



Jew and Gentile

Please read Mark 7

If I asked you whether you were Jew or Gentile you might answer or you might think I had gone a little crazy! And yet by the end of this article you may wish to ask yourselves the same question.

In the gospels we frequently read about Jesus' discussions with both Jew and Gentile. Often he gets involved with Pharisees or Saducees and points out their shortcomings. At other times he converses with gentiles, for example the woman at the well in Samaria. Why do the gospels recount these stories of Jesus' reactions to both Jew and Gentile and what possible meaning does it have for us and our lives? To begin to answer this question I invite you to think about what Mark's gospel has to say on the subject.



Mark chapter 7 could really be entitled 'Jew and Gentile' as it is made up of two accounts of Jesus berating the Pharisees, followed by a brief aside to the crowd and his disciples, and then two further accounts, this time of Jesus healing gentiles. It is a chapter of great contrasts, full of ideas to think about, and of great importance in our day to day living.

"You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men." Mark 7:8

Ceremony was at the heart of the Jewish religious life. And holiness was thought to exist in just carrying out the required ceremonies whether at the temple or at home. You can see how this had come about.

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**Where was
 this
 Christmas
 Tree?**

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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**

Right back when the children of Israel had been led by Moses out of Egypt they had been given all sorts of laws to guide the way that they should approach God. Central to much of the ceremony was ritual cleansing, a symbolic action that we continue to repeat in baptism. But it is all too easy to forget that ceremony has a deeper representation and to concentrate excessively on getting the outward act correct - and then insisting that others should do it exactly the same. The symbolism and deeper meaning slowly disappears and you are left with an outward ceremony that has no heart to it.

So we can see how the Jewish people, led by increasingly dogmatic leaders came to the state described in the gospel, where outward show and tradition was everything. Their ceremony was a hollow sham, devoid of the love that should have been at the centre of their religious life.

Does this strike a chord with you?

Do we pay too much attention to the outward show of our Christianity, to what we do on Sundays, to the style of our Worship and what we wear? Are we in danger of believing that religion is about ceremony rather than about bringing Jesus' love to others. It is a sobering thought!

"What comes out of a person is what defiles him."
Mark 7:20

Are you sometimes fearful of the evil that we daily read about in our newspapers or see on the TV screens or maybe witness ourselves? Are you frightened that the rising tide of crime, fuelled by drug taking, will have an impact on your own life. The sad fact is that we are all likely to suffer physically from the effects of crime. A mugging, a burglary, a stolen car, damaged property can happen to us all, any time.

But this part of Mark's gospel is not about the physical effects of evil, it is about the spiritual effects of evil. What is more dangerous to our spiritual health?

Is it what we might take in from others or is it what we might bring out from ourselves?

Jesus makes it clear in his conversation with the disciples that it is what we bring out of ourselves that makes us *'unclean'*. We are not going to be contaminated by other people but we are going to be seriously damaged by the selfish thoughts and ambitions that we *'bring out'* and put into action in our lives. We can become totally controlled and overwhelmed by the selfish love in our hearts.

Once again Jesus is pointing out the futility of believing that religion is about what is on the outside, when it is really about what is on the inside. What is in our hearts is what counts, because that is what will inevitably come to the surface in our day to day living.

And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." Mark 7:34

We have now moved away from the Jewish world to the Gentile world on the east of the Sea of Galilee. In this last part of Mark 7 Jesus performs a healing miracle on a man who was deaf and who could hardly talk. Was this man actually dumb or was it simply that being deaf he had been unable to learn to speak? The man was deaf, he could not hear Jesus. Do we fail to hear Jesus? Are we *'deaf'* to his words? Jesus tells us to *"love one another"*. But do we really *'hear'* him? Do we obey his command and put loving others as a high priority in life?

The man could hardly talk. Do we express love in our lives in clear and easily understood ways? Or are our expressions of love weak and barely felt by others. If so we need to be healed. We need to find the way to hear and obey. And it is only Jesus that can open us up and makes us effective channels of his love in the world.

Mark 7 pictures a stark contrast between the world of the traditional Jew and the world of the Gentile. On the one hand we have a world of faith and tradition but where there is a danger of the religious life becoming hollow and devoid of love. And on the other hand we have the Gentile world, the world outside of faith and tradition, where Jesus is not being heard.

Let's try to see this as it applies to us. To ask, as it were, whether we are Jew or Gentile? Our lives can be seen in two parts. There is the part of our lives which is, superficially at least, religious and there is the other part which does not seem to be touched by our faith.

Our religious life has brought us to read this article. But is our religion only external? Is it hollow and without love at its heart? This is the challenge that Jesus brings to us - to examine where our faith touches our lives and to see whether the impact is more than skin deep. Do we care too much for ceremony and tradition rather than the life of religion, which is to do good?

And there is the other part of our lives, which seemingly our faith never reaches. The day to day practical aspects of living which although they can be quite demanding are rarely enlightened by faith and love. We make all sorts of decisions week in and week out but do we make these decisions in the light of love for others or do we fail to hear Jesus speaking.

We need to be healed in both these parts of our lives.

