



Pentecost

*On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld." **John 20:19-23***

We read in Acts, Chapter 2 that at Pentecost, after Jesus had ascended, the believers were gathered together in a locked room and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Tongues of fire appeared above them and they were able to speak many foreign languages and spread the good news of Jesus. You can see from the above quote from John's gospel that Jesus had already breathed on them and said "Receive the Holy Spirit", so that they could be sent, as He had been sent by the Father. This must have been a moment of transformation for them. We also need transforming and need to be open to the power of the Holy Spirit.

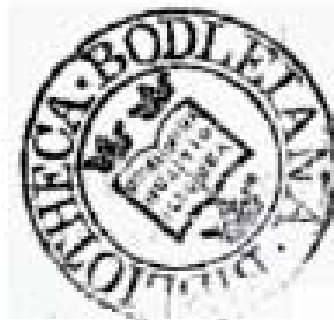
The disciples had been promised that the Holy Spirit would be sent to them. What is the Holy Spirit? We are taught it is divine love and truth proceeding, yet it is experienced in a very personal and intimate way. Being aware of the presence of the Divine through the Holy Spirit can give us insights and courage and the ability to take risks, just as it did those gathered together at Pentecost two thousand years ago.

If we are afraid, shut in a room in our minds with the doors locked, Jesus can breathe the Holy Spirit into us too, to enable us to be sent out; to free us from that locked room of the mind and release us into the world with new energy and determination to serve the Lord. We may speak with new tongues, not foreign languages but a new way of speaking because we are new people inside and so we think and speak from a new spiritual motive. The Holy Spirit brings Christ within us.

"However well of Christ you talk and preach, unless He lives within, He is beyond your reach". Angelus Silesius

Rev Gillian Gordon

Pentecost	1
The Patience to Wait	2
Conference 2008 - Programme	3
The Upper Room - 6	4
Question 5	4
In Memory - Gordon Jacobs	5
The Story of Ruth	6
Google and the Bodleian Library	7
Reflections on Immortality	8
At Sea with God	9
187th Missionary Society Annual Meeting	10
Wisdom	11
Notices	12



What is the connection between the stamp of the Bodleian Library, Oxford and the New Church

See page 7

May 2008
Number 363

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

The Patience to Wait

Children are renowned by their very nature, for their impatience. Young people, especially in these affluent days, seem to be hardly any less impatient - expecting to have everything they want 'Right now!' Hopefully with advancing years we gradually gain a greater measure of patience for the things or changes we want or long for. Still even then, our patience can be sorely tested at times, as we may find ourselves waiting indefinitely for a hope to be fulfilled, a vital hospital appointment, or simply for 'things to get better'.

We are naturally impatient, so we can imagine the disciples impatience after the excitement of the Lord's resurrection appearances, as they had to wait, pent up '*for fear of the Jews*' for nearly seven weeks till the time when, as Jesus had promised, they would become '*clothed with power from on high*' Luke 24:49.

In what must have been a rather frustrating situation they remind me of a story I read recently about a woman who had the cocoon of a butterfly on her windowsill. As time passed, the butterfly began its struggle to emerge from its cocoon. But as more and more time passed without the butterfly succeeding in its struggles she became concerned that the butterfly was stuck and decided to help it. She took a small pair of scissors and snipped the opening a little larger to help the emerging creature. And the butterfly crawled out. But that's all it ever did: crawl. Apparently there was something about being in that cocoon longer than what seemed comfortable - about the pressure of the struggle, that was necessary to get colourful, life-giving strength into its newly formed wings.

There is no easy shortcut it would seem, through the time of preparation needed for receiving the power to break free of constraints so as to 'soar'. So it was with the disciples' time of preparation, waiting for the Day of Pentecost - waiting for the energizing of their spirits and the courage and power to speak out as witnesses of the Lord's resurrection. Swedenborg explains that the times when we need to exercise patience are times of spiritual temptation - the temptation to try to escape from the trial rather than to use the time to get in touch with our soul.



The Lord had already taught the importance of this to His disciples when He once explained to them,

'In your patience you will gain your souls' Luke 21:19

The opposite is clearly also true. In our impatience we lose touch with our souls. In our mental struggles to shorten our time of waiting we weaken and maim ourselves in spirit. Let us then remember the butterfly, and in the wonderfully wise words of the psalmist,

'Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him.'
Psalm 37:7

For the truth is indeed that it is
'In your patience you will gain your souls.'

Rev Michael Stanley

Anyone can convince himself in favour of Divine origin by observing nature, when he looks at larvae, which are impelled by the pleasure of some desire to seek and long for a change in their terrestrial condition to one which is as it were an analogue of the heavenly condition. For this reason they creep into places where they can, so to speak, put themselves into a womb so as to be reborn, there turning into chrysalises, pupae, nymphs and finally butterflies. After undergoing this metamorphosis and putting on the lovely wings typical of their species, they fly up into the air, as into their own heaven, and engage there in agreeable play, mate, lay eggs and provide for their posterity; then too they take agreeable, sweet nutriment from flowers. Can anyone, who has convinced himself in favour of the Divine by observing nature, fail to see that the larval stage is a kind of picture of a person's earthly condition, and that of a butterfly of his heavenly condition? Those, however, who have convinced themselves in favour of nature, observe these facts, but because they have banished from their minds the heavenly condition of a person, they call these just natural instincts.

