



“After this work was finished...”

As we celebrate New Church Day on the 19th June let us look carefully again at what Emanuel Swedenborg writes about this event in his work, True Christian Religion.

Chapter 1 (number 4) of TCR begins, as everything begins, with ‘**God the Creator**’ and in the third paragraph Swedenborg writes in a straightforward style:

It is a notable fact that several months ago the Lord called together his twelve disciples who are now angels, and sent them out throughout the spiritual world with orders to preach the Gospel there anew, since the church the Lord established through their ministry is to-day so close to its end that hardly any remains survive. This has come about because the Divine Trinity has been divided into three persons, each of whom is God and Lord.

Chapter 2 moves on to the theme of ‘**The Lord the Redeemer**’ and towards the end of this chapter at number 108 in the second paragraph we find Swedenborg writing again about the disciples as though he were writing to a close friend:

At this point I will add a piece of news. A few months ago the twelve apostles were called together by the Lord and sent out into the whole spiritual world, as they were once into the natural world, with instructions to preach this gospel. Each apostle had his own zone assigned to him. They are now following out their instructions with all eagerness and dedication. But a more detailed account of these events will be given in the last chapter of this book, which will deal with the ending of the age, the Lord's coming and the new church.

And then we move to the last chapter of TCR, chapter 14 with the lengthy title ‘**The Consummation of the Age, The Coming of the Lord, and the New Heaven and New Church**’ and the promised more detailed account in number 791:

After this work was finished the Lord called together His twelve disciples who followed Him in the world; and the next day He sent them all forth throughout the whole spiritual world to preach the Gospel that reigns, whose kingdom shall be for ages and ages, according to the prediction in Daniel (7:13, 14), and in Revelation (11:15). Also that blessed are those that come to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9). This took place on the nineteenth day of June, 1770. This is what is meant by these words of the Lord: He shall send His angels and they shall gather together His elect, from the end of the heavens to the end thereof (Matt. 24:31).

May the Lord enlighten us as we read and seek to understand these revelations.

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Our mission is to express, share and experience with others in life an inclusive, non-judgmental vision of God’s kingdom

Internet study tools for the Bible and the Writings

One of the advantages of the internet is that it can give easy access to a very wide range of tools to support study of the Bible and the Writings. This can prove very useful when preparing material for services or discussion groups and it also makes the task of putting together service leaflets with quotations much easier. Listed below are some web addresses for sites that I find useful but please note that there are many more out there!

bible.gospelcom.net

BibleGateway.com is probably the premier Bible resource on the internet with a very large number of English and other language translations of the Bible available to search, together with a quote for the day and other reference material.

www.blueletterbible.org

The Blue Letter Bible site provides a variety of resources including 9 English translations of the Bible, access to the Latin Vulgate, Hebrew and Greek concordances and a range of commentaries.

www.gnpcb.org/home/esv

This site is the home of the English Standard Version, a translation produced quite recently, and one which is proving very popular because of its combination of a modern readable style yet with close adherence to the original text.

www.greekbible.com

If you wish to study the Greek text of the New Testament this site provides easy access for searching and looking up key words and passages.

www.ntgateway.com/bible.htm

This site provides a very useful 'gateway' to a vast range of other sites (some of which are mentioned in this article), so if you only want one key site in your list of 'favourites' this should be it.

www.theheavenlydoctrines.org

Welcome to the HEAVENLY DOCTRINES on the web. This site provides access to all of the Writings in a range of translations. In the 'Find a passage' section you can choose which book you wish to read and it is then easy to copy a selected section to your own document. Alternatively there is a Directory of Teachings, accessible from the Home page, which provides nearly 40 categories of teaching which can be then investigated further.

www.biblemeanings.info

There are a number of other sites where the Writings can be read online and this one offers access to a wide range of materials organised in different ways. For example you can choose a book from the Bible and then follow up on the spiritual meaning. For example if you select Genesis you will have access to Arcana Coelestia. On the other hand if you select Leviticus you will be able to read from Rev Henry Maclagan's exposition or if you choose the Gospel of John you will find Rev John Clowes' notes and observations.

www.newcenturyedition.org

This site, organised by the Swedenborg Foundation, provides information on the New Century Edition of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg. Whilst these new translations can be bought as books it is a remarkable fact that the source text is available to download online for personal use. From the Home page listed above select 'Downloads' and you will have the option to download a file for Heaven and Hell, Divine Providence or Divine Love and Wisdom.

Alan Misson

Spiritual Growth Weekend for Women

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an inner journey of healing towards personal well-being and newness of spirit.