Where our faith is superficial and we only go through the motions, we need to be healed so that our religion becomes true and centered on love not tradition. And where our faith does not seem to be important to daily living we need to be healed so that we can hear the words of Jesus and express them in that part of our life also.

"All religion has relation to life and the life of religion is to do good"

Alan Misson

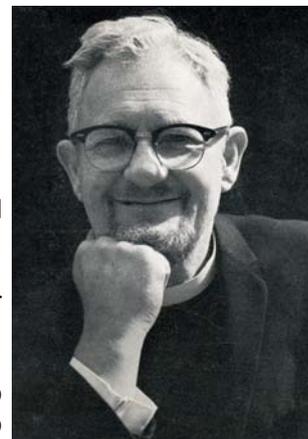
See Footnote on page 3 opposite.

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

12. Our Varying Moods

READ Exodus 17: 8-15

In order to preserve our free will, the Lord has placed us in equilibrium between heaven and hell. Angels are with us on the one side, and evil spirits on the other, and we swing backwards and forwards, experiencing varying moods or emotional states, good and bad. From these we learn what we really want to be, and so our true self emerges, grows and develops. It is like a father teaching his child to swim. He lowers him into the water, leaving him to thrash around on his own till he cries out that he is drowning; then he under girds him with his strong hands, and gently raises him up till he is ready to be dipped again. Compare also Moses lowering and raising his arms at Rephidim, enabling the Amalekites to advance and retreat till the Israelites had discovered their strength.

PRAYER

Dear Father, whose loving Providence is over all the events of our lives, I thank You for light and for darkness, for my successes and my failures, for good and for evil, in so far as they both provide me with opportunities for growth. Help me to exercise my free will wisely in the areas in which I am free, and may my earnest prayers and supplications sustain Your arms, as Aaron and Hur upheld the arms of Moses on the mount, until the victory is won.

Footnote to Jew and Gentile

In the article on pages 1 and 2 I have used the terms Jew and Gentile to describe in shorthand form the sort of people Jesus regularly came up against and I have then used the same terms to help us reflect on our own nature. Using the term 'Jew' as shorthand or as a 'tag' to mean the type of person at Jesus' time "*where outward show and tradition was everything*" or as a description of the state of the Jewish church at that time seems acceptable to me in this sort of article but we have to be careful in using such terms because they can be easily misunderstood. Even as recently as the Channel 4 programme 'Christianity: A History' on Sunday 11th January 2009 the question was asked as to whether John's Gospel was anti-Semitic. And it is possible to ask the same question about Swedenborg's references to Jews in the Writings.

Writing these comments led me on to another thought.

Frequently in the Writings Swedenborg refers to groups of people in the spiritual world and what they are like.

For example at the back of True Christian Religion in the Supplement there are many paragraphs describing the state of groups like the Dutch, British, Germans, Roman Catholics, Mohammedans, Africans, and Jews.

Now this has puzzled me for some time because I had understood that our 'place' in the spiritual world is determined by the nature of our ruling love and 'communities' in the spiritual world arise from people having similar ruling loves. Surely it cannot be that race, creed or geography has an effect on our 'place' in the spiritual world so how can Swedenborg talk, for example, of the Jews in the spiritual world.

Perhaps the answer is that he is simply using the term Jew or African or Dutch as a 'tag' to denote a particular spiritual state arising from a type of ruling love and he does not mean a nation, a country or some other physical world based grouping.

What do you think?

Alan Misson

Creatures of habit?

Breaking old or bad habits and developing new and good ones is a fascinating area to explore. But what makes it even more important still is that the subject of habits has a lot of very useful parallels with our spiritual life, our regeneration, and the whole basic question of changing and being changed. We're told, for example, that the first essential step in doing good is simply to not do what is evil or wrong. We are to shun (notice the power in that word!) a particular attitude, tendency, habit or response that we have identified somewhere in our life, and turn away from it because it is a sin, a sin against God. And "sin" means missing the mark and being out of line.

Did I say simple? There is no habit that is simple to break or kick. We know very well that just to set our mind against some form of selfishness or some negative attitude will not make it disappear overnight. The feeling or the thought itself, as we know only too well, will come back at us soon enough with a renewed intensity. This is something which we know is very similar to the situation of purely physical habits and those even deeper addictions. Take the example of smoking. It is precisely when the smoker is without a cigarette (or a match) that he will crave one the most. And in recovery programs for various addictions it is the first few days that are the danger times and there are all kinds of techniques to help the person over this hard initial period, to counter the craving.

There are parallels to this on the spiritual level. On this level we correctly talk about the pattern of deepening temptations which need to be faced as we go through the hard work of our regeneration and rebirth. We learn about the way in which hell renews its intensity in the effort to undermine a person's new commitment to the Lord, with subtle suggestions. And we know that the actual path of regeneration inevitably leads us further on in time to confront even more states which need to be dealt with. And so on. Can we, then, never kick the habit of wrong-feeling and wrong-thinking and wrong-doing once and for all?