Conjugal Love 418

'Stretch out your hand'

Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shrivelled hand was there ... He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.' Mark 3:1-5

Monday July 28th

14.30 Choir practice in Tissington Room, Lakeside
 16.00 Tea
 16.15 Registration and Signing of the Roll
 17.00 Opening Worship
 17.20 Welcome from the Chairman
 17.30 Announcements - CEO
 17.35 Appointment of Sessional Committees
 17.45 Votes of Condolence and Messages of Greetings
 18.00 Extraordinary General Meeting
 18.30 Break for Evening Meal (Served at 18.30)
 20.00 'Getting to know each other'
 21.00 Worship

Tuesday July 29th

07.45 Choir practice
 08.30 Breakfast
 09.30 Family Worship
 09.45 Senior Minister - 'Stretch out your hand'
 10.45 Break for Coffee
 11.15 Announcements - CEO
 11.25 'Order of Business' Secretary
 11.40 'The changing face of Ministry'
 12.45 Break for Lunch (Served at 13.00)
 14.15 Bible study for all ages ?
 15.45 Break for Tea
 16.15 Choice session (45 minutes):
 # Nature Trail in the grounds or
 # Talk by Stephen Russell-Lacy 'Feeling good
 about oneself from a Swedenborgian
 perspective.'
 17.00 SOLCe and ordination students
 18.00 Break for evening meal (Served at 18.30)
 20.00 Holy Supper Service

The Conference Choir

Barbara Fordham, who will be leading the choir at Conference, asks that anyone who would like to be part of the choir at Conference to contact her in advance.

Please phone: 01702 218520
 or email: barbara-fordham@hotmail.co.uk

Wednesday July 30th

07.45 Choir practice
 08.30 Breakfast
 09.30 Family Worship
 09.45 Announcements - CEO
 09.55 Report from the Treasurer
 10.40 Break for Coffee
 11.15 Report of the Governing Council
 12.45 Break for Lunch (Served at 13.00)
 14.15 Report of the Governing Council continued
 14.45 Children and young people - games
 Adults: The Church in the World - story telling
 and structured group discussion - session 1
 15.45 Break for Tea
 16.15 Children and young people - games
 Adults: The Church in the World - session 2
 17.30 Free time leading to Evening Meal
 (Served at 18.30)
 20.00 A 'Bit of a Do' leading into a worshipful time

Thursday July 31st

07.45 Choir practice
 08.30 Breakfast
 09.30 Family Worship
 09.45 Announcements - CEO
 10.00 Report of the Committee of Ministers
 10.45 Break for Coffee
 11.15 Ballot
 11.30 Report of Committee for Auxiliary Ministry
 12.15 'Unbelievable Providence'
 12.45 Break for Lunch (Served at 13.00)
 14.30 Conference ordination service for all ages
 16.00 Break for Tea
 16.45 'Purley Chase reaching out'
 17.30 New Church Youth Association
 18.00 Break for Evening Meal (Served at 18.30)
 20.00 Choice session (1 hour):
 # Rev Michael Stanley - 'A change of heart and
 terminology'
 # Sacred Dance
 # AGM of Historical Society
 # Free Time

Friday August 1st

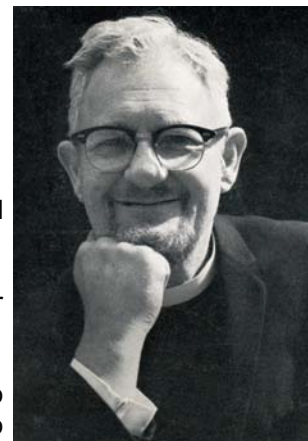
08.30 Breakfast
 09.45 Music for a time of quiet meditation
 09.50 Announcements - CEO
 10.00 'Reaching out to others' - new resources
 10.45 Break for Coffee
 11.15 Conference Review
 12.00 Votes of Thanks
 12.15 Chairman's closing remarks
 12.20 Closing Worship
 12.35 Break for Lunch (Served at 12.45 or packed if
 ordered in advance)

The Upper Room

From 11th May 1974 to 1st February 1975 the Herald, the forerunner of Lifeline, published a series of fifteen Meditations by Rev Brian Kingslake using the title - The Upper Room.

His meditations and the accompanying prayers seem as relevant today as they did over thirty years ago and are now re-published in Lifeline in the same series.