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How to book: contact Rachel Turner telephone 01743 891621 or via website, www.poolcottage.com

Our hopes, our problems and our policies

Thirty-five years ago the 'The New Church World Assembly' took place in London to celebrate 200 years since the events recorded in True Christian Religion 791. I was privileged as a young man, just out of my teen-age years, to attend the whole of the Assembly in order to provide the public address system and record all the speeches and services. I remember many memorable presentations but to mark this 35th anniversary and to celebrate New Church Day 2005 I present the talk given by Rev Paul Vickers who was President of Conference at that time. This was the third in a series of talks on the subject: 'Our hopes, our problems and our policies'. The first was given by Rev Ernest O Martin, President of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem and the second by Rt Rev Willard D Pendleton, Bishop of the General Church of the New Jerusalem. Here is Paul's address, which despite the years seems as relevant today as it did then. **Editor**

I reminded the General Conference only this week of Goldsack's first law: "No two New Church ministers ever agree about anything". Although you have also to remember Goldsack's second law, I think, that all New Church ministers strive to think from divine revelation. I cannot speak in any way for the whole of the Conference, because all men receive light from the Lord into divine revelation in various ways. The Lord works through that variety. I am also sure that the Conference elected in me the wrong man for this, because I never bothered to learn the history of the Conference, and I shall not be able to remember a lot of its organisation. Most of my work has lain in trying to analyse the problems that we face, when we try to use the revelation that the Lord has given to us. So I am going to go in along that line, and then perhaps try to show the work the Conference does under that light.

Our hopes, our problems, our policy! Our hope is in the Lord; our problem is human nature; our policy is the Lord's way of working.

That's the summary. Let us think about it. Our hope is in the Lord. Now we hope for the Lord's New Church and, as Bishop Pendleton stressed, we must be very careful not to identify the Church with the organisation. The Writings teach us that the Lord's Church in the world is universal and specific. It means that every man, woman, and child in the world at this time is a member of the New Church -including any head-hunters left in Borneo - because there is only one dispensation of the Church at any one time. Now all of those people can be saved. The Lord accomplishes their salvation by the faith into which they were born. The first question I think we should ask is, "How?" If we have the duty to convey to them the revelation that has been entrusted to us in this age, we need to understand in what the Lord is saving them now. What is it that the Lord has left with every man and woman in every age? It is a confrontation with God. Not with the Lord Jesus Christ, for they may never have heard of Him; but, not knowing the Lord by His own name and His own nature, nevertheless He has left with them a confrontation with God. Sometimes out of the most distant ages, the worn and tattered remnants of past revelation have brought to them an idea of God. Their salvation lies in whether, faced with this concept, they will live for God and their fellows, so far as they understand it, or whether they choose in their freedom to live for themselves. Salvation is to be saved from one's

selfishness by living for others in the knowledge of God. The Lord can save all those men and women in the faith in which they are.

What then is the purpose of the revelation given now to this age at the Second Coming in the Writings? It is, of course, to shed greater light upon this confrontation of man with his choice in life. We hope in the Lord. We hope in the Lord and trust in Him because we know that all men and women will be saved, and the multiplication of those who actually know of the Writings is not really involved at that point. It is essential that there should be a Church specific, or the universal Church cannot even have light from the spiritual world. We all know that. Yet the actual numbers in the Church specific at any time are no measure of the Lord's work in salvation.

There is another side to the way in which we hope in the Lord. This perhaps is most important at this time to all of us. The world is being vastated of so many ideas. So many things that the human race has assumed for so long are being questioned and destroyed. This destruction is coming because of the light of the Second Coming. Even where the Writings are not known, the Second Coming has brought change in the channels of influx from the spiritual world. The actual light coming into the mind of any human being by which he can think at all is now different. It has been changed and clarified, so that distorted purposes no longer sustain the pattern of men's thinking. This does not bring the knowledge of new truth, but it brings a great power to destroy the old. And we sit in the midst of destruction and we lament. Now, why? Our hope is in the Lord. The destruction of those false ways of thinking, even down to earthly ideas on government, is desperately important because that work alone will open up the minds of men and women of later generations to see the truth that now is offered and which they need. Our hope in the Lord, then, is sure on these two grounds. First, the Lord's world is achieving its purpose and every man and woman can be saved from selfishness. Second, man's thought is detecting the fallacies and selfish assumptions of the past, even though no true new ways replace them.

