. Elizabeth learns a great deal from her various encounters with them, and I imagine that you are intimately familiar with them all.



Mr Wickham is by far the most amiable of the three. He is friendly, fun-loving, handsome, charming. Almost everyone warms to him immediately, even Mr Bennett. But his true nature reveals itself as the film progresses, and he proves the downfall of Lydia and almost the whole family, thanks to the unforgiving scruples of middle and upper class society. Although he is easy to like, Mr Wickham is not to be trusted.



I have a soft spot for Mr Collins. He provides the comic relief between two very serious romances. He takes himself far too seriously, which Lizzie is quick to ridicule. He makes his intentions known directly, which is admirable compared to Wickham, and he is generally an open book to everyone except perhaps himself. I think of him as essentially a good man but far too affected with keeping up appearances. In his simpering admiration of the wealth of his patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, he pays little attention to her arrogance and lack of manners. He is proud of his own way with flattery and compliments, and imagines that others are similarly impressed.



Mr Darcy is quiet, and serious, he seems unemotional at first, sullen and aloof. Elizabeth's dislike of him is immediate and fierce. His declaration of love is clumsily blurted out and she rejects it firmly. But, we learn that he spends a great deal of time observing those around him, and while his assessment of character is generally unforgiving, it is nevertheless quite accurate. He does not boast nor place great store in wealth, although he has more justification than either of his rivals to do so, nor does he go out of his way to promote himself or his own interests. He is faithful to those he deems worthy, and to his word. He is the most difficult to get to know, but effort and patience are rewarded in the end.

Do we find our three friends in the Bible? Well, I think we can, but I don't see it in individual people so much as in Jesus' teachings about worry and fear. It is in the words themselves that I sense these

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characters. They are all quite physical descriptions. Let me introduce them.

Mr Darcy

But when you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet.
(Mark 13:7)

Being “troubled” derives from “clamour” or “tumult”. It means to become unsettled, thrown into confusion, in emotional uproar, to make an outcry, or scream. I see Mr Darcy here because he demonstrates the opposite, exactly as Jesus recommends. He stands apart from the noise, quietly observing it, and making his assessments of the various characters and personalities displayed in the drama that unfolds before his eyes.

It seems to me that our greatest problems derive from where we look to understand our world. From the Word of God and the wisdom of age and experience, we have turned gradually to philosophy, science and intelligence, from there to journalism and facts, and finally to social media and the hysteria of fake news (alternative facts). I'm not talking about whether a person quotes from the Bible or not, but whether the application of Biblical principles is visible in their lives. Too many of us simply get on the social media bandwagon and join the ever-increasing noise, as we clamour for attention. Loud Christianity becomes just part of that tumult. But Mr Darcy watches quietly from the side, and I am inclined to join him to gain real insight into the state of our world, and the people round about me.

A few verses later, we meet Mr Collins.

But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. (Mark 13:11)

Alas, I fear that he does not follow our Lord's recommendation. Indeed, our Mr Collins admits to "premeditation". The Greek word for worry, means to be divided, pulled apart in different directions, to go to pieces, anxiety, cares of the world, distraction, solicitude. Worry is rooted in the distraction of external circumstances from the reality within. Although Mr Collins is very comfortable financially, he is not at all grasping: still, he places a great deal of satisfaction in that comfort, and offers his admiration to those who enjoy greater wealth. So, we might equally remind him of Jesus' counsel:

"... do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?" (Matthew 6:25)

The remedy for Mr Collins, is found in the words which set chapter 6 of Matthew in context, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:48), which actually means to be "whole", undivided, to withdraw from worldly concerns: be more like Mr Darcy.

Finally, Mr Wickham.

We are most familiar with the Greek word for fear, "Phobos", through the English words we derive from it, the various phobias. It describes the physical actions that result from our fear, meaning to put to flight, flee or avoid:

"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28)

While "fear" may also express reverence, we can see that it is probably inappropriate to use this in reference to the Lord here, and the Greek certainly does not require that this verse talks about God at

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all, being better translated, "But rather fear the one who ...". We are to approach the Lord, not flee from Him. What we should fly from are our own tendencies towards evil, for these are what "destroy both soul and body in hell." As inclined as we are to like him and find his company amusing, we do well to flee from Mr Wickham.