In one sense, no we can't. Life - and spiritual life - is not as cut-and-dried as that, and the wish to be finally clear of "wrongness" (or missing the mark 'sin') is itself misplaced. We shall always need to watch carefully for the ways in which our unregenerate states will keep resurfacing and reappearing. In new forms too. Just like that smoker who finds that his craving can suddenly reappear virulently even years after he gave up the habit, and in an instant he could weaken and tell himself, *"Just the one. It won't really matter. And anyway, I deserve it after all this time!"*

But if this prospect makes you feel rather despondent, take heart, because there is another and more positive side to our habits. Forget, for the moment, those strong drug-based areas of addiction and start to think about



some of the much more mundane things like wiping dirty shoes and putting on your seat-belt as soon as you get into the car. How many times do you need to deliberately remind yourself to wipe your feet on the doormat or take them off or click that seat-belt before it becomes a thing of new habit, and so becomes routine for you? Actually, three, four, five times is usually all it takes us!

Now, if that is indeed the case, we can begin to apply this to some of those inner situations that we would dearly love to change and handle better. There is this following statement in our teachings, from the Doctrine of Life 41:

"When anyone has shunned an evil as a sin several times, then there appears to him only the good that he is doing, and they (that is, the shunning of evil and the doing of good) are with him together."

That powerful statement, for me, is really speaking about the positive and possible side of forming new habits. To practise it makes it become part and parcel of our life. And if that is so, then the implications are simply enormous. To dwell on the difficulties of making any spiritual progress (as we tend to do) may in fact be playing right into the hands of various evil spirits who really love it when we start talking about things getting worse or harder (which we often do). Their excitement is to sow anything to prevent us from believing that it is possible to change and break the habits of the past!

You see, the only real effective way to kick anything is to kick it, whether it's physical or spiritual. To get on with it, and perhaps not even say that you are starting but now doing it. Cured smokers are often encouraged to say 'I am a non-smoker' rather than think they have given up.

It is realistic - it is possible - to grow into new habits which can then become a real part of the new us. And

to think about the Lord's will for us and His power to help us is at the centre of achieving the change.

If you have found yourself dwelling too much, too often, on making too little progress, then I invite you to have a look through the following helpful quotations from our teachings on the theme of 'habit-forming':

"When a person frequently does what is true, it then not only recurs from habit but also from affection and thereby from freedom."

Arcana Caelestia 4884

"When knowledges in a person's memory become part of the person's life, they vanish out of the conscious memory, and, by continual use or habit they become as it were spontaneous and natural." AC 9394

And read Heaven and Hell paragraph 533.

Let's break the habit of not believing it can ever happen!

Rev Julian Duckworth

A Christmas Tree Festival at West Wickham

Way back in early 2008 Rev Gillian Gordon, Minister for London, surprised us all at West Wickham by saying that she thought we ought to hold a Christmas Tree Festival. Each year on the first Friday in December the town of West Wickham holds a street party when all the shops are open later than usual and other activities take place on the high street. For some years we have opened the church on the same evening to welcome people to come in and look around - but with little success. Gill's idea was to have a Christmas Tree Festival on the same night and use that to attract passers-by. What she envisaged was that all the different groups that used our hall would decorate a tree and they could then be grouped together in some way to make an attractive display.

Of course our immediate reaction was one of shock when we thought about how much hard work would be involved and our disbelief that we could put on a show that people would want to come and see. Well history proved Gill right and us wrong as the Christmas Tree Festival turned out to be one of the most successful events we have ever put on.

Through a lot of hard work by Gill and our secretaries, David and Elisabeth Brooks, most of the hall users were persuaded to spend time decorating trees that the church had bought in a style that related to their activity.



There were trees by groups for Yoga, Pilates, Adult Tap Classes, Footloose Dancing School, Tai Chi, Caterpillar Music and Circle Dancing. Added to these 7 were one for our Open Door Wednesday coffee morning, another for West Wickham New Church and a final one for the New Church in London. This made 10 trees in total!

All the trees were placed in the church or the church lounge together with our usual tree and many decorations and together they made a wonderful scene. Then we waited to see what would happen during the street party.

Over the course of four hours around 40 people came in who were either known to us or were relatives of people known to us. But on top of this another 80 or so people came in who were completely new visitors. There were lots of children and parents and grandparents and we all worked hard to show them around and serve what seemed like endless amounts of coffee, sausage rolls and mince pies.

So thank you Gill for pushing us hard and for having the faith that a Christmas Tree Festival could be such a successful event.

Alan Misson



United Search for Divine Providence

Session 4



There are laws of the Divine Providence, and these are unknown to men.

The 5 Laws of Divine Providence (DP 70-99)

In this session we shall examine the first of these 5 major laws in 8 subsections. It may come as a surprise that the Lord should be acting according to laws. But when we look around us, we realise that nature functions according to laws, otherwise only chaos would reign. These laws are in fact our security and maintain order.