Our problem, of course, is human nature. Now that is a double problem. It is a problem because of what men and women are like now; and it is a problem because they have been like that for too long. There is the

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Our hopes, our problems and our policies

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problem of individuals now, who have got to choose between their selfishness and the Lord. And there is the problem streaming out of the past; the fact that men and women have been selfish, have chosen selfishness so often and so long, that they have perverted all ideas, all concepts of government, ways of life, even the way they react to one another in a 'bus queue! Everything is perverted and twisted. Now that, we all inherit. Even we who have the new revelation must have much of that in our minds, undetected, that goes on affecting our behaviour day by day. That is there and, while it is there, it prevents the light coming in. It needs a steady, long, life-long, lives-long, breaking down of those attitudes by a constant use of divine revelation, before slowly men and women can come to see more of the light and see more quickly this confrontation state in which they stand. Added to this general problem of human nature, is the specific problem of each individual who, in what he understands, must choose in life between selfishness and service in order to accept the truth and think from it.

Our task in face of this problem is to bring to others the light that has been given to us, or rather (to be quite correct theologically) to bring to others the forms in which the truth has been revealed to us by which the Lord can shed living light in human minds. We have to bring those things to other men and women in their varied states. The Lord will really shed the light; we can do nothing about that. But we can present to others those forms that He has given to us in the Word and the Writings, and then they can see the light that He will give them. This involves that, when those things are given to them, they must be in a form that these people can take, that they can use. They must be in terms and ideas which speak about life situations they really can understand. You know (I have said this in print but I must say it again) divine revelation is not like an abstract book of philosophy. It is rather like the instructions on a fire extinguisher. Everybody has got to be able to read them sufficiently. It is absolutely essential that they should be able to understand them. And every man and woman can understand divine revelation to the degree of their development. The task the Church has is to bring these forms of truth to other men, and to understand them ourselves, in face of the problem of human nature and its selfishness, inherited and chosen.

There are certain cardinal principles about policies and ways of working that we have been worrying about in Conference, I think, for some years now. I have only been in the ministry twenty-five years, and the whole thought and attitude and drive of the Conference has changed in that time. Indeed, Conference ten years ago bears no relationship to what it is now. And this has been because of our thought about those cardinal principles we seek in revelation to tell us how to approach men and women. The first one is very important: that we should never condemn. When they brought to the Lord a woman hot from a bed of adultery, He would not condemn her. So when we look upon the world; never

should we condemn it for lack of understanding, for false choices, even for deliberate evils. Never! Because when you condemn a man, at once you cut him off from you. The hells seek to make us feel we are condemned. The heavens seek to excuse us- not to excuse our evils, but to excuse us with the sense that we can find our salvation. This, then, is the first principle: we should never appear, whether in our organisations or in this glorious claim to be New Church men and women, to cut ourselves off by appearing to condemn others. Next, we should never try to destroy the light which other men already have, because, as we have seen, the Lord is saving them in the faith into which they were born, unless He sees that it can be changed by something in their circumstances or by something in the way He can lead their affections. This second point should lead us to use the light men already have. Sometimes one feels inclined to call it darkness and not light, I know. But we must see that to them it is the light. It is a way in which they look at God. Into that has got to be drawn a fuller light. The day may come when they say that light was darkness; but they will only say that because by then the light has come by a living process into their minds. This means that real meaning must be brought into the way we can talk to others. We have got to sit and listen to them, to find out the way they think, and to detect how the new light of the new revelation can be brought to them. Let us be quite clear. Man of himself has no understanding of his position; only revelation can ever show man anything he needs. The function of the Church is to bring this into the life situation of the people and show it to them.

In the work of the Conference, the developments that have taken place have been in the effort to grapple with these ideas. Take ministry first. We have tried to train the ministry in ever greater depth of doctrine from the Writings and an ever fuller concept of the Word in the letter - for the literal sense of the Word sheds light when used with the light of its general doctrine. Then we have tried to take these things into the pastoral and life-situation in which people have to be taught and see how this can be conveyed there. Now that is not a field you can cover in a few years. Do let me make it clear, our ambition is not that men should enter into the mere activities or expertise of modern life and use that. That is useless, because it is man's. What is man's is useless by definition. We must try to take the light that is God's and bring it into the present situation of ideas, understanding and endeavour already known and see how it can be used. This means that much of our work now, we feel, will turn towards small groups worshipping in their homes or family groups. Teaching will be both question and answer, so that genuine life understanding exists and not mere structures of terms. We move towards seminars in which the depth behind is to be discussed. The smallness of groups has worried us, because in Conference we were constructed on the large Church basis. But, thanks be to God, He is destroying all our large Churches - either He is taking the congregation

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away or He is giving the buildings dry rot! Somehow or other He has got to get us down to the life situation in which the truth and only the truth is important. But the truth must be used in the living way. We must not be frightened of the path He leads us down, but be content to work down it.