Of course, all three are present within my own nature: the ability to stand back and observe, the tendency to be torn between inner and outer concerns, and the scoundrel who wants only to follow his own desires. How do they manifest in your life?

"To those within the Church it is not apparent that this is the condition of the Church, that is to say, that they treat with contempt and loathe everything to do with goodness and truth, and also show hostility towards those things, especially towards the Lord Himself. They do indeed attend places of worship, listen to sermons with some kind of reverence while they are there, go to the Holy Supper, and sometimes discuss those things with one another in a seemly way. The evil accordingly do the same things as the good, even exercising common charity or friendship to one another, and as a consequence others do not see in them any contempt for the goods and truths of faith, or therefore any contempt for the Lord, still less any loathing of these, and least of all any hostility towards them. But those very actions are outward forms, by which one person leads another astray, whereas the inward forms existing with members of the Church are completely different and the complete reverse of those outward forms. It is the inward forms which are described here and which are of that nature. The essential nature of these inward forms is presented visually in heaven; for the angels pay no attention to anything else than the things that are internal - to ends in view, that is, to people's intentions and wills, and to their thoughts stemming from these. How different these are from external things becomes clear from members of the Christian world entering the next life, regarding whom see 2121-2126."

(Heavenly Secrets, part of paragraph 3489)

2020

We all hailed two thousand and twenty

A year of plenty it was always said.

But alas Covid-19 raised its dreaded head

Livelihoods destroyed, many dead.

Oh to remember what history has taught

Oppression, in every form,

In the end, cometh to naught.

And when everything is said and done

Perhaps a kinder world awaits

In the year two thousand and twenty one.

John Wilson

SOCIETY REPORTS

BRISBANE

I could write about the terrible things happening to us in this time of lockdown since 13 March, 2020, but really what is the point of that...to spread more discontent, unhappiness and blame. No, I refuse to look at it that way, instead it makes me think about The Lord and what His intentions are for us all in this "hour". It has given us the time to reorganise our belongings, time to think about our beliefs and attitudes that may or may not be serving us well, time to converse with our families or friends perhaps, time to think about what really matters in our lives and the opportunity to change if we see the need. None of these things happen instantaneously, but slowly progress with persistence and diligence where real order, love and wisdom can thrive in time.

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To that end some of the changes at the BSNC have included Rev Darren Brunne establishing online sermons and talks and our Gold Coast Doctrinal Discussion Group continues to hold Zoom meetings each month.

Sadly Rev Ian Arnold has had a longer than expected spell in hospital, while he undergoes some rehabilitative treatment and we wish him great strength and courage in all that he faces each day. I am happy to report Brian Heldon is feeling well through his ongoing immuno-therapy treatment.

We look forward to another seminar in due course by Dr William Wilkie following his very successful one last September. The opportunity to listen to other New Church Ministers' online services is very welcome and encouraging for us all and perhaps a great way to inspire our friends in the wider community to join us.

Keep safe and well everyone.

Gaye Heldon

NEW CHURCH IN VICTORIA

New Building

Confirmation from the local council of our status as a place of Public Assembly (Place Of Worship) has finally been received. Discussions with our builder have been ongoing, but now, once the Board settles on a final design, renovations can commence.

Spiritual Leadership

David and Pam Moffat have found a nest and will be moving into their new home in the Melbourne suburb of Highett on 4 June.

David will be away from his virtual pulpit from 3rd to 12th June to assist in the move.

David began live streaming on Palm Sunday, 5 April and by the end May, worship services or discussion sessions had been 'Zoomed' on

nine Sunday mornings. This has been achieved through David's technological expertise, assisted by his son Alex. The Church has had to acquire some equipment to enable these broadcasts to occur.

Indicating the power of electromagnetic outreach, there have been more attendees in this format than in the traditional, on-site services as in days of yore. Members and friends who have been able to join these occasions have greatly appreciated being able to do so. While the majority have been in the Melbourne metropolitan area, there have been participants from Ballarat, Bendigo, Maryborough, Canberra, Port Macquarie, Brisbane and Perth, a wonderful coming together of New Church friends and members.