The term 'Upper Room' can be seen as representing the higher levels of our minds into which enlightenment from the Lord can flow when we seek to know the truth and wish to apply it in a life of usefulness to others. Such enlightenment involves our coming closer to the Lord just as the disciples came close to Him at the Last Supper.



Rev Brian Kingslake
1907 - 1995

6. "Count your blessings"

READ Psalm 145

Pride can always be sterilised by gratitude. Let me pause for a few moments, and run over in my mind some of the things for which I should be grateful, and may my loving gratitude pour out to the Giver of all good gifts. Life itself. Parents, upbringing, education. Loving friends (my life-partner, children). Art, literature, music. The beauties of nature. Religion, the Bible, and all revealed truth. The assurance of eternal life. Above all, the Lord's love for me, and His care for me, every moment of day and night. (Anything specific I have to be grateful for just now?)

PRAYER.

"Beloved Lord my heavenly Father, I cannot possibly express in words my gratitude to You for all Your gifts. Please accept the emotion of gratitude which is welling up in my heart as I contemplate such overwhelming generosity, such tremendous bounty. Yet it is not primarily for what I have received that I thank You. I give You all my love because You are love and beauty itself, the infinite Source of my life, and all life. Thank You, thank You!"

Question 5

One of the earliest receivers and translators of the Writings in England was Rev Thomas Hartley, Rector of Winwick in Northamptonshire. Hartley visited Swedenborg shortly before his death in London but he also asked Swedenborg nine written questions about the Trinity and related subjects. Here is question 5 and Swedenborg's personal answer.

Is not the Holy Spirit in the New Testament the same as the Spirit of God in the Old Testament, only with the difference that before the Lord's incarnation it proceeded from the Divine Esse or Jehovah directly, or through the mediation of angels, while after the incarnation it proceeded through the Son or Divine Human? Is the Holy Spirit not the same as the sphere of God?

ANSWER

The Spirit of God and the Holy Spirit are two distinct things. The Spirit of God did not and could not operate on man except imperceptibly, whereas the Holy Spirit, which proceeds solely from the Lord, operates perceptibly on man, and enables man to understand spiritual truths in a natural way; to His Divine Celestial and Divine Spiritual the Lord has united the Divine Natural by which He operates from them. Besides, 'Holy' in the Word is attributed solely to the Divine Truth, thus to the Lord, Who is Divine Truth both in the celestial and spiritual sense and also in the natural sense, wherefore it is said in Revelation that the Lord alone is holy, xv 3, 4. See further Apocalypse Revealed n. 173. And it is said in John that the Holy Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified, vii 39. The Holy Spirit is the same as the Divine Sphere when by this is meant the Divine Love and the Divine Wisdom, both of which proceed from the Lord Jehovah out of the sun of the angelic heaven and make its sphere in the way that heat and light proceed out of the sun of the natural world and constitute its sphere; for heat from the sun of the angelic heaven is in its essence love, and light from the same sun is in its essence wisdom. To these two the heat and light of the sun of the world correspond.

Gordon Jacobs passed into the spiritual world on 16th October 2007 aged 88. He had been suffering from ill health for some time, but this development was unexpected.

Gordon came across an Everyman copy of Trobridge's 'Life of Swedenborg' just before his marriage to Mabel and took it with him on their honeymoon in 1946! During their holiday they visited Llangollen, where he discovered a copy of 'True Christian Religion' in a second-hand bookshop, bought it and read it avidly. Following this he contacted the Swedenborg Society, became a member and later a life member. He was well read and understood the doctrines for some years before he found the New Church in Wretham Road in the early 1950s.

He was a great student of Swedenborg philosophy and was widely read. His enthusiasm for everything he felt important combined with his meticulous mind were used in many ways to serve the church he loved. He collected references to Swedenborg he found in any published literature and card indexed it. This invaluable tool is to go to the Swedenborg Society where it will undoubtedly be used as a wonderful help to researchers. He also produced a subject index of articles in twentieth century New Church periodicals which has come to be known as the Jacobs' Index. He was a founder member of the New Church Historical Society; wrote the one and only edition of the 'New Christian' magazine and articles for 'Lifeline' and 'Outlook'; and acted as the link for outreach for the New Church in the 1980s before the Outreach team was set up.

He attended the annual Conferences in 1974, 1977, 1981, 1982, and 1983 but he did not like the cut and thrust that occurred and resigned his membership of Conference. He also left the Birmingham church committee for similar reasons as he was a gentle, peaceful person who was sensitive to others, never critical and dreaded causing offence. However he served on the Worship and Pastoral Care team and was

a valued member of it. Music was another talent he possessed being a pianist, jazz pianist, organist and composer. He played the organ for Oaklands virtually every Sunday for thirty years playing only nine days before he died. He was the Swedenborg Society collector, the librarian and book steward and as a professional accountant audited the accounts each year. He wrote 'A History of the New Church in Birmingham' for its 200th anniversary in 1991.