Our activities are very varied. Many of the Ministry and the laity question and strive to understand in our various schools and seminars, seeking to learn that they might talk to others. Most of the real power of this activity will probably only be felt when they can explain personally to someone, in terms that person can understand, something of the light of the Word and the Writings of the Second Coming. Other activities cover a wide range. I should not really talk of any of it, because how can I select? Perhaps I could just mention the United Search for a True Christian Religion, a brainchild of the Rev C V A Hasler. He set to work, he worked for five years and created havoc in his household and his domestic affairs to produce and get this out! Other men work on things like ways of teaching children in their homes. Often we confess ourselves utter failures, but still work at it. This is what the Church must do in the coming years. That we are in a time of flux we all recognise in the Conference. I don't think any one of us would wave before you the pattern of the next ten or fifteen years. Why should we try? For the future is of the Lord's Providence. The essence of the moment is that

we should look at the truth He has given us, and only look from that at the problems of men. We can take many things from the modern world. Let us be quite clear, world-wide the Word of God is now being used by some men. And it is being used, not as a text book to argue from propositionally, but to see what light it may shed. Now we can fasten on those ideas. We can lead from the things that men like Karl Barth have said, from the revolution that Sören Kierkegaard began. We can lead out of these things. Indeed, sometimes I feel that there is a burden upon our shoulders that the revolution came from Kierkegaard not from us, that the break-back to the Word of God was proclaimed world-wide by Barth and not by us. They, having the smaller measure of the gospel, could still see its essential purpose for men. Now that is what we can infill, gifting them with a light that we wish God had given to them, as He has to us in our unworthiness. But He has entrusted it to us. We in the General Conference are at one in striving to do the Lord's work on earth. We are trying to change our methods so that they use the Lord's own revelation to understand men and women, and so that they work in the Lord's own ways so that His providence can be in our efforts.

Whatever the ways we choose, we are in no doubt that our hope is in the Lord, our problem is human nature, and our policy is - and can only ever be - the Lord's way of working.

Memorial Seat at Purley Chase

People gave donations to Purley Chase in memory of Dennis Duckworth. When asked how we would like these to be used, we as a family thought that a bench would be useful where people could sit in the sun. A circular bench to go round the silver birch tree was suggested.

Christopher Woodhouse, Wilf's son, has made a beautiful octagonal oak seat which he has built round the silver birch. This tree is a successor to one under which Dennis would build an altar as soon as he arrived at Purley Chase for Fire Fellowship Camps in the early days when people filled their palliasses with straw from the nearby farm.

Wilf has planted a swathe of daffodils nearby as Dennis loved these harbingers of Spring and would always buy a bunch as soon as they appeared in the shops.

Many thanks to all who contributed in this way. The bench looks splendid from all the windows looking out on the back garden and makes quite a feature. It draws the eye.



Mary Duckworth

RENEW Programme - Closure Report Summary

The RENEW Programme had its roots in the coming together of a wide range of people at a weekend meeting in April 2000 coordinated by an external facilitator. After the April meeting a small group took the ideas forward and presented them at Conference in July 2000 where there was much discussion and debate, finally resulting in the appointment of Alan Misson as RENEW Programme Manager.

From September 2000 a Programme Team, under the leadership of the Programme Manager, met regularly together to formulate more detailed plans. These plans were presented first to the Council and then to Conference in July 2001 where, after lengthy debate and discussion, a resolution was approved almost unanimously. The resolution stated: *"That the Council be authorised to implement the proposals, having regard to the reservations expressed during the Annual Meeting."*

Following Conference Alan Misson, as re-styled RENEW Implementation Manager, set about the difficult task of establishing small teams of people to be responsible for implementation in each of the five areas of Education, New Church Centre Growth Trial, Residential Trial, Communications and Web Development and Management Structures.

At times the programme proved frustratingly slow to move forward but at other times there seemed to be great steps made and prospects for the future looked bright. Some clear tangible things have been achieved:

- A Communications Manager has been appointed and a web site is under development.

- Significant changes and improvements have been made to the management structures of the Conference organisation.

Good progress was made in two areas but the projects ultimately came to nothing through lack of human resources:

- A Director of Educational Development was appointed but then resigned
- An offer of the post of New Church Centre Growth Trial Leader was made but then declined and a subsequent re-think of the trial nearly took off.

Poor progress was made in one area:

- A Residential Centre Trial team could not be established but now the focus is on Purley Chase.

But all these are the tangible effects of the programme. Perhaps of greater importance is the wider effect that RENEW has had on encouraging everyone in the Church to look again at what they are doing and to ask the question "Is this the best way I can serve the Lord and His Church?"

The RENEW Programme may have closed but we all have a responsibility for continual personal and group renewal.