Bible study sessions have also been held fortnightly on Monday evenings via Zoom and the Church Board has been meeting using this same facility.

Passing

Margaret Ange Parker (9 December 1922 to 3 April, 2020)

Margaret was a Sydney girl and met her future husband Eric when he was serving in the Army in Sydney. They were married on 3rd May, 1947 with Margaret's father, the Leader of the Sydney Society, conducting the ceremony. They moved to Melbourne and built a house in Highett where they lived for a number of years before moving to the Forest Hills area.

Margaret was a stalwart of the Melbourne Church and attended every Sunday except when she and Eric were away on their travels – an activity they thoroughly enjoyed. Margaret had a lovely soprano voice and would sing in a quartet for special Church services. She played the organ for a number of years and later would fill in when the regular organist was unavailable. She served as Secretary of the Church and was involved with the Women's League, always being available to help out at the Church Fete and on the duty roster.

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Outside of Church activities Margaret was a member of the Maroondah Singers for many years and sang in the Myer Music Bowl at Carols by Candlelight. She belonged to the Girl Guides Association and ran Brownies and Guides and held other positions. At different times she was a member of other clubs often helping to run them. Margaret was an avid reader and enjoyed solving Crossword puzzles. She will be missed by all who knew her and enjoyed her company.

Helmut Lopaczuk, Secretary NCIV

PERTH

While the past few months have been very difficult for many people and thankfully here in Australia we are far better off than most other countries, most of our group have found many positives from the experience.

Just prior to the lockdown six ladies enjoyed a lovely lunch in the picturesque town of Guildford after a wander through several of the antique shops. This was the final get together before everything shut down.

All of us have really appreciated the many sermons, services, and online readings and talks available within the church which have kept us all connected and spiritually 'fed'.

Ros and David Walker have reported doing lots of walking in their neighbourhood, which has led to meeting many people they have not seen for quite a time. Many odd jobs have been done in the Walker household, lots of gardening too. Ros found more time for reading and David to do jigsaw puzzles.

Claire Van Beizen has really enjoyed reading sermons about things to learn from the pandemic and the need to bring us back to basics.

Joy and Trevor have also really enjoyed online services and have found more time for reading. They have greatly increased their walking and bicycle riding. Many small projects around the home have been completed and Joy has enjoyed more time for sewing. Trevor has enjoyed taking up playing the guitar teaching himself.

Lyn Rocke has found that her neighbours have now become friends

as caring for one another has become the norm. Lyn is also very appreciative of a very caring family.

During the lockdown the Logopraxis group met twice over Skype but have now been returned to face to face meetings.

We in Perth are looking forward to restrictions being lifted considerably very soon and a return to more normality. However we all hope that the consideration and concern for one another shown during this time will continue into the future and we can enjoy the simpler things in life. We also look forward to a return to worshipping together.

Joy Moffat

SYDNEY ROSEVILLE

Not much to report this quarter, for obvious reasons. Reverend Howard has done a great job providing great videos online ('Spiritual Shorts,' he calls them) to keep us connected spiritually. With the loosening of the lockdown he has decided to keep up this new work, which is something we're all happy to hear. The sudden expansion of the practical possibilities of technology has changed the world very suddenly for us. ZOOM meetings are now everywhere. Joe Vandermeer has used them particularly to make his work at the Swedenborg Centre even more busy than ever.

So we hope and pray that, as life returns to somewhat normal, no reversal in control of the virus occurs. Wishing everyone around the country the very best in this regard.

Wayne Kasmar

THE LORD AND HIS LOVE

Sarah Walker

It's the end of a long day and I'm tucking my little one into bed. This is the time where we lie down next to each and talk quietly together. I share things close to my heart and of things that I hope will prepare them for their life ahead. Through the gentleness of stories, I talk of Love and hope and truth and trust. I speak of the Word as His Love.

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Tonight, my little one asks “Mummy, what does glorification mean? I heard someone say that the Lord went through glorification? What is that?”