1 That man should act from freedom according to reason. (DP 70-73)

Our Creator maintains within us the freedom to wish and to think as we like. He also gives us rationality that we may learn to exercise our freedom sensibly. Our individual liberty is the key to our life and the Lord guards it as the pupil of His eye. See Deuteronomy 32:10, Psalm 17:8. This is the main key to understanding our personality. But this freedom comes at a price, since we can't blame others for what we do. We are responsible for all the choices we make and the Lord does not step in to stop us doing something foolish or evil, or we would never learn right from wrong. The Lord constantly 'provides' (the root word in 'Providence') that we should be in an equilibrium between good and evil, but He does not interfere in our decisions. Hard on us? But that is what makes us 'human' – we have spiritual freedom, whatever we make of it.

2 What we do in freedom and with reason appears to be our very own. (DP 74-77)

This section opens with a fascinating revelation comparing animals with humans. Animals have no rational thought, but they have 'knowledge' sufficient for survival and procreation which we usually call instinct. They have no concept of time, especially of the future. To endow them with human thought is to misunderstand them. (74) We are very different and it is worth spending some time in realising the wonder of our 'human' capacities: abstract thought, concept of time - past and future - and the wide choices we have. (75) The great wonder is that we feel that these thoughts are our very own, but unless we felt this we would have no joy or pleasure in any knowledge. What an insight into our psyche! The 20th Century produced many psychiatric schools of thought, but when they dismiss the hand of God in creation, and deny man's immortality, then they

are missing the key to understanding the purpose of human existence.

3 Whatever we do in freedom appears to be our very own. (DP78-81)

Who has ever had such a deep insight into the human mind? What we do or receive in freedom becomes a part of us. However, whatever we are forced to do under compulsion is not appropriated. What a relief! Millions are forced to conform and do most horrible things or have to submit to them. Yet none of these becomes a part of their inner personality. They are discarded as muddy garments. Divine justice is full of love - cherish this magnificent truth! Read Matthew 5:27-30, Revelation 3:1-6.

4 We are regenerated by means of our liberty and rationality. (DP82-86)

So few understand what is meant by being born again or regenerated. Most assume that God in His mercy forgives our past and we are 'saved'. It is not quite so simple! Why? Because unless we want to be different, the Lord will not impose anything on us because He will never interfere with our free will. We are all born into many evil inclinations inherited from our ancestors and we have to put these evils behind us. The Lord cannot wipe the slate clean without our consent! Read Genesis 6-9 the story of the Flood. Our own roots go back to that correspondential story. It is still with us.

5 Our reason teaches that anything good and true can only come from the Lord and not from ourselves. (DP87-91)

A simple question: Where does our power to see, hear or speak come from? From our eyes or brain? No, this ability comes from the Lord's Love and Wisdom. It is as simple as that. Read esp. 88 and also Mark 4:26-34. We only reap the harvest of love!

6 How conjunction with the Lord comes about. (DP92-95)

The Lord said, "Abide in me, and I in you." John 15:4 This is not a conditional love on His part. He is always abiding in us otherwise we would not be! Take note of this in 91:2: "Love wills to be loved: this is inherent in it; and so far as love is loved in return it is in its own delight." John 15:10-11: have you ever dared to think that when we love the Lord - His love is delighted? Yet this is our experience in all our relationships, so why leave the Lord out?

7 The Lord regards our freedom and rationality as sacred. (DP96)

This is because our whole life and personality depend on these two human faculties which differentiate us from animals. Without them we would not be human nor have immortal life. It is as simple as that! Read Genesis 2:1-7

8 It is of Providence that man should act freely and rationally. (DP97-99)

This summarises the whole section, but mentions that 'infernal freedom' is not really freedom, but only slavery, and its reasoning is false. But since it is the person's choice, it is of Providence that those who choose such a life have a right to live it. Interesting insight into the mentality of atheists in 99: they can still understand angelic wisdom when in the company of angels, but this is discarded when they return into their own environment. So beware what company you keep here on earth!

Key passages

Because this Session occupies just 29 paragraphs and is divided into 8 short sections, perhaps you can read all the paragraphs during this month. Read just one section at a time and think about it for a day or two before going on.

Prayer and Reflections

Each section in this lesson speaks directly to the heart, so it is suitable for quiet, wordless meditation as we take in, with a sense of awe, the realisation how close the Lord is to us. Yet He always respects our freedom, even when we sometimes turn away from Him. Meditate also on your inner freedom and rationality and see how you use them without ever abusing them.

Christopher Hasler

This session is part of a complete course being published in Lifeline for use by individuals and groups. It is also available online as a leaflet which can be downloaded and easily printed.

To find out more go to: www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk

Click on Resources and then United Search for Divine Providence. You will find an Introduction and Invitation to the course and the Session notes as they become available.

Don't throw your life away and get a new one.

We had a wonderful new weighing machine - made in China. Unfortunately we turned the knob on top just a little too far and it came adrift - useless!

Now the Chinese are brilliant when it comes to inventing machines that are as inscrutable as themselves, and, so far as I could see, there was no obvious way into this device. However, I was determined not to be beaten. On closer inspection I finally discovered a very small screw, which, with any luck, might just admit to the secret interiors of this arcane contraption. Even then, only by the administration of a little brute force did the thing finally reveal, with great reluctance, its mysterious inner workings. After some major surgery on the springs and screws within, it remained only for the outer shell, by virtue of yet another monumental battle of wits, to be painfully re-assembled. Then, triumphant, it was again fully operational.