Alan Misson
May 2005

NEW DIRECTOR OF STUDIES OF THE NEW CHURCH COLLEGE

The College Council is pleased to announce that Rev Clifford Curry BSc has accepted an invitation to become the Director of Studies as from 1st April 2005 for a 3 year period. In view of the shortage of Ministers and of the fact that there are currently no ordination students, Clifford will be spending half his time working for the College, and the other half continuing his ministry in Bournemouth; he will continue to live in Christchurch and will visit the College for a few days every month.

As Clifford will be concentrating on the educational and pastoral aspects of the position, the Council accepted his proposal that his title should be Director of Studies rather than Principal.

He will be continuing the implementation and development of SOLCe (Swedenborg Open Learning Centre) with its emphasis on distance learning backed up by face-to-face tutorials.

Clifford joins a list of distinguished leaders of the College, and we wish him an interesting and useful time in his new role.

David Haseler
Secretary

In Memory

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Talking as we walked through the Derbyshire dales, we found ourselves to be on the same wavelength on many things, though admittedly he was on a much higher frequency than I was! We were able to share personal and other problems in a sphere of mutual trust, something that is essential in any close working relationship. John would use me as a sort of sounding board on occasions, seeing what sort of reaction he got. Perhaps to get confirmation that the direction he was travelling on would be accepted. Not that he could easily be deflected, he was a man with a mission!

Our walks, usually with Margaret, Betty and Rita and until a couple of years ago, with Ollie their second King Charles Spaniel, of course had their lighter moments. For instance we might go round a corner in the path, and John would suddenly proclaim: "Look at the Glory of the Lord all around you", or something similar. It didn't matter if there were strangers walking there in the quietness of the countryside. I confess to being tempted to hide behind a bush! But that was John. On occasions when there were overseas visitors to the College John would invite them to join in one of our walks. I can still remember the pleasure John had in seeing, shall we say, the generously proportioned form of Ron Brugler, from Convention, sweating up hills in the Manifold Valley.

We didn't always walk in Derbyshire, nor did we always talk 'church'. A couple of weekends away from it all, staying in a stone cottage in Wensleydale come to mind. An essential for a good walk for me is the presence of water, preferable a river or a stream. John's essential, either in the middle or at the end of the walk, was a good pub, - and the water based brown liquid that was available within!

John had a dream that became known on our walks as "Matlock". He had this idea that when he completed his work for Conference, he and Margaret would move to a property near Matlock in Derbyshire and turn it into a small retreat centre. From then on wherever we were in Derbyshire and saw a property suitable for such a purpose, "this would be ideal for 'Matlock'" would be the comment. This dream has not come about but in our new project at Purley Chase we have the opportunity of developing something along the lines of what John saw a need for, some time ago.

On our last walk together, just four weeks ago, not in Derbyshire this time but in the Forest of Bowland, we talked about Purley Chase. True to form, John quizzed me on whether I thought the financial situation was under proper control and whether the project was a sound one, which I said it was. "That was not your opinion 18 months ago" he retorted, which just goes to show that John did listen and remember what others said to him!

In conclusion I wonder what his answer would be if I was able to ask him now "what is the view like where you are now, John?" I'm sure his answer would be the same as it occasionally was on some of our walks when we came across a particularly fine view: "Awesome, Michael, truly awesome!"

Elisabeth Brooks

Brian John, the younger brother of Judith and me, was a funny little toddler. He didn't run around as much as most small children and consequently became rather chubby. He spent hours sitting on the floor not doing very much. Mum and Dad wondered if he was a bit slow mentally - but after having several eye operations to enable him to see properly, he started showing the world that he definitely was not slow!

When he was still quite young, "Briany Boy", as he was known to Mum & Dad, Judith and me and his cousins, made one of his first major decisions. He disliked this name intensely and stated very categorically that his name was now John. Consequently, another John Presland came into being. However, although he will always be John to most people here, he will always be Uncle B.J. to many of his nieces and nephews who loved him very much.

As he grew through boyhood, this marmite addicted lad became an avid builder of meccano models, a lover of bus timetables, maps and football scores. He became chess champion of the South East London schools, consequently proving that his brain was definitely not subnormal.

For many summers in our childhood, we spent two glorious weeks on the Isle of Wight. We loved it there and still do. We stayed at Freshwater Bay, an idyllic spot on the south side of the island. Every year John was not happy until he rediscovered his favourite hollowed out tree trunk on a quiet country lane. This was his pulpit and he delighted in climbing in and preaching a mini sermon to the rest of us. Shades of things to come!

When he was eleven, he won a scholarship to Dulwich College dependent on an interview with the headmaster. When asked, "what do you do on Saturdays?" much to Mum and Dad's horror he answered "I go round with the milkman"! However, this lack of an academic answer didn't lose him his place at Dulwich College.

I will now skip several decades of John's life except for saying that he, Ken and Alan Misson became great friends in their teenage years. Sadly, Ken died of cancer seventeen years ago but his friendship with Alan continued throughout the rest of his life.

During the later years of John's life, particularly since he became Principal of the New Church College, John

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had a significant spiritual influence on many people: I have been told this so many times this last week. He also had a wonderful spiritual influence on Mum and Judith and me. In the book of Revelation it says: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock". Judith says that John encouraged her to open the door and through him she learnt and marvelled at the teachings of the New Church.

Only two and a half weeks ago, Mum, John and Margaret, Judith and Mike and David and I spent a few days together in Chichester. Although he was so very ill, he gently prepared us for his entry into the spiritual world and we all talked together in a lovely manner. We read the Bible together, concentrating on the journey to the Promised Land. John led us in prayer, meditation and discussion. John made it very clear that he felt sure that he would be welcomed into the spiritual world by Dad and his old friend, Ken Misson. It was a very close family time.

And finally, I started by talking about his childhood and I will finish in the same way. One day he looked at Dad and tried to say: "Writing sermons; don't be silly; it isn't Saturday" but his childish voice came out with "Writing termons; don't be tilly; tishn't Taturday"!

Michael Hindley

John attended the annual Conference on 26 occasions, 6 times as a representative, 5 times as a Council member and 15 times consecutively as a Minister.

On 1st October 1980 John became Treasurer, succeeding Rupert Lewin. The Council's Report at the AGM states..."John focused on the policy making aspects of the work and in this way has contributed much thought and expertise to improving the finances of Conference." John was Treasurer for over five years until 1984 and was instrumental in the Council introducing central payments system, ministers expenses claim forms, the car scheme, and a 25% increase in stipends and student grants at that time.

John continued as Assistant Treasurer and was instrumental in creating New Church Developments Ltd, building new premises for the Blackpool, Burnley and Besses churches and assisted in facilitating the new Radcliffe premises. The 1991 Proof Reports state "...a 6 year financial analysis shows these 3 premises were built at a net cost of £137k.

John entered the College as a student in September 1986 and was ordained on the 25th July 1990 by Rev Robert Gill, President of Conference at the Conference Service in Derby. No one present at that service will forget the images of John processing to the altar wearing his new robes and also assisting his father in the procession. Subsequently his pastorates included Kearsley, Heywood, Manchester, Radcliffe and Stockport.

Just 6 years later he was seconded by the Conference to become part time College Principal succeeding Ian Arnold in September 1996 with a 4 month overlap with Ian; John wished to be part-time at that time to maintain a pastoral role within a team ministry in NW Manchester, but subsequently John's Principalship became full time. Whilst at the college John was instrumental in negotiating the release of capital assets from the sale of the former Jersey Society to the Conference.

Following on from the 4 year work of the Committee on Ministry, John wrote a detailed paper "A new pattern of ministry for both men & women" for consideration by the CoM and subsequently the Conference AGM which ultimately led to the approval by the Conference of women being trained and ordained into the Conference ministry

John had astonishing energy levels and his conscientious and dedicated work involved many long hours; indeed it was not unusual to receive emails timed very late evening or very early morning.

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE NEW CHURCH COLLEGE

We would like to invite you to join us at the Annual Meeting to be held at
The New Church College on Saturday, 2nd July 2005

The meeting will commence at 14.30 with an opening service followed by a business meeting. After refreshments, our new Director of Studies, Rev Clifford Curry, will be explaining his plans for the College, and will also be talking about 'Angels and Dragons: a Vision of Hope', a theme from the Book of Revelation which was originally given to the Swedenborg Society.

The meeting will close at about 17.30.

David Haseler Secretary

God is our Refuge and Strength -

The Book of Psalms

I am delighted to be able to present to Lifeline readers a series of articles by Rev John Elliott. In this fourth article John writes about the deepest level of meaning in Psalms 10 - 11.

“By David we have to understand the Lord. In the Psalms therefore, wherever David is the speaker, the Lord is meant in the spiritual sense.”

Prophets and Psalms



There are good reasons for us to regard Psalms 9 and 10 as not two but one song or poem. For one thing, in some very old Hebrew manuscripts which have come down to us they appear as a single psalm, as they also do in ancient versions or translations, notably Greek and Latin ones. For another thing, Psalm 10 has no superscription or title, which suggests that though originally there were two separate songs, the compiler(s) of the Psalter felt that these two should stand together. Perhaps the two songs were composed at different times by the same author, or maybe a second author sought to finish Psalm 9, which from one point of view is incomplete. For by itself Psalm 9 is an unfinished 'alphabetical acrostic' poem or song.