Gordon and Mabel were such genial hosts and caterers. Many, including Conference Council members, benefited from their hospitality and sampled Gordon's home-made wine. In the 1950s they served as host and hostess for several Midland Young People's Council Whitsun schools at Purley Chase. Purley Chase was always close to their hearts; they attended many 'Senior' Studies including the one held in September 2007 and now his beloved grand piano has been donated to the Centre.

Many years later Gordon and Mabel returned to look for the bookshop in Llangollen but it no longer existed. His comment was, "It had obviously served its purpose". Many in the New Church will be grateful that it did, for without his dedication, scholarship and research the church would be a poorer organisation. Gordon was much loved and will be greatly missed by everyone who knew him including the many charities he supported with his considerable talents. Our sympathy goes to Mabel and to his extended family.

Rev Rita Russell

.....
The Editor of Lifeline regrets the delay in the publication of this memorial notice.

New Church Womens League Benevolent Fund

The Annual Meeting will be held at the Accrington Church on Wednesday May 14th at 7pm.

A cordial invitation is extended to anyone who can attend.

May Liversedge
Secretary

The Story of Ruth

Where you go, I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Ruth 1:16.

The Book of Ruth is an exquisitely beautiful and engaging story. It is a very old story, although it was apparently edited and put into its present form in about the fifth century BC. In the Septuagint, that is the Greek translation of what we now call the Old Testament, done in Egypt in the third or second centuries BC, it was placed immediately after the Book of Judges, which is where it fits historically and which is where it appears in our Bible. Like other books of the Bible it can be read on different levels, although it is not, according to Swedenborg at AC 10325, part of the Word (that is a book with a continuous spiritual sense) and, as far as I am aware, he never mentions it in his writings.

Although it is a very old story and clearly rooted in a culture that is very different from ours today, the story still has powerful resonances for men and women of the 21st century. The story of an alien woman who adopts her mother-in-law's country when she is widowed while still a young woman, instead of returning to her own country and family, as she is encouraged to do, is one we can understand. In Britain today we are much concerned about questions of immigration from other countries around the world. The newspapers, radio and television are full of stories about migrants, about their different languages, customs and religions, about the pressures on housing, schools and the National Health Service. We are sometimes told that the country is 'full up'. In truth, of course, there has always been immigration into this country, and emigration from it as well. When Ruth came to Bethlehem with Naomi her mother-in-law all those years ago she came as a migrant. Although she had been married to a Hebrew man, as a foreign migrant she came with nothing and, like many of the migrants to our country today, she had to take the lowest kind of menial work. She went out into the fields and followed the harvesters, picking up the grain they had left behind. She must have been sad and lonely and quite home-sick. At least that is what the poet John Keats thought when he imagined her hearing a nightingale as she worked in the fields:

Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;...

Like many of today's migrants, she worked her socks off; 'she has worked steadily from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter', we are told. Then Boaz, a kindly man who is the owner of the fields, takes pity on her. He allows her to drink water whenever she is thirsty and later gives her food. He protects her. In someone else's field, we are told, she might be harmed. Hostility to foreigners has deep and ancient roots.



Ruth in Boaz's Field
Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld 1828

Then the story takes a different turn. Naomi is anxious that her daughter-in-law should not remain in a precarious position doing casual work in the fields and depending on the kindness of her employer. Ruth is a young and attractive woman and her mother-in-law encourages her to seek a husband and a home. 'Wash and perfume yourself, and put on your best clothes', she advises her. Things have not changed very much, have they? She is advised to go down to the threshing floor to attract the attention of Boaz. Boaz behaves honourably and eventually they marry and Ruth has a son who is to become the grandfather of King David. In the Jewish tradition, as I am sure you are aware, descent is through the female line. If your mother is Jewish you are Jewish, even if your father is not, but if your father is Jewish and your mother is not, you are not yourself Jewish. So it is extraordinary to find that the great grandmother of David, the greatest king of Israel and the man who our teachings tell us represents the Lord's kingship or Divine Truth, was a foreigner, a Moabitess, although one who had embraced the religion of her mother-in-law.

At Christmas time we sing Nahum Tate's paraphrase of Luke in the carol 'While shepherds watched their flocks by night':

'To you in David's town this day
Is born of David's line
The Saviour who is Christ the Lord;...'

The town where David was born and where he was anointed king was Bethlehem, 'the House of Bread' in Hebrew. It was here that David's grandfather Obed was conceived and it was here that David was born. It was in Bethlehem that the Lord was born, as the prophets foretold. This was no accident of geography, for

Bethlehem, we are told, means in a deeper sense the dwelling-place of the Lord. Look beyond the geographical Bethlehem of today, a town sacred to Christians, inhabited by Arabs and occupied by Israelis and look at the spiritual meaning. Is your heart a Bethlehem of love and peace, or is it a place of conflict and strife?