But, of course, you are really not supposed to do this sort of thing, these days: it simply isn't fair-play. You are intended to discard anything that doesn't work, and buy another one.

It is the same with the human mind. As Jesus so rightly pointed out, in order to enter the kingdom of heaven we could be '*born again*'. When we find we are getting a distorted reading of the situation, and life starts to lose its purpose, something needs to be done.

But I don't think Jesus meant that we should abandon everything and start again. It would, after all, be very wasteful to throw away one's whole worldly experience when all that's required is a repair job - no need to throw away the whole box of tricks. The problem, of course, is how to get at the works: spiritual innards are not easily accessible. There are motives within motives, and the secret mental grub-screw that unlocks the psyche may be hard to find.

'The internal mind is called spiritual because it is in the light of heaven.'
True Christian Religion 401:3

G Roland Smith

Getting and Spending

The following is a reprint of an article in the February 1979 issue of Lifeline. It is an address by the late Fred Nicholls to the London Women's League on their Gift Day in December 1978 in the typical light-hearted but also serious style that Fred made his own. At the time Fred was, amongst other things, Treasurer of the Swedenborg Society. It seems particularly relevant in our current economic climate. Editor

As many of you know, I look after quite a lot of other people's money, so it will not surprise you that I read the Financial Times every day. My wife only reads the Financial Times on Saturdays - that's the day when they have a page headed "How to Spend It". In these days of the overdraft, hire purchase and the credit card, it is quite easy (perhaps too easy) to spend it before you get it, but personally I regard it as more logical to think about getting it before deciding how to spend it.

The pound in your pocket or hand-bag or bank account can be (in the eyes of the tax inspector) earned or unearned: they may be salary, wages, pension, dividend or capital gain, they could be a legacy or a win on the pools: they may even have been stolen from someone else's hand-bag or have fallen off the back of a lorry.

Probably man has never lived by bread alone, but it comes in rather useful if you don't want to starve. Before the world became too complicated, the best thing to do if you got hungry was to go out hunting. Nowadays, you can always try hunting for a rich husband, but since there are not enough to go round, it might be as well to think of other ways of earning a living.

Probably most of us are among those who offer their labour in an office, shop, farm or factory, and leave the boss to worry whether the product or service he is selling is sufficiently profitable to enable him to pay our salary. The more independent-minded may wish to set up their own business, probably starting in quite a small way, such as selling roast chestnuts, then branching out into peanuts, hazel nuts and even nut cutlets, before taking over Cashews Consolidated, and finishing up as the International Nuts and Bolts Corporation Ltd., with a skyscraper office, a flat in town and a country cottage known as "The Nut-house".

Others who go it alone are artists and musicians. These have the problem of persuading the customer to pay for the pot of paint they throw in the face of the public, or of persuading them to pay to listen to the sort of sounds they like to make. If you make the sort of sounds which reach the Top Twenty, you may well become very rich indeed, which only goes to show that there ain't no justice.

Professional people also tend to be self-employed. If you have a knowledge of the law, accountancy; dentistry or taking corns out of elderly feet, it will probably pay you quite handsomely to put a brass plate outside your door and wait for the great British public to come hobbling.

Give or take a few millions, that just about covers the working population, leaving only those who are too young, too old or too ill to work, and, of course the Civil Service, who don't know the meaning of work! Most civilized countries now provide old age pensions, sickness benefit, child allowances etc., and some are much too generous to those who go on strike. On the other hand, most civilized countries try to stop the criminal fraternity from becoming too prosperous; but despite the efforts of Starsky and Hutch and the Sweeney, quite a lot of burglars, bandits, smugglers, pickpockets, pirates, pimps and prostitutes manage to stash away quite a load of loot in their Swiss bank accounts.

So one way or the other, legally or illegally, earned or unearned, most of us in the civilized world get together a few pounds to spend. But before considering the various ways of disposing of it, let us leave it on deposit for a few minutes, while we search our consciences on the way we acquired it.

Obviously, nobody here would be happy to be in possession of money acquired illegally or money won by gambling. Probably none of us would want to earn our living in a betting shop or a clip joint. But is our conscience always clear about the way we do earn our living? Do we always do a full day's work for a fair day's wage? In the office, are we always hard at it from 9 to 5; or do we sometimes waste the boss's time by arriving late, chatting to our friends, making private phone calls, taking long lunch hours, or snatching forty winks in the afternoons? If you are a shop-keeper, do you ever fix a price which is higher than it should be? If you work in a factory, do you ever rush a delicate process, or forget a vital screw? Do you happen to know any builders who use breeze blocks when they should be using bricks? Have you ever come across a painter who puts on one coat of paint and charges for two? Do we ever give short change, short measure, or shorter working hours? Such things would never occur to you or me; in fact, I don't know why I am asking you so many awkward questions. Let us press on and start spending those hard-won, well-earned, honest pounds in your purse.