An 'acrostic' in the Old Testament is a poem in which the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet are used one after another, in their proper order. The best example of a perfect acrostic is the very long Psalm 119. Each of the first eight verses begins with aleph, the first letter in that alphabet; each of the second eight with beth, the second letter; and so on, through to each of the last eight, which all begin with the final letter tau. (There are other alphabetical acrostics in the Old Testament, not only in the Psalter but also in the Book of Lamentations.) In the case of Psalm 9 only the first half of the alphabet is used 'acrostically', while Psalm 10 is a rather imperfect attempt to employ the second half of it. And this a further, perhaps main reason for treating the ninth and tenth psalms as a single entity.

I cannot find anything in **Prophets and Psalms** to suggest that there is any deep, spiritual significance in the employment of such 'acrosticisms' in the Old Testament. (As I have explained before, **Prophets and Psalms** is how I'm referring to a titleless manuscript which was found among Emanuel Swedenborg's possessions after his death.) Yet certain statements that occur in his published works lead me to think that we should see the acrostic use of the Hebrew alphabet as more than some literary device. Take for example the following statement in **Arcana Coelestia**, that "... not even a jot, nor a tittle, that is, small part of a letter in the literal sense of the Word fails to hold what is holy and Divine within it" This statement springs, of course, from the Lord's words recorded in the Gospels concerning every jot and tittle in the Old Testament.

As I have emphasised in my three previous articles, the essential theme throughout the Book of Psalms, at the deepest level of meaning, is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when He was in the world. We have seen that the first two psalms serve as a general introduction to that theme, and that the next six relate more specifically to His trials and temptations, that is, to what was going inside Him and to what was happening in not only the natural world we see around us but also in the unseen, spiritual world. Those six psalms speak of His states of humility, in which He was severely tempted by the powers of evil but never succumbed because He always placed utter reliance on the power of God. By that power alone He was able to withstand and defeat the tempter. Now in the ninth and tenth psalm(s) we hear a song of thankfulness and joy that the wicked who were tempting the Lord had been and were being overpowered. That song also states plainly what the wicked are really like.

There is insufficient room here for me to quote the whole of Psalms 9 and 10 and explain them in detail, so let me just present the brief explanation of them contained in **Prophets and Psalms**, and then add a few comments of my own. (At this point you may wish to read these two psalms in your own copy of the Bible.)

Psalm 9 Verses 1-8, 19, 20 The Lord gives thanks and rejoices that the wicked have been brought to judgement and have been suppressed, verses 9, 10 and that the good have been set free. verses 11-18 The good give thanks that the wicked have been defeated and cast into hell.

Psalm 10 Verses 1-11 The wicked do wicked things to the good and refuse to have anything to do with God; they pretend to be other than what they are, they are full of deceit. verses 12-18 The Lord prays to the Father that the wicked may be made to pay for their actions.

“Wherever David is the speaker, the Lord is meant in the spiritual sense.” Thus David's thanksgiving to his God in the opening verses of his song is an expression of the

(Continued on page 11)

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Lord's thankfulness that 'wonderful deeds' were being accomplished, by the power of God. For Psalm 9 begins:

I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart;
I will recount all your wonderful deeds.
I will be glad and exult in you,
I will sing praises to your name, O Most High.

(The LORD is the way in which most English translations of the Old Testament render the four-lettered Hebrew name for God which may be transliterated as YHWH.)

The psalm goes on to declare what it was that those deeds were achieving, namely the utter defeat of our Lord's spiritual foes:

When my enemies turn back,
they stumble and perish before your presence.

The enemy came to an end in everlasting ruins;
their cities you rooted out;
the very memory of them has perished.

But the incarnate Lord's foes were not only His; they were and are man's as well. Indeed it was because of what the powers of evil - that is, all the inhabitants of hell - were doing to human beings in both this life and the next that He came into the world. At the time of His coming into this world of space and time, those powers were exerting influences so great that some people were not only obsessed or besieged by them from without but were also being possessed, that is, penetrated and dominated by them from within. The Gospels provide us with several examples of people who, through no fault of their own, were possessed by demons. While in the world our Lord allowed the powers of evil to go to war against Him in order that they might be resisted and defeated on the level of human experience, and that as a consequence they might be for ever subject to Him on that same level. This would then mean that although people in the world could still be obsessed and thereby tempted by the powers of hell - but not possessed, provided that they did not engage in the kind of activities that would let those powers take them over - He would be there to protect them in their conflicts. As the Psalmist puts it:

The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.
And those who know your name put their trust in you,
for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who fear you.

Those who are 'oppressed' and trust in the 'stronghold' to protect them from harm - that is, the good who are tried and tempted by the wicked, but do not go under because they rely on the Lord - are invited, in the second half of Psalm 9 to accompany the singer in his song of thanksgiving that the wicked have been overcome and

sent back to where they truly belong:

Sing praises to the LORD, who sits enthroned in Zion!
Tell among the peoples his deeds!

The LORD has made himself known; he has executed judgement;
the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands.
The wicked shall return to Sheol,
all the nations that forget God.

The first eleven verses of Psalm 10 speak plainly about the wicked. They do 'wicked things to the good' and in their hearts as well as their heads they are atheists, though their wickedness and atheism is not always plain to see. They know how to make us fall into the trap of accepting what seems to be good and true rather than what is really so. In His own battles with the powers of evil our Lord had to deal not so much with direct, frontal assaults, so to speak, as with booby-traps and other cunning devices to ensnare Him:

In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor;
let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised.
For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul, and
the one greedy for gain curses and renounces the LORD.

His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and oppression;
under his tongue are mischief and iniquity.
He sits in ambush in the villages;
in hiding places he murders the innocent.

The rest of Psalm 10, as **Prophets and Psalms** states, is a prayer that the wicked may be 'made to pay for their actions', that is, that once the true nature of their activities is revealed, restraints may be placed on them so that they can no longer do any harm to those who are good:

Arise, O LORD; O God lift up your hand;
forget not the afflicted.

Break the arm [ie the power] of the wicked and evildoer;
call his wickedness to account till you find none.

Enough has been said in this and the three previous articles covering Psalms 1-10 to give readers some feeling of the inmost theme running through the whole Psalter. I do not intend to carry on from Psalm 11 onwards but to select from here and there among the remaining 140. Please mention to the Editor any particular Psalm you would like me to write about in future articles.

To be Continued

Letters

Dear Editor,

I respond to Brian Talbot's invitation to express views on what he presented in your April 2005 edition. While it is true, as stated in a number of places, in the Revelation of the Second Advent that differences do not divide, it should however, be clearly noted that it says differences and not opposites, since these do divide. To believe that the Revelation of the Second Advent is Swedenborg's is an opposite to the truth, in fact a direct denial of what the Lord Himself says in True Christian Religion 776, "This Second Coming of the Lord is not in person, but in the Word, which is from Him and is Himself".

With regard to difference; who has not experienced in their reading of the Word, that what they saw as the meaning changed, as they gained a deeper insight of the subject, which can be said to be different, but certainly not an opposite. At first one has an external literal acceptance, but as life advances a more internal view comes to light. This is because the Letter is the basis, containment and support of the spiritual senses. It is a well know fact that the Spiritual sense can only be expressed in the Natural by correspondence, since the two worlds only make one by correspondence.

That the Revelation of the Second Advent which is the Word of the New Church which is the New Jerusalem. as the Crown of all The Churches, is from the Lord alone

and not Swedenborg's is plainly stated in TCR 779, "I also testify that from the first day of my call, I have not received anything pertaining to the doctrines or that Church from any angel, but from the Lord alone while reading the Word."

I therefore do not see how the Revelation or the Church can be attributed to Swedenborg, when both are said to be from the Lord.

Yours sincerely,

Rev Norman Riley



Dear Editor,

I was very interested to read the Rev. Brian Talbot's letter in your April issue. He quotes my father on the subject of intercourse with spirits. My father and I used to talk about Swedenborg and New Church doctrines quite a lot. I agreed with most of his views, but totally rejected his view on spiritualism. He seemed to come under the spell of Marcelle de Chazal, the wife of Maurice de Chazal who was the New Church pastor in Jersey after the War. She claimed to be having almost constant contact with spirits, and was always relaying messages from the next world. They seemed to me to be quite out of character and quite implausible.

But what really upset me about my father's views was that he induced my mother (who was not a Swedenborgian) to undergo a spiritual operation. It was an attempt to perform by spirits a total hip replacement. Marcelle acted as the medium and there was a lot of devout prayer. But my mother was absolutely terrified - she felt she was in the presence of ghosts. The operation was completely unsuccessful. I told my father that I thought he had been very selfish to inflict this on his wife!

I tend to believe that at some very distant future date, perhaps even billions of years, mankind may come to a condition comparable with that of the Most Ancient Church and that then intercourse with spirits will be an every day experience. We are all, of course, now in the spiritual world and in constant touch with spirits, but we are not conscious of this and I believe that that it is the Lord's full intention that we should be so protected.

Yours sincerely,

Guy de Moubray

Lifeline

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