Ruth came to Bethlehem as a migrant, as a refugee, we might say. She found shelter there and food and love and kindness. She was a Moabitess, a word that has adverse connotations correspondentially. Moabites are those who adulterate goods and falsify truths. But Ruth did no such thing. Naomi's God, the true God, became her God. She went into the field. We use the word field in much wider senses than the purely agricultural one. We talk, for instance, of 'fields of study' and magnetic fields. By correspondence a 'field' means the whole human race as to the reception of truth in good. We may not work in agriculture, as Ruth did, but we all have our own fields of endeavour. Do we work steadily in them as Ruth did in hers? First, she simply picked the grain left behind by the harvesters. She found little remnants of good and truth. But later, encouraged by Boaz, she takes a fuller part in the work of the harvest and gathers in whole sheaves. The harvest represents the state of the whole human race as to the reception of the truth of faith in good and the harvest of wheat represents an advancing state of love and charity. Do you harvest your field, or have you let it lie fallow?

If male figures like David represent truth, female ones represent love. The story of Ruth is the story of an affectionate woman who through love for her mother-in-law Naomi follows her into a foreign land. Here, starting from a menial position, she shows her affection in all that she does and eventually becomes the ancestress of David's line through her marriage to Boaz. The story is one of 'conjugal' or marriage love. Marriage love, we are taught, is the most fundamental of all loves because it is from the Lord's love towards the whole human race. The human race consists of both men and women. The Lord was born into this world as the child of a woman, Mary. There are only two women in the Bible who have a book named after them. Ruth is the first of these. She deserves to be remembered and honoured. We can do this by reading her book. If we study it carefully we can find lessons for our daily lives today. Ruth made her own journey to Bethlehem long ago. Here she brought forth fruit to the Lord. Let us make our own spiritual journey to Bethlehem next Christmas and bring forth our own fruits of the spirit.

Richard Lines

Google and the Bodleian Library

Users of the most popular web search engine, Google, can now search a rapidly increasing number of old books that are stored in the major libraries of the world. One such library is the Bodleian in Oxford. This library first opened to scholars in 1602. By 1849 there were over 220,000 books in the collection and by 1914 had reached 1 million. And the growth has continued at an enormous rate ever since.

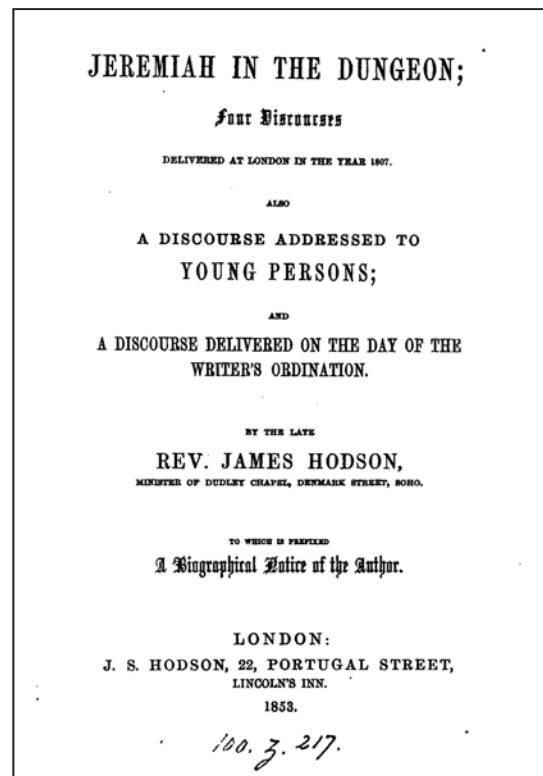
But a major change is now taking place with an agreement between Google and the Bodleian to digitize and make available on the internet more than 1 million of the library's printed books over a three year period.

But why, you may ask, should readers of Lifeline and New Church people generally have an interest in this development. Well the simple answer is that it is making available a vast range of books related to the New Church and its history and teaching that for the vast majority of people have not been available to read and consult.

Examples of what you can find include the following:

Early translations of the Writings, biographies of Swedenborg, commentaries by John Clowes and others, volumes of the Intellectual Repository, early Victorian magazine articles, sermons and much more.

Here is the front page of one such book, a series of sermons delivered by Rev James Hodson in the early 1800's and printed by his grandson in 1853.



Reflections on Immortality

The death of someone close to us touches us deeply and raises many questions and possibly some doubts in our mind. Doubts about our belief or even our unbelief. A good friend of mine who lives in the island of Mauritius told me recently that a relative of hers was sitting with a dying aunt and the Archbishop came to visit her. She asked the priest, "What happens when a person dies? What is it like on the other side?" He replied, "No one knows. It is a great Mystery." The 'Mystery' he was referring to is the confusion as to whether those who die awake soon after death, or whether they have to wait for some universal resurrection at the last day. Paul makes some references to this in 1 Corinthians 15:52 where he talks about the Last Day in which all shall rise..