Well my love, the story often feels like a fairy tale – as something that is comforting and reassuring to hear – it has a happy ending. It brings us peace to know that the Lord loves us so much that He willingly made Himself one of us, He made Himself a humble, fallible human and then faced the enormity and onslaught of the fury of the full force of the hells. Just for us. To save us from ourselves.

Gosh, that sounds a bit complicated Mummy.

Yes it does, doesn't it

And just like a fairy tale, it can often feel hard to grasp and see how it relates to our own development, to our own inner process... it feels mystical and magical and so also fantastical and intangible.

But just like with fairy tales, we must look within it to see how we may apply the principles it teaches to our life.

We must allow the image to show us the true Self within the mirror it holds up for us to look into.

I'd like to hear the story Mummy.

Yes, and I think it's time to tell you, so let's begin now

Once upon a time, long ago, the people of the earth lived in harmony with the Lord. They knew that everything around them was connected and part of the universal Love that sustained them and gave them life. They could see this Love in everything around them and also in each other. They didn't know how they knew this and they didn't question it.

But by and by, things started changing. They started paying more attention to what their physical senses in the world were telling them. Once this happened, it led to questions about things that they had

always accepted without understanding why. And then this led to them placing more emphasis in their daily rituals of worship and more emphasis in the body and their experience in their senses.

As time went on, more and more focus started to be placed in these rituals and the delight of living in the senses of the world around them and within them. It directed them into exploring many new paths of scientifics and knowledges and understanding. There was a great expansion in thought and the affections for thinking from what they could taste, touch, see, hear and smell.

But it also brought with it an awakening to things of destruction as well, as this new delight in the senses could also be used to gratify the own self, instead of loving each other. Over time, a belief in the idea that life existed from living in the sensual world around them, became stronger than the original feeling of life being a gift from Love itself. They became less able to see the Lord in each other, or the Lord in their idols, or the Lord in their rituals, or the Lord in their senses, as this new way of being became stronger and stronger.

The Divine being of Love saw this and knew that it was time to descend into this physical world to offer a new hope and a new experience of Love that could meet and speak to level of the senses.

It knew that it must come in a form that was gentle and appealed to things of innocence, as something non-threatening. So it came in the form of a baby boy, in the arms of his mother and father, surrounded by animals and many travelled from near and far to visit him. This boy grew into a man and as he did he started to discover the Divine Love within him that was longing to be brought forth and unfolded and make him truly human. But he also discovered resistance to this Love. And so his journey of offering Love to others and healing and compassion also involved allowing this Love to offer healing and compassion to himself - to the inner struggles and temptations that occurred as the

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evils and hells that opposed this Love, fought back with a steady onslaught of fury.

Little by little, the things that he had inherited from his human mother that were finite and not from the Father that had sent him, were put off. The Love descending down from his soul sought to create a new flesh for his body in which the senses of the world could be experienced from Love rather than the self centred love that he had inherited from his mother. So there were two humans. The first human he was born into, was like a pretend human and it provided an external flesh for his body that was from his mother who belonged to the world of the senses. It looked human but its flesh was dead and decaying because it only loved itself and lived from the idea that its life was created by what it could feel from the senses in the world. The second human was real because it lived from Love, from the internal that had been given from his Father. As the boy, now a man, fought and suffered in the battles against the darkness that threatened to destroy the Love, the dead flesh from the pretend human gradually was sloughed off and a new flesh formed to cover this Love and so created a real human.

The little boy, now a man, was healed and reformed. And the new human that unfolded was glorious and beautiful to behold.

And now... He stands before us all, at every moment, with His arms outstretched, beckoning us to let Him do the same Work in us. He offers the promise of eternal Love and Life. We are filled with such a deep sense of being cared for because He loved us so much that he was willing to step into the fire of the darkest most horrible evils to fight to save us. To fight for our freedom. He is our Hero, our Saviour, the true divine Human.

My little one falls back against the pillow and sighs with a dreamy look on their face. "You were right Mummy - that's such a beautiful story! It's so incredible and magical. It almost doesn't seem real. How do I know

it's real? How does it relate to my life? How does it relate to me?"

Well my darling, we must open our hearts and let the Lord hold the mirror for us ... to shine on the image within the story and listen to what it teaches . . .

When we are born and enter into this world we start out like those people from long ago. We see love and innocence in the world around us and we don't question it, it is just something that we live from in our hearts. And then as we start to get older, we start to become aware of the world around us. We start developing likes and dislikes; for food that we like, for different things we like to look at, the different things we like to listen to, for people we like to spend time with, for things that make us feel good and happy and things that give us pleasure. We start to develop a sense of life and we start to build a sense of self from this, which we call our personal identity, or our personality, or how we define ourselves. We say it is what makes us who we are, what makes you 'you' and me 'me'.

Then, when we get a little bit older yet, our mind starts to expand, and we question things and challenge ideas that our parents or our teachers have taught us. We start to really embrace living in the world with all its facts and knowledges and pleasures that life can offer us.

And we might live this way for quite a while.

But from the moment we are born, the Lord is using these opportunities in our life to build memories that are like vessels or storage units. He stores up all the good things of His love in them and they progressively become plentiful, growing in size until the time comes for His love to descend and open them up and bring out the contents into use.

Along the way, as we have been gathering these storage vessels, we have gathered others too that don't hold the Lord's love in them, but instead they hold things that are self-serving and only focus on that is

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good for ourselves without thought for others. When the Lord's love descends and we awaken to it, these vessels of self-love get in the way and create resistance. And so they need to be opened so that we can peer inside and let the Lord know that we understand what it is we are looking at. This is very difficult and it hurts to see it and we feel the same despair and unhappiness that the Lord felt when he was suffering and fighting for us. But if we are brave, like He was, and we trust in Love, then this is like handing over the power to the Lord to allow Him to remove these vessels out of our sight. These vessels are like the dead decaying flesh on the pretend human. They make us believe that life comes from the world we live in that we can see, touch, feel, hear and taste. But once these vessels are sloughed off then the vessels of His Love can be opened more and more. These vessels are like the new flesh from the Father that forms around Love and makes us truly human.

"Hmmm. All this talk of creating humans and new flesh makes me think of the creation story about the first humans – Adam and Eve. Why is that mummy?"

Well little one, first we need to think about what it means to be human.

The human form can be known when love marries with its wisdom and produces use. So this is when we take the Lord's Love in our heart and the truth from His Word and we apply it in our life and we see that it is good. The truth from His love becomes living for us. The Adam and Eve story is like this too.

Adam is a man, we will call him the masculine and Eve is a woman, so we will call her the feminine. Our first rational understanding of life is based in the world of the senses. It loves to acquire information and what it believes is truth. But this is the pretend human. This is the sense of self that has no real life in it. This is what the masculine is born into. Yes, it is a sense of self, and yes it has the ability to think rationally, but it is self-serving. This sense of self must be transferred out of the masculine and into the feminine. This is the rib in the story

that is taken from Adam, out of his body, out of his flesh. This is the dead flesh of the vessels that don't have the Lord in them and need to be taken from out of our sight. We must be willing to sacrifice what we love, even if it feels like it's our very own flesh and blood. We must be willing to let the Lord take out the rib and transfer it.

The second sense of self or the second rational understanding is formed in the feminine. The rib is taken out of the masculine and a woman is formed around it – it is her flesh that envelops the rib. The new flesh is the vessels that have the Love of the Lord in them. This is the flesh from the Father, from Love, whilst the masculine's flesh is the flesh from Mary, from love of self only. So Eve is the gift given to Adam so that they may both become one flesh and one life that is a real human. And then babies come forth in the womb of Eve and then those babies make more babies. Life is constantly being created in this process. That is the eternal Life He promises.

“Gosh there is so much to try and remember Mummy. And so many ideas in there that I don't think I understand yet. How does the Lord's Love descend into us? And how do we know what is truth and where do we find it?”

Oh, well ... it starts to get more in depth from here on in little one. This next part is more for the grown-ups. I shall tell you about it but perhaps just listen and take in what you can. Listen to the love in my voice as I speak the words and think of them as vessels that you can store away until they are ready to be opened.

At some point in your adult life you will hear the Lord calling you; it may be early in your life, it may be in the middle, it may not happen until later. But it will happen. It will feel like a call to seek connection to something more than what you have, than what you feel. It will feel like a call to seek truth and want to really know it. It will be a call to you to enter the Word because that is truth itself. The Word is the flesh of the human, of the Divine Human.

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But every time we enter the Word we experience it sensually first. We experience it as the human from Mary, as something that is finite and tangible and as something we can touch and hold and examine. The words in its pages touch us, confuse us, excite us, inspire us ... they appeal to our senses in our spiritual body, in the life of our thoughts and affections, in the life of our mind. But they also make contact with the storage vessels. Like the baby boy, the words appear innocent and non-threatening and we allow them to enter into our minds. And like the baby, the words are an innocent childlike form of the senses that start to grow into a man within our minds. The information and knowledge that we are reading and processing, starts to expand our thoughts and our affections, as the influx of the Lord's Love flows down into our mind's through the concepts and the very words themselves. This is the opening up of the storage vessels.

Up until this point in our life, we have been oblivious to the fact that there was another way to view things. We may have had momentary thoughts about it but we were happy exploring the world of the senses and its delights. And these are indeed a necessary part of the process. Without these vessels that we have gathered along the way, there would be nothing to store the Lord's love in, and also just as importantly, store that which opposes it. You see, it is actually the process of moving through the resistance, the resistance to the Lord as the Word descending into our lives - that allows more of the vessels of Love to be opened. In seeing where He is not present, it strengthens our seeing and knowing of where He is. It is the presence of the resistance and our struggle with it, that opens us up to the specific form of the human we are to enter into.

So we call this opening up of vessels an 'awakening' – it is our awakening to spiritual life. The things that have sat in storage all those years are now being opened up and let out to fulfil their original purpose.

The things that contain the Lord's love are released and meet with the Word's truth as it comes into our awareness, flowing in through what we are learning and applying in our life.

But at the same time the other vessels..... they feel like Pandora's box because they release all the things that stand in opposition- the sickness and disease in our minds of what loving only the self can do to our life, leading to decay and death.

So there is the process of the flesh of the pretend human, the exteriors, being put off and then there is also the process of things more interior – of seeing what the human from Mary really is and what the human from the Father is. The more interior work is the work of distinction and separation, of seeing the difference in the two sense of selves.

This distinction and the need to separate is what propels us into the wilderness of temptation. The flesh doesn't want to let go of the rib - it is attached to it. It is difficult to give up ownership of it, to give up the sense of self that we have spent so long relying on and depending on and believing in, in the life that we thought was ours through our own intelligence.

We see the same struggle in the mind shift from reading things in the Word literally, to seeing them representing instead higher spiritual concepts or principles. There is a strong pull to want to read things at face value, even when they don't make sense because to read them from internal processes requires an acknowledgement that the Lord is the Process and that we have no ownership on it at all. When this happens the letter of the Word then becomes the servant to internal senses rather than external ones.

So the externals from the human from Mary – the life in the external senses of the Text or our lives in the senses of the world, then becomes known as the servant because it allows us to be conscious of the fact that we are alive. It allows for distinction and thus

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separation that leads into the new externals of the real human being provided for. The Word provides new vessels of truth that love can join with and flow into and the Text of the Word is seen to be the new flesh once the Lord is recognised as the internal of the Word. Our life is seen in Him and therefore life is eternal and the Word once seen as finite is now acknowledged as Divine and therefore infinite.

The Word as we enter into it and it into us, over and over, is perpetually sloughing off the externals that can't serve the internal of the Lord, of Love, and is building new flesh or externals for us, for the new real human that is forming forever more.

Are you still awake little one?

Yes, only just Mummy ...

How about I read you something from the Word.... it always explains things better than I can.

Yes, I'd like that, read it to me please...