Many people think that the big decision for them to make is whether to spend or save; whether to go on a shopping spree or leave it in the bank. But it is not quite as easy as that. The economist will distinguish various ways in which you can spend your money; in fact, if you spend it in certain ways you are really saving. To the economist the real distinction is between saving and consuming. And certainly saving is not a simple matter. If you keep your golden sovereigns in the old oak chest,

or your five pound notes under the mattress, you are just hoarding and doing nobody any good. But if you invest your savings wisely (or let your wise investment manager do it for you) you can be adding to the country's resources and the general prosperity.

Let us look at a few examples. If you spend your money on mince pies and eat them, both they and the money are gone or consumed. Similarly, if you switch on the electric fire and burn a few units of electricity, that too is gone or consumed. But if you buy yourself a sewing machine, the money may be gone but you have a lasting asset which will enable you to produce numerous coats, dresses and what used to be called "unmentionables" over the years ahead. Again, if you use the electricity to provide power in your factory or printing works, the electricity may be gone, but you will have added to your assets by producing numerous nuts and bolts, or left-handed screwdrivers, or books by Swedenborg, or copes and cassocks. If you "spend" your money in this way, it is not gone for ever, but is invested or used to produce something else.

I am not, of course, trying to imply that consuming is always bad and investing is always good. Some at least of your money must be used for consumption. After all, we all need food and clothes and shelter, and it is our first duty to provide these for ourselves and our families, so that we do not become a burden to other people or the state. In the case of the very poor, there will be nothing left after providing for the necessities of life, but many of us will have at least a few tattered pound notes remaining, which we can spend as we like. These can be used in at least four different ways: first, for more consumption, e.g. luxury foods, alcoholic drink or a flutter on the pools; secondly for articles of a more lasting nature; thirdly, for investment; and finally for giving away as presents or as charitable donations.

Increased consumption is supposed to be good for trade, and I don't suppose I am the only one who enjoys consuming modest quantities of luxury food and drink. However, my conscience would undoubtedly start to worry me if I were to enjoy an unduly high standard of living, when there are so many people much worse off than I am. Another way to consume your spare cash is on recreation - sports, theatre visits, outings and holidays - all of which are very necessary, but again in moderation.

More lasting value for money can be obtained in the field of consumer durables - such items as refrigerators, washing machines and television sets - all of which will continue to give pleasure or useful service for many years. Under this heading also we could include pictures, jewellery, plants for the garden and grandma's rocking chair.

Investments involve giving up the use of your money for a time in return for a rate of interest or capital appreciation, or possibly (if you are very clever, or very lucky) both. If you put your money on deposit at the bank, the bank will lend it to someone else, perhaps to help build a warehouse, or stock a farm or finance an export scheme. If you put money in a building society, it

will enable someone else to borrow it on mortgage in order to buy a house. If you put it in National Savings or Government stocks, the government will do all sorts of peculiar things with it, and will pay you back in 10 or 20 years in smaller pound notes than you paid in. If you buy shares or property, you may be helping to finance a factory and provide more jobs; you may make your fortune in the process, or you may lose the lot.

Finally, you can give some of your money away. This will fool the economists, who are mercenary, worldly people, who never take account of such quixotic generosity when formulating their econometric models. But don't let that worry you. Economists are also resourceful gentlemen, who will happily and unblushingly produce new figures and new theories when the old ones are shown not to work.

Christmas is the time of the year when all this comes to a head, and as I write, there are now only 13 shopping days to Christmas. Many people save during the year in order to have more to spend at Christmas, and all the newspapers, magazines and advertisers are only too happy to tell them what to spend it on. To the big department stores and the small boutiques the Christmas trade is vital, and something like 70% of the wine and spirits consumed in this country are in fact sold in the few weeks prior to Christmas.

Apart from over-indulging ourselves and our friends, there is a healthy tradition at Christmas of giving to charity, and the charity organizers are well aware of this. My own count this year is eleven appeals through the post, five Christmas catalogues, and at least a dozen invitations to Christmas fairs, fetes, sales of work, mini-markets and assorted bun-fights. This is apart from all the advertised appeals in the Saturday papers, the broadcast appeals on the radio and television and a forecast (based on last year) of about 27 visits from various bands of carol singers. As usual, I bought my Christmas cards at the Royal Exchange, where between 50 and 60 different charities are displaying and selling their wares. There is no lack of good causes willing and anxious to benefit from your largesse.

Today, of course, is the Women's League Gift Day, a charity less well-known and less vociferous than many of the high-pressure groups I have just mentioned. But in its quiet way (and the emphasis is on anonymity and discretion) the Women's League helps a number of elderly people, by giving them a little extra to spend. These are (so far as I, or any other outsider, knows) modest people, living on modest pensions, who would otherwise have nothing to spare after meeting their modest food and fuel bills. The little extra that the Women's League grants provide, enables them to be a little bit warmer or better fed, or to have an occasional outing, or to give a few modest Christmas presents.