This was apparently an old Jewish belief to which the sister of Lazarus referred when she was grieving for her brother:

Now Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he die, yet he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" John 11:21-26

A few days later, Jesus, nailed on the cross, responded to the dying thief, who was crucified next to him:

"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." Luke 23:42-43

Surely, a very clear affirmation of the immediate continuation of life! We also get quite a mind-blowing statement in the Gospel of Matthew 22:31-33 in which Jesus speaks to the crowd:

And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living. And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.

I trust, we are equally astonished by the implication of that saying: All those people we think of as dead are fully alive in God - now and for ever. He is not the God of the dead! So here we have three very clear statements which assure us that those we love do not die, but awake in the spiritual world. But are 3 statements enough? Perhaps 20 or 50 would convince us? If space permitted, we could turn to many more

than that, but so often, when we are thinking about this matter of human immortality, especially when someone we love dies, we seem to regard it purely as an academic question; something that needs a rational answer.

It can never be resolved just like that. We need to look at our experience. If you are a parent, or an auntie or uncle and you look at your children, nieces and nephews or grandchildren, your heart is filled with love. You would do anything to protect them from danger or harm and above all from death. You could never begin to explain or prove rationally what your feelings are, or why you have them, but they are real. You can't deny them. You would go to any length, make any sacrifice to save and protect your loved ones: donate your organs, even give your life. Nor is such behaviour particularly rational, but it is what you are, it is how you feel, how you love. Now take that overpowering feeling and remember that this is precisely what our Incarnate Lord came to do: he came to save us in times of dire need, and continues to do so:

I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. John 10:10

Our belief in the afterlife hinges far more on the way we love, than on some philosophical dissertation. Nothing is more real in our life than love. The Bible, if we wish to be reassured, is full of Divine promises, even descriptions, of the life which awaits us after death. The information is certainly not lacking! But our love which we have towards each other needs to be involved in our belief. Here is a passage from the New Church doctrines, in a fairly modern translation from the original Latin of Heaven and Hell 415:

When someone's body can no longer perform its functions in the natural world in response to the thoughts and affections of its spirit then we say that the person has died. This happens when the lung's breathing and the heart's beating have ceased. The person, however, has not died at all. We are only separated from the physical body that was useful to us in the world. The essential person is actually still alive.

The essential person is still alive since we are not human because of our physical bodies but because of our spirit. After all, it is the spirit within us that thinks, and thought from affection make us the people we are. It is clear then that when we die we simply pass from one world into another.

Isn't this what we instinctively feel in our hearts when a loved one dies? And are not the Lord's reassurances just what we need at such a time?

Rev Christopher Hasler

At Sea with God

At the beginning of March I found myself heading for Purley Chase for a Retreat Weekend led by Revs Mary Duckworth and Clifford Curry. I have to admit that being rather busy at the time, I wasn't sure I was fully committed to the idea of taking time out for quiet reflection and exploration. However once we set sail I began to get very excited about the journey we were embarking on.

With Clifford's skills as a seaman and Mary's gentle presence as our Skipper we were soon led to think about our journey and to prepare the cargo we would need for such a trip, and to let go of that which would weigh us down too much!. We discovered the varying emotions that could be felt aboard ship, as one minute you were being tossed around by the storms and the next sailed into calm, peaceful waters.

The wonderful symbolism of how our life's journey could be reflected in a journey aboard ship was really exciting, for me, as we considered the importance of taking the Lord with us on our journey. Sometimes we want to set out on our own – thinking we are strong enough and will be weak if we ask the Lord for His help. How untrue this is. On my own, I battle with the storms but if I call on the Lord for help, I will enter calmer waters (see *Psalm 107:23-32 / Matthew 14:22-33*). Oh how our ego can get in the way of a truly close relationship with God!

We learnt about the reasons we set out on journeys (e.g. *exploration, broaden our knowledge, to seek new ways*), what stops us setting sail (e.g. *fear, worry for those we leave behind, reluctance to venture into the unknown or maybe laziness*) and then we set sail. We considered the need for a map (*our spiritual map/Bible, which, like a mariner's map, reveals secrets hidden beneath the surface*).

We considered other tools we might need, such as a sextant, a compass and a chronometer. We pondered on the currents and tides, the dangers and perils and looked at solutions. Finally we considered the anchor - our faith. This is our connection to God. We need this when we want to stop and consider our position. We need this to give us the strength and courage to continue life's journey and in order to face the many perils that may challenge us. Where would we be without our anchor, but cast adrift in the ocean.

There is so much more I could tell you but I will stop there. This weekend was truly a voyage of discovery, and to that end I was inspired to write a poem, which I read out at the weekend and, to which, I leave you with now.



Christ in the Storm on the Sea of Galilee
Rembrandt 1633

Voyage of Discovery

- 1 As I leave the harbour
on my great adventure;
As I load my cargo,
whilst letting other things go.
- 2 Lord, keep me safe,
as I venture out onto the ocean wave.
Lord, be by my side,
as my protector and guide.
- 3 As I navigate the ocean,
with it's up and down motion;
As I wander here and there;
let me fee no fear.
- 4 Lord, let me feel Your presence;
let me know something of Your essence.
Lord, give me plenty of courage,
and let this be a bountiful voyage.