No shape has He nor honour when we shall see Him, and no appearance nor loveliness that we will covet Him. Despised is He, and shunned by men, a man of pains and knowing illness. Yet Yahweh desires to crush Him, and He causes Him to be wounded. Should you place His soul for a guilt approach, He shall see a seed. He shall lengthen His days, and the desire of Yahweh shall prosper in His hand. From the toil of His soul shall He see light. And He shall be satisfied by His knowledge. My righteous Servant shall justify many, and with their depravities shall He be burdened. (Isaiah, 53:2-3,10-11, CLV)

It's like making chocolate cake isn't it Mummy?

How so love?

Well, it shows us all the parts and how the cake is made and there is something comforting about that.

Yes, there is comfort in the Process. It doesn't mean that there isn't effort to make the cake and that sometimes it can be difficult; if we don't have the right ingredients or we miss something out or we get called away in the middle of it and we forget what we were up to when we return, or if we just aren't feeling like we want to make the cake or if we make it and it doesn't cook properly or we burn it and have to start again. It can even make us cry and feel sad sometimes.

But there is something very dependable and solid in knowing that it's the same process each time. It feels safe and reliable and something we can trust in.

Gosh Mummy, it still seems so complicated and there is still so much that I don't understand and don't know.

Yes my love. But there is awe and joy in that fact too.

Yes Mummy, there is.

I think I shall sleep now.

Sweet dreams little one. May His love descend and envelope you in peace.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Studying the Bible on the New Christian Bible Study Website

Website address: newchristianbiblestudy.org

by Michael Chester

There are many people who feel blessed to have the inner meaning of the Bible illuminated via Swedenborg's Writings. Here is one example. Finally, after so many years of not truly "getting" the Bible, I feel completely taken over by it through Swedenborg's writings. I took the long way around--studying many different religious dogmas for years,

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including Christianity, only to keep singing that U2 song, "...but I still haven't found what I'm looking for"... I don't know why it took me so long to discover Swedenborg. It took Curtis and Youtube—the Lord really does work in mysterious ways! Hallelujah!

This is the second in a series of articles on The New Christian Bible Study Website. This website is hoping to spread the experience of "getting" the Bible and this write-up builds on the previous article which focused on Swedenborg's Writings which appeared in the Autumn 2020 New Age and is accessible at <http://thenewage.net.au/?p=1047>

So how does the website facilitate the study and appreciation of the Bible? On the home page 'The Bible' menu has 4 drop down sub-menus.

These are – Read the Bible, Popular Bible stories, Reading Plans, and Bible word meanings.



To explore these features I've decided to focus on the Noah's Ark story. First of all I choose 'Read the Bible' so as to read Genesis chapter 6. The default English translation is the King James Version with seven others to choose from. There are many non-English

translations as well. You can easily compare translations using the 'Compare to translation' drop-down menu.

After choosing chapter 6, I notice that when the cursor hovers over a highlighted word or phrase, I can read an explanation. For example, in verse 3, I click on 'the LORD' and I'm provided with an excellent explanation of various names for the Divine such as Jehovah and Lord, and the inner meaning that stands behind these names.

Next, I click on the 'Study the Inner Meaning' button to see what is provided.

The sliding pane has five tabs, the first with related links from Swedenborg's works, the second with 'Other New Christian Commentary', the third with 'Hop to Similar Bible Verses', the fourth with 'Word/Phrase Explanations' and the fifth one 'Resources for parents and teachers'.

→
Study the Inner Meaning







🌿 **From Swedenborg's Works**

Main explanations:

Arcana Coelestia [554](#), [555](#), [556](#), [557](#), [558](#), [559](#), [564](#), ...

Sacred Scripture [103](#)

The Inner Meaning of the Prophets and Psalms [407](#)

True Christian Religion [279](#)

The first tab enables us to read Swedenborg's commentary alongside the Biblical text, with the main commentary coming from the Arcana

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Coelestia (Heavenly Secrets). By clicking on AC 554 we have the Biblical text and Swedenborg's Commentary side by side.

The screenshot displays two side-by-side browser tabs. The left tab, titled 'The Bible', shows the 'Popular Bible Stories' section with 'Noah and the Flood' selected. Below this is a search bar and the heading 'Genesis 6 : Noah and the Flood'. The text is in 'English: King James Version'. A 'Study the Inner Meaning' button is visible. The text includes three numbered verses: 1. 'And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them,'; 2. 'That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.'; 3. 'And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.' Verse 4 is partially visible: 'There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.'