"Getting and Spending". It was the poet, Wordsworth, who put these two words together in one of his odd odes. You probably remember how it starts:-

(Continued on page 10)

*The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!*

Wordsworth is not one of my favourite poets, and that very wet, very misty, very bleak area known as the Lake District is not one of my favourite haunts. It was a recurring theme of Wordsworth that the world is too much with us, and that we should get away from it all and back to the simple delights of nature. This is fine for Wordsworth and a few other drop-outs in who pretend they don't want the benefits of civilization. But we can't all live in picturesque lakeland cottages, contemplating hosts of dancing daffodils, and worrying about the lack of indoor plumbing.

I agree that the world is too much with us, but I don't want to run away from it. Many of us have to live and work in the big cities, earning our living in dingy factories and soulless offices, but we can still have our religion and ideals with us. It is no good complaining about living in a semi in the suburbs, or serving in a small shop in a side street, or commuting in a crowded cattle truck. We must live life as it comes, and try to make sure that we do not surrender our beliefs, and the good example and good deeds which must flow from those beliefs. Getting and spending are essential parts of modern life. I suggest that we can (and must) be Christians and New-Churchmen in our daily lives, setting a good example in the honesty and unselfishness of our dealings, earning our living by unstinting, faithful service, and spending our earnings wisely in the interests of others as well as ourselves.

Taizé Weekend

14th–16th November 2008

We have both played in the Music Group at our Catholic Church in Colchester for over 20 years and have often played or sung some of the Taizé chants. We have also been to local Taizé services. This seemed a wonderful opportunity to learn more about the 'Taizé experience' in the quiet rural setting of Purley.

A sizable group of 24 people took part in what proved to be a very peaceful and uplifting weekend. A warm and friendly atmosphere was quickly established and this continued and deepened over the weekend. Daily activities including singing practice, Bible study and periods of quiet reflection, taking place around a central framework of three sessions of worship with Taizé chants at morning, noon and evening. These sessions with their contemplative music, readings and prayers as well as quiet time were really helpful in easing us into the day at 8.00am, re-focusing thoughts at midday and calmly reflecting the day's events at 9.00pm. We felt quite monastic by the end of the day!

The Bible study sessions (a new venture for us) were most interesting and resulted in lively discussion on the texts. The word 'shrewd' will now be quite significant to everyone who took part; see Luke 16:1-31 if you're curious! Singing practices were great fun, as we were able to learn new chants and had the opportunity to sing in parts and in other languages.

Free time on Saturday afternoon meant we could benefit from some fresh air (and a little rain!) and also were able to watch a DVD about the Taizé community in France which gave us quite an insight. On Saturday evening there was a Circle Dance session and participants danced to some of the Taizé chants. We both helped to supply 'live' music, together with Bruce when the tempo of one of the recordings was found to be too slow. We also played for a couple of the services which was very enjoyable. We decided just to sing for

the final 'Worship with Chants and Communion' at noon on Sunday so that we could become absorbed in the meditation. The final service was very moving. By then everyone had learnt many of the chants very well so it was easier to lose oneself in the music. As well as Communion, there were many intercessions so that we thought about the wider world and those who are dear to us.

We both found the weekend to be a very special one. To be able to take time out from a very busy life in the company of such a friendly group of people is a rare pleasure. Marion Curry and Bruce Jarvis had obviously put a lot of work into planning all the sessions and services and we do hope they put all their knowledge and experience into use again for another Taizé weekend. Rumour has it that they will and we will definitely put our names down!

This was our first experience of 'New Purley' and we were really impressed with all the facilities and comfortable accommodation. The food was so irresistible that we're sure we put on a few pounds. We didn't want to come home, but unfortunately work on Monday beckoned. However, we were definitely 'chilled' on return and had to go into a higher gear in the office.

Viv Kuphal & Jackie Wallace

With some forceful, sorry I mean gentle encouragement, I have begun to lead some services at my local church. I absolutely love doing this, but the preparation and build up to the service is a very trying time for me. I worry that I may say or do something that may not be in line with the teachings of our church.

So it was with some trepidation and also with some excitement that I attended my second Worship Leaders weekend. The weekend was led by Jan Miller and our Senior Minister the Rev Mary Duckworth. We would also be sharing Purley Chase with a troop of guides. The weekend started well, but the guides were less than impressed by our singing of grace before Friday's evening meal. The gauntlet was thrown down and they said they could probably do better!

We got down to business on Friday evening with a session led by Jan and Mary Burnley followed by Mary Duckworth's opening session called What's Life. This was followed by a lovely Vespers led by Jan.

Saturday morning began with a Holy Supper service that Thelma and Peter Wilson delivered very beautifully. We then had our second session with Mary followed by the first presentations. During this session I gave my very first presentation, I was very happy when it was over. In the afternoon we had a break, some of us went to the garden centre others went into Atherstone and then more presentations and another session with Mary. In the evening Rev David Gaffney played his guitar and sang with us, most of the hymns were new to us but we still enjoyed them. Gwendolen then closed our day with a lovely peaceful vesper service.

Sunday morning began with the rest of the group's presentations and a final session by Mary. We had a final roundup session with Mary Burnley in the chair. We finished with a service that involved various people

contributing and some really great hymns. What we lacked in harmonies we more than made up for in enthusiasm and spirit.

You may have noticed I have not mentioned the guides, they were really great. They were well behaved, quiet when we needed them to be and the graces they sang were much better than ours.

All in all the weekend was really good. As always Mary brought with her a wonderful air of peace and spirituality. Helping us to look at life and what it means to us in a very gentle manner. Thank you Mary, we all very much appreciated your time and enjoyed all your sessions.

During the round up session it was discussed whether we really needed two weekends a year. For myself personally I feel it is vital. Worship Leaders have a very important part to play in the life of the church, it is possible that some churches may be in danger of closing without the support of them.

We need the support of each other and the CAM team. In order for us to have that support we need to meet together. Because we live in different parts of the country this is only feasible over, at the least, a weekend. We appreciate that the costs involved are high, but we feel it is very necessary.

Speaking for myself it would really not be possible for me to take this enormous step from congregation to worship leader without the invaluable support, encouragement, wisdom and knowledge I am getting from all my fellow worship leaders.

I cannot stress enough my need, our need, to meet at regular intervals.

Sue Wilson

God's life is present in all its fullness not only in people who are good and religious but also in people who are evil and ungodly. That life is the same in angels of heaven as it is in spirits of hell. The difference is that evil people block the road and shut the door to prevent God from coming down into the lower areas of their mind. Good people, on the other hand, smooth the road and open the door. They invite God to enter the lower areas of their mind since he already inhabits the highest areas of it. They change the state of their will so that love and goodwill may flow in, and change the state of their intellect so that wisdom and faith may flow in - they open themselves to God. **True Christian Religion 366**

Further short quotations from the Writings may be found on the Words of Wisdom page of the Spiritual Wisdom web site. Visit: www.spiritualwisdom.org.uk and then click on Spiritual Living. On that page click on Words of Wisdom.

Letters

Dear Editor,

On the front page of the November 2008 Lifeline there were two quotations from the Writings about peace. I was struck by the marked difference between the translations of the two passages. One should not expect Swedenborg's deep theological ideas to be as easy to read as a novel. However, the first passage sounds more like normal, comprehensible English. The second has a stiffness about it about resulting, I think, from sticking too literally to the Latin.

To me this was an object lesson in the need from time to time for new translations of the Writings.

Yours sincerely,
Gordon Kuphal

Editor's comment.

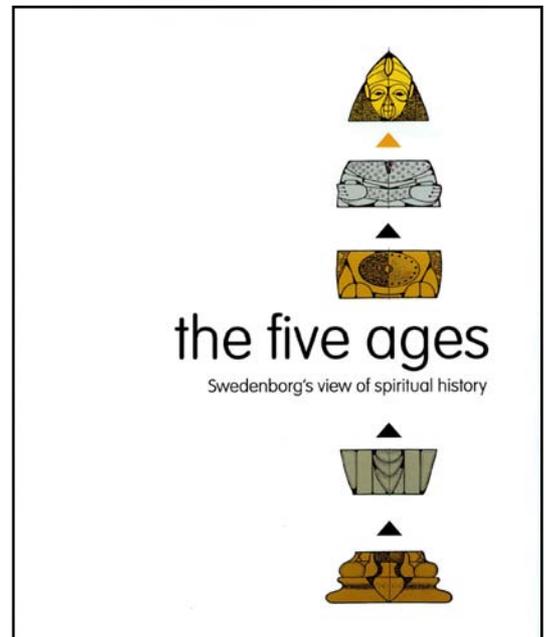
The first translation used on the front page of the November 2008 issue, from Arcana Caelestia, was John Elliott's but the second one from Apocalypse Explained was the Whitehead translation dating from the beginning of the 20th Century. As far as I am aware there has been no new translation of Apocalypse Explained since then so the best we have is around 100 years old! Furthermore neither the Swedenborg Society nor the Swedenborg Foundation appear to have any plans to publish a new translation.

A New Book by Swedenborg !

Well not exactly, but this may be the nearest thing to it. Among the papers Swedenborg left after his death in 1772 was his Coronis which set out to describe five ages or 'churches', as he calls them. A world history, but a spiritual or psychological history, not a political or social history. He relates them to the Classical Ages (Gold, Silver, Bronze etc.) and to the Biblical Ages (Adam, Noah, etc.).

In this new book Patrick Johnson has brought together most of the significant passages on this subject found in Swedenborg's various volumes. As the quotations have been taken from various contexts the editor found it desirable to provide a linking text to give continuity. Also, as knowledge of history was limited in the 18th century, and archaeology and anthropology unknown, he has added up to date historical comments where they can illuminate Swedenborg's text

In addition to being a valuable addition to anyone's library, this book could serve well in supporting classes in church and cultural history.
Erland Brock The New Philosophy



The Five Ages is published by the Swedenborg Society in hardback. 243 pages 30 illustrations. From your book steward or the Society at 21 Bloomsbury Way, London, WC1A 2TH at £14.95 plus post £2.75. Phone 020 7405 7986

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