All that remains is to add my thanks to the Skipper (*Mary*), First Mate (?) (*Clifford*) and to my fellow crew mates for a wonderful weekend.

Gwendolen Rowe

Change of Address

Rev Rita Russell

13A Merrivale Avenue,
Southbourne, Bournemouth, BH6 3JP
01202461278.

187th Annual Meeting of the Missionary Society

The meeting was held at Kensington New Church on 14th March on a rather chilly, damp evening, but we were welcomed with an excellent high tea to put us in a positive mood. Less than twenty members turned up; not necessarily a good thing, but it was confirmation that the membership find public meetings difficult to support, and that the time had arrived for change in the organisation, which was to be the main subject of the business.

The meeting began in usual style, however, with the review of the past year, which had been quite active and successful. The Committee reported that three publications were in hand, Stephen Russell-Lacy's 'Heart, Head and Hands', a compendium of his successful Swedenborg Movement leaflets; a 'shorter' version of Swedenborg's Divine Providence and a book on David by Ian Johnson. Two issues of 'OUTLOOK' had been published, support given to 'festivals' and a special scheme to 'remainder' some of our stock launched. The Treasurer was able to report a record year for income, in spite of the world financial situation, and that the assets remained at about £200,000.

Thus it seems clear that the 'activity' of the Society is in good health, it is the 'organisation' that is the problem. With this question in mind we turned to previously circulated proposals to wind up the Society and transfer its assets into the trust of the General Conference of the New Church. This would be on the understanding that the activities, such as Seminar Books publications, OUTLOOK, and support for outreach work, could be carried on by a small sub-committee of Conference; initially the Society's Executive Committee. The proposals were discussed and passed by a large majority. They cannot take effect, however, until the Conference and the Charity Commission have agreed to them. Further proposals were therefore passed to enable the Executive and/or the Conference to maintain the activities of the Society in the interregnum.

At this point, the President, Gordon Kuphal, noted that, having put the house in order by taking these significant historic steps, he should offer some brief and well chosen words about the Society's history, and acknowledge our gratitude President Gordon to all who had, in past and present times, loyally carried on the work of the organisation (see end of article).

We were now able to turn our attention to our guest speaker, Helen Newton, the recently appointed Training and Development Officer of the General Conference. Helen expressed mixed feelings about addressing a body that had just decided to close, but suggested that it was nevertheless appropriate, as the tasks she had been given could do much to carry on the activities of the Society. She talked about new activities at Purley Chase which were specifically tailored to the needs of Outreach as well as the church's membership. She

would, each year, organise a series of workshops to be put on at our churches and elsewhere. In the past year seven societies had made use of a specially prepared labyrinth. In the coming year she would put on tour a series on 'symbolism', using special mirror cards and a take away book.

So, what it is hoped will be the last meeting of the Missionary Society closed on a happy and positive note.

**Reprinted from the
London and Southern Area Newsletter Inset**

Some historical notes by Gordon Kuphal

This is a historic moment. I'm sure we all feel regret that it has been necessary to take this step. It is appropriate to acknowledge the efforts of all the people over the past 187 years who have contributed to the work of the Society in seeking to spread knowledge of the Heavenly Doctrines.

Just for a moment I would like to dip into the past. While I was working in the archives at Swedenborg House last week, I looked for the boxes containing the papers relating to the Missionary Society. The oldest item I could find was the 26th Annual Report of the Missionary and Tract Society of the New Jerusalem Church, which was presented to the Annual Meeting in 1847.

It was held on Wednesday 12th May at the Church in Argyle Square. In the school-room at half past five "ninety ladies and gentlemen partook of tea and coffee. The company afterwards adjourned to the Church, where the number ultimately amounted to more than one hundred and sixty. At seven o'clock the Rev T C Shaw was called to the chair".

The main part of the Report concerned activities around the country, including Exeter, Brightlingsea, Norwich, Chatham and Maidstone, and many other places, although mainly in the South of England. Quite a few of the places assisted were already Societies associated with the General Conference of the New Church. The Missionary Society supported many lecture courses.

As far as finance was concerned, the total expenditure for the year was £200-15s- 1d, of which £ 100- 1s-8d was for printing. So the printing of tracts was important in the Society's work.

But I don't want to loiter in the past, or shorten the time available to our speaker. I prefer to turn to the future. We wish the Conference well in its trusteeship of the Missionary Society funds and hope that they will find good and productive ways of using them.

Wisdom

Wisdom once was a universally admired quality. In the present world this has changed especially in the “developed” Western world where there is an ambivalence about it. In the world of commerce and government where the emphasis is on materialism, knowledge, competitive performance, efficiency and results, wisdom tends to be dismissed. But at the same time amongst the public there is a demand for books of the collected wisdom from different cultures.