The right tab, titled 'From Swedenborg's Works', shows 'Swedenborg's Works / Arcana Coelestia' with the translation 'Elliott (1983-1999)'. It has a search bar and the heading 'Arcana Coelestia #554'. Below this is 'Arcana Coelestia (Elliott translation)'. A 'Go to section' field shows '554 / 10837'. There are 'Previous' and 'Next' buttons. The text reads '554. CONTENTS' followed by 'The subject is the state of the people before the Flood.' and '(References: Genesis 6, 6:1-8)'. Another 'Go to section' field shows '554 / 10837' with 'Previous' and 'Next' buttons.

Having the Bible and the Writings side by side, with so many helpful links, assists us in a big way on our spiritual journey. This is what Dr Groves wrote on one occasion.

Those who have the Word, and the Writings which unfold some of the inner dynamics of the Word, have a flying start on the way to spiritual cleansing and perfecting. They have access to the knowledge and practical know-how of the activation and regeneration of the total contents of their lives.

Dr Philip W Groves, Swedenborg's Mighty Contributions: Spiritual aspects of Swedenborg's psychology.

The second tab list 'Other New Christian Commentary'. There is a richness of resources provided. In this particular case it showed these

3 categories: 'Stories and their meanings'; 'Bible Study Videos' and 'PDF Resources'.

→ Study the Inner Meaning

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☰ Other New Christian Commentary

📖 **Stories and their meanings:**

[Noah and the Flood](#)
[Noah Builds an Ark](#)

📺 **Bible Study Videos:**

[Steering and Fishing](#)
[Being Strengthened](#)
[To Fill the Earth](#)
[No Air at All](#)
[Habits, Bad and Good](#)
[Thinking](#)
 ...

📄 **PDF Resources**

[Noah Builds an Ark](#)
[Allegories of Genesis](#)

Clicking on 'Noah and the Flood' brought up the Swedenborg and Life video 'The Meaning of Noah and the Flood'. Here's what one person said about the video. "Dude, I'm 56 with a degree in theology, and this stuff keeps blowing me away. You make it so enjoyable, so easy to listen to".

I'm familiar with the Anita Dole Bible Study Notes and I'm happy to see that Chapter 6 of Volume 1 - Noah builds an Ark - is the first of the listed PDF Resources. It's also included under the 'Resources for parents and teachers' tab.

Another way people might enquire on the Noah's Ark story is to go to Popular Bible stories (second on the Bible drop down menu or the 'Understand Bible Stories' option on the Home page.) and do a search on Noah. Currently it comes up with 5 records, the first being 'Noah and the Flood'. Clicking on this brings you to the same content as found on the Commentary tab of the Bible Slider mentioned above.

What's good is that people can follow their own inclinations in exploring a topic. It wouldn't surprise me that most people would

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choose Bible stories as their way of exploring the 'Noah and the Flood' story, instead of going directly to the relevant chapters in Genesis. And the supporting videos and texts provides a user-friendly experience to give the seeker a full experience—enjoyable, enlightening, and relevant.

Another interesting feature is that you can focus on a verse by clicking on the verse number. For example, by clicking on verse 3 of Genesis 6, a window displays this verse. You can go forward verse by verse, as well as in the reverse direction. Each verse has its accompanying 'Study the Inner Meaning' button leading to relevant commentary.

To conclude, it's good to ask ourselves to what extent are we connecting to the transforming power of the Word, and the Writings which unfold some of the inner dynamics of the Word, as we travel the narrow pathway of spiritual cleansing and perfecting. Are the Biblical stories meaningful to us? Does the Noah story help us to be faithful to the Lord's Word, accepting our separation from worldly standards and holding the belief that the Lord does save us and has a purpose for doing so. The personal meaning of the Bible is the goal to keep in mind and this wonderful website is a means to assist us in the process. Hopefully what has been described has been helpful and provides further encouragement for you to explore and utilise this website.