For Swedenborg wisdom cannot be found in a book. It is not a collection of ideas but, along with love, it is an essential of a truly human life. He explains that everyone is born with two receptacles to receive life from God, the will and the understanding. The will receives love and the understanding wisdom. They are completely interdependent. Love is dependent on the quality of its wisdom and vice versa. Their relationship is like that of the heat and light of a flame.

It is this association of heat with love and light with wisdom that is the origin of the use of heat and light in many sacred scriptures.

As part of the gift of life we are given free will and an ability to reason. So we have a choice about the kind of love we have and whether or not we become wise.

To be truly wise a person loves God and their neighbour and therefore they love what is good and true because it is good and true. A person who has no such love but only loves the self and world may be theologically knowledgeable and intellectually clever but will never be spiritually wise because he has no desire for genuine wisdom. Neither will a person who dismisses spiritual things and relies solely on worldly and natural ideas because spiritual wisdom is based on spiritual concepts and awareness. People such as these may be “wise” in the eyes of the world but they cannot be truly wise.

In ancient cultures wisdom was often associated with not only spirituality but also old age because people only reach their potential by making a spiritual journey. They move from a self-centred love to a God centred and unselfish love. This takes a lifetime so true wisdom became associated with age.

A wise person develops many qualities, such as, a love for what is good and true, humility, integrity, compassion, empathy, honesty, justice, and innocence. Throughout the history of every culture and religion these are the qualities that have been recognised in people who are wise. This does not mean that they become naïve. As Jesus succinctly put it, “Be as wise as serpents but as innocent as doves”



It is encouraging to read of a few people such as Charles Handy in his book “The Hungry Spirit” stating that such qualities are essential in the modern Western world and no business or political party can continue to function for long if they ignore or dismiss them.

Here are three quotes on wisdom:

It is obvious from actual experience that love generates warmth and wisdom generates light. When we feel love, we become warmer, and when we think from wisdom, it is like seeing things in the light. We can see from this that the first thing that emanates from love is warmth and that the first thing that emanates from wisdom is light.

Emanuel Swedenborg in Divine Love and Wisdom 95

Wisdom is not a product of schooling but of the lifelong attempt to acquire it. Albert Einstein

Wisdom ceases to be wisdom when it becomes too proud to weep, too grave to laugh, and too selfish to seek other than itself. Kahlil Gibran

From www.spiritualwisdom.org.uk

It is with sadness that we record the passing into the spiritual world of Mabel McCallum. The funeral was held on 31st March at the New Chapel at Manchester South Cemetery. A Memorial Notice will appear in a future issue of Lifeline.

Notices

Annual Meeting of the New Church College

The Annual Meeting will be held at The College on Saturday, 5th July 2008

Drinks will be served from 10.30 for an 11.00 start. The main feature of the day will be presentations by the 4 ordination students on the theme of 'The Church in the World' and there will, of course, be an opportunity for you to meet the students. In addition, the programme will include the Annual Meeting and a closing service. The programme will finish at 15.00 but you are welcome to remain afterwards to talk with people or use the Library.

Lunch will be provided; a donation towards its cost will be welcomed.

The College is in an exciting period of development and we would like to invite you, whether a Governor or not, to join us on 5th July.

If you are able to attend, it would be helpful if you would contact:

David Haseler
Secretary

0121 440 8070
david.haseler@generalconference.org.uk

A Job Opportunity with the Swedenborg Society

The Swedenborg Society is seeking to recruit a new member of staff on a part-time basis to help with book-packing, shop supervision and other tasks, including assisting with the compilation of an on-line Library catalogue. No previous experience is necessary, but enthusiasm, adaptability and the ability to work flexibly as a member of a small team are essential. An interest in Swedenborg and his writings would be an advantage. Salary and hours are negotiable. The Society is looking to fill this vacancy in about July/August 2008.

If you are interested, please contact **Richard Lines** at the Society.

The Swedenborg Society
20/21 Bloomsbury Way
London WC1A 2TH
Tel. 020 7405 7986
e-mail: richard@swedenborg.org.uk

Lifeline

Contributions should be sent to the Editor, Alan C Misson
27 Woodland Way, Shirley, Croydon, CR0 7UB Tel: 020 8777 5098 Email: alanmisson@btinternet.com

Lifeline is published on the 2nd Sunday of the month (except in Jan and July) by the General Conference of the New Church. Articles and notices should reach the editor by the end of the second week of the month prior to publication.

Subscriptions to be sent to the Business Manager, Ian D McCallum
65 Heaton Road, Stockport, Cheshire, SK4 4JJ Tel: 0161 432 5362

Price per copy £1.25 United Kingdom £17.50
Overseas Seemail £22.25 Worldwide Airmail £29.75

ISSN 0308-3624

For the current issue of Lifeline,
back issues and other resources visit:

www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk