



Who put the tree inside the acorn?

There is a song called 'Who put the colours in the rainbow' which includes the words - 'Who put the tree inside the acorn?' - a favourite line of many people. In relation to the Lord as Creator, what do you feel this image of a huge oak tree being inside an acorn means for you as a person with an *angelic self*?

Go to page 6 for the complete 4th Essential: Part 3 Loving ourselves - our angelic self

new church

Lifeline



But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. "But go, tell His disciples - and Peter - that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you."

Mark 16:6,7

Change of address Rev Christopher and Mrs Joy Hasler

01622 859808

Lifeline

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Editor: Alan Misson,
Tel: 020 8777 5098 Email: alanmisson@btinternet.com

Distributor: Howard Turner,
Tel: 020 7229 9340
Email: howard.turner@generalconference.org.uk

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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.

Lost and Found

One of the most gripping parables in the Gospels tells of a younger son who requested his inheritance from his father, and then proceeded to waste it all on riotous living. All that was left to him was to crawl home and grovel before his father. The father of this "prodigal son" surprised everybody by welcoming him with open arms, "for he was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." The older brother was none too pleased with all the fuss and celebration - but that's another story!

What were Jesus' disciples to do with themselves after His death on the cross? Just go back to their homes, try to forget Him, and get on with their lives? To all intents and purposes, He was lost to them. Taken from them. Beyond their reach. So much hope and expectation, and now nothing - except memories. Doubtless they were downcast, and feeling very sorry for themselves. In that situation perhaps the only solution is to revert to duty and custom. Mark's Gospel tells us how three of Jesus' closest disciples - all women - went along to his tomb on the Saturday evening, carrying spices to anoint his body as early as possible on the Sunday.

What they found changed their lives forever! Not only that. What had happened changed the course of human history. Mankind, in the form of those religious authorities of the day, had thought they could silence the voice of truth. Despite all the prophetic statements in their Hebrew Scriptures, and despite all they

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Honorary Life Member of Conference

At its May meeting the Council will vote for a Member of Conference to be recommended to be appointed an Honorary Life Member by the Conference annual meeting in July 2012. Any member, society or group wishing to suggest names for consideration by the Council should send them by the end of April to:

Michael Hindley, Council Secretary,

or by email to michael.hindley@generalconference.org.uk
or by telephoning him on 01206 303800.



That 'God blessed' means the Lord's presence and grace is clear from the meaning of 'blessing'. In the Word, in the external sense, 'blessing' means being enriched with all earthly and bodily good. This is also how all people who keep to the external sense explain the Word, as Jews did in the past, and still do so today, and also as Christians do, especially at the present time. Consequently they have focused the Divine blessing, and still do, on wealth, on having plenty of everything, and on personal glory. But in the internal sense 'blessing' means being enriched with all spiritual and celestial good, a blessing which neither does nor can possibly exist unless it comes from the Lord. This is why 'blessing' means the Lord's presence and grace. The Lord's presence and grace carry such blessing within them. The expression 'presence' is used because the Lord is present only in charity, and the subject at this point is the regenerate spiritual man who acts from charity. The Lord is present with everyone, but as is a person's distance from charity, so is the degree of the Lord's presence, or so is He, let me say, more absent, that is, the Lord is more remote.

Arcana Caelestia 981 In reference to Genesis 9:1

William Speirs Bruce - one of the Last Explorers

Earlier in the year the BBC ran a series on 'The Last Explorers' with Neil Oliver retracing the lives of four Scottish explorers who were famous in their own time but now largely forgotten. On Sunday 29th January the subject was William Speirs Bruce who set out to conquer Antarctica, not for imperial glory, but to advance scientific knowledge in an era when exploration had become harnessed to national prestige. I am sure many Lifeline readers will not have spotted or known the New Church connection but Richard Lines alerted me to the programme and wrote the following:



"It was interesting, but there was little about his background. The internet is more helpful with articles in Wikipedia and elsewhere. His death in October 1921 was noted in the New Church Herald for 3rd December 1921 in an editorial note by Rev Charles Hall who wrote that he had the pleasure of knowing Dr Bruce fairly well. Bruce was the grandson of the Rev William Bruce and the son of Samuel Noble Bruce, a doctor. Hall says WS Bruce was a quiet and unassuming man who disliked self-advertisement and this may account in part for his lack of recognition. Another reason was the hostility of Sir Clements Markham, President of the Royal Geographical Society, as the television programme made clear. Hall says that WS Bruce had no particular interest in theology and took no part in the work of the organised New Church. I first learned about WS Bruce from Dennis Duckworth who mentions him briefly in his book *A Branching Tree*. The second name Speirs points to New Church connections. Hall concludes his note by mentioning that the Polar explorer Nansen was related by marriage to Commodore Sundström one of the leaders of the New Church in Stockholm and a Vice President of the 1910 International Swedenborg Congress."

Rev William Bruce was the author of several much loved New Church commentaries on Books of the Bible such as *Commentary on St. John* and *Commentary on the Revelation* as well as more general works such as *The First Three Kings of Israel*. The 1881 Census shows Rev William Bruce, now a widower and retired New Church minister, living with his son Samuel Noble Bruce and his family at 43 Kensington Gardens Square.

William Speirs Bruce was born in London on 1st August 1867 and died in Edinburgh on 28th October 1921.

heard from Jesus, and all the evidence of His actions, they thought they knew what was best. So they crucified Him.

And don't we all think we know what's best! Until the light breaks through and shines into our darkness, we are effectively lost. Okay, we're living life as we know it in this natural, worldly dimension. But it's like living in the twilight, struggling to find some sort of happiness and fulfilment, without ever really grasping what life is all about.

While on their way to the tomb, those women felt powerless because they knew they hadn't the strength and capacity to remove the great

stone that blocked its entrance. Just like the prodigal son who felt powerless to change his situation. So how amazing it was that they found the rock rolled away, and no corpse inside for them to anoint.

Here they experienced and found for themselves the true nature of Jesus Christ's life and ministry. The consequence of His resistance to every temptation to serve His own needs, indeed, to save His own life, was that all power was given to Him. The Divine Fatherhood within Him had become one with the Humanity of Jesus, and God was now completely present with His children. Immanuel, God with us. At every level, our Heavenly Father could now reach us and be available to us.

Those women, feeling so terribly lost, now found themselves in possession of the great truth about life. No earthly power could contain and destroy the Divine life, any more than death of the body destroys our eternal life. No merely human power can remove mankind's distorted ideas or change our self-centred nature. This is the nature of redemption. It comes to us freely, only requiring of us that we recognise our limitations and go to Him who is our Saviour for help. When we come to see that this is the way things are, then all that is needed is for us to go on seeking Him, to go on living our lives His way as best we can. And then we find that He never leaves us, whatever the impression and appearance.

Timelessly, and to all eternity, our Lord God is calling us to Himself, wanting to share all the benefits of heavenly living with us. We don't have to wait until some time in the future to find joy, peace and fulfilment. He comes to us now, is present with us. We may feel lost and desperate but our Saviour is alive and with us for evermore.

May each one of us find the Lord we are seeking this Easter.

Rev Bruce Jarvis

From the Council

The team of Trustees, Officers, Ministers and Recorder met together on 6th March for lunch, renewal of friendships and what seemed like yet another meeting but this time with an apparently shorter agenda and fewer papers. A potential new council member was also present for most of the meeting with resulting fresh ideas to contribute. In practice each meeting assumes an identity of its own and this was certainly no exception. The organisation is in a different place each time we gather - evidence of the movement and change that is taking place.

Quite a few posts and tasks are now being undertaken by volunteers so the organisation is in the middle of a settling-down period with new routines and ways of working being tried, documents and filing cabinets being found new homes and a certain amount of clearing out being done (not enough for some and too much for others!) New post holders do things differently or not at all so we are living through interesting times.

There were discussions about how Ministry, College and the Council communicate and work together and openness to better ways where identified. There was recognition of, and discussion about, our different perceptions of future needs. What is the future of the church and how might it serve people most effectively? Members of the Vision team emphasised their agreement to support 'green-shoots' of growth some of which is encouragingly evident with young families and young people.

Capital from closed churches and recent property sales have contributed to converting recent operational deficits into a small surplus. This removes pressure enabling growth initiatives to thrive where people are keen to offer their talents. It also enables a small salary increase in line with the UK average earnings index.

Throughout the meeting reference was made to the Conference program for July 23rd to 27th this year, with suggestion of several new 'live' issues for the church to add to those already offered. It will be a fascinating Conference, whatever your views and you are needed there so that you can express them. Should we move ahead in new ways or is maintenance of the current tradition paramount? How should we use our finances or should we save them? Should we plan for the future or be happy in the moment? How can we relate our doctrines to modern day issues or should we not try? What do you think? Please come and share with others and renew old friendships or make new ones in the process.

Meanwhile at Purley, Council members enjoyed buzzards in the grounds and

fold to Him. Like the Good shepherd, the Lord is constantly calling us and gently leading us within the truths of his love and wisdom wishing us to use these in useful loving ways.

Throughout the Word of God the Lord's providence is pictured as feeding and cherishing those inmost affections of love and compassion. These are the loving gentle qualities of the true innocence of a lamb. The meaning of the word innocence means a gentle willingness in being led by the Lord. Remember the words of John the Baptist:

Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!

John1:29

Amid the clamour and confusion in this world of natural disasters, wars, terrorism and individual violence we can sometimes feel so powerless. But we cannot always control the way that life's situations come at us to make any change for the better. But the Lord has given us power, the power to change something within ourselves. Any change in us that we can make to wake us up out of our selfishness will start to change the world. But it must start individually with each one of us.

Can we too invite the Lord into our hearts and allow Him to shepherd and lead all of those possible loving qualities that are there within each one of us if we so desire?

I long for Your salvation, O Lord, and Your law is my delight. Let my soul live and praise You, and let Your rules help me. I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant, for I do not forget Your commandments.

Psalms 119:174-176

Stephen Thomas



As the Good Shepherd so He calls us forward into life by name and He knows our strengths and weaknesses for He has made us and we are His.

His loving providence protects us. If we do not listen to his loving commands however good the advantages may seem to us then we too will become lost sheep. We become helpless from our own self-seeking. There must be a real unity with His life and ours. We should recognise the Lord as the joy and life in all that we do and He too will recognise this joyful acceptance of His life in ours. A reciprocal relationship where the giving and receiving back of joy makes a relationship full and complete. This wonderfully images the way that God's life was flowing in and was being received by Jesus, to give us a permanent presence that is with us for all time.

By steadily putting off the selfishness of all mankind, Jesus laid down our old selfish way of life to take up the life of God. So too, we have to put off our selfishness in his strength and take up his life so as to become our way of life. We must look to the Lord alone to follow, teach, protect and guide us. He is the Good Shepherd and we are the sheep of his church.

If the sheep hear the voice of a stranger they will stop and lift up their heads in alarm. If they hear the stranger's voice again they will turn and flee. We too must be careful to follow the Good Shepherd's voice and develop those loving qualities inside all of us and so become more loving and compassionate shepherds to one another. We must endeavour to understand the truth the Lord guides us with and obey it in each situation by powering the truth we understand with the love of God.

But what of the false shepherd? The hired hand? He did not have a true calling. For him it was just a means of earning money. There was no sense of caring and responsibility in his task. Unlike the shepherd the hired hand felt no responsibility than just beyond the routine surveillance of the sheep. The meaning for us is that the hired hand had no direct interest in his flock. He was more interested in his wages. No help that is just 'hired' by our foolish pride and self interest will keep us safe. By serving our own selfish desires and not being responsive to peoples needs are we not just hired hands and false shepherds? Nothing less than the true shepherd will do for the job and not hired hands.

So often our lives seem to become a 'flock' of good affections and desires. But Christianity is not just an intellectual process of reasoning, argument and conclusions. We become a mass of sheep without a shepherd. There are so many ways of loving and serving our fellows but we seem to have no proper direction. Again and again in the gospels the Lord teaches that learning and working out truth and trying to understand it has a value, but our Christian lives are only truly lived out when our love goes out into action to help others. We are the Lord's sheep and so we must choose a way of life that opens the door of the

deer too. Blue tits were flitting about and the daffodils are just coming into bloom. The bare trees against the blue sky were wonderful and there were new views to be seen through the trees where old wood has been cleared. There is love for Purley Chase, evident in the care freely given to the property and grounds. New contacts are being made and many local people are finding the place and hearing something of our message. We surely all pray that the peace and joy that is Purley pervades our churches, groups, committees and Councils. May we look forward to the future with hope.

Judith Wilson

Annual Meeting of the New Church College

The Annual Meeting will be held at The College on Saturday, 30th June 2012 at 14.30.

Following on from the business meeting, there will be a session of general interest - more information will be provided in a later edition of Lifeline.

The work of The College continues to develop in new and interesting ways, and we would warmly like to invite you, whether or not you are a Governor, to join us for the afternoon.

Tea and cakes will be provided - a donation towards the cost will be welcomed.

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

There is actually a kind of love apart from wisdom, but it is ours and not the Lord's. There is also wisdom apart from love, but while it comes from the Lord, it does not have the Lord within it. It is like sunlight in winter that does of course come from the sun but does not have within it the essence of the sun, its warmth.

Divine Love and Wisdom 139

4th Essential: Part 3 - Loving ourselves - our angelic self

And God saw that it [land producing living creatures] was good. Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness”. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:25-27 (parts of)

In this creation of man - male and female in his own image and likeness - God seems to be laying down a foundation. A firm base fed and nurtured by the Lord. That is, nurtured towards becoming an angel within a heavenly sphere.

The title for this session - '*Our angelic self*' - is to do with both how we have been created and secondly how the image and likeness of God within permeates our inner being.

Of what does this *angelic self* consist? We know from the wording in Genesis Chapter 1 above that each person is made in an image and likeness of God. Perhaps it could simply be said that the angelic self consists wholly of gifts from the Lord.

A mirror activity

Maybe looking into some mirrors could give clues to knowing something of *our angelic self*:

A mirror from the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg:

Enter into the mysteries of the Word for each of its truths is a mirror in which we see the Lord. Drawn from True Christian Religion 508:6

Consider looking into such a mirror – let's take a favourite or familiar passage from the Sacred Scriptures, say a beatitude from Matthew 5:7

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

What you see could be a reflection of your God. What is this reflection telling you about quality of life, behaviour or possible expectations of action through your angelic self? Maybe this could be part of what you see - your receiving mercy

The Good Shepherd

**I am the Good Shepherd.
The Good Shepherd lays
down his life for the sheep.**
John10:11



The true Palestinian shepherd was born to his task. The true shepherd never hesitated to risk and even lay down his life for the sheep from wolves and robbers. His task was busy and dangerous, always guarding his flock from wild animals and beasts of prey. Small bears too were always ready to steal the sheep away. So he was never off duty.

Because of this the sheep were folded at night in sheepfolds – which were just open spaces enclosed by a stone wall. There was an opening by which the sheep could come in and go out quite freely. And at night the shepherd would lay down across the opening so that no sheep could escape except by over his body. Can we not see comparisons here with our Lord as the Good Shepherd? He protects us, His sheep with a sheepfold. A sheepfold of truth enclosed within the Word of God to protect us against the thieves and robbers of our selfish desires that could so easily harm our spiritual life. Yet He does not imprison us! He gives us a door in which to go out and come in by with the freedom to choose His loving way of life or sadly misuse it if that is our wish. We are free to use the truth to change us or to twist it to suit what we want to do.

Another interesting comparison is that unlike Western countries, the Palestinian shepherd would walk in front of the sheep. The sheep were not driven and herded against their will by dogs. The Palestinian shepherd would walk along in front with the sheep following behind; he would be looking to see that the pathway was safe so that the sheep by his calling to them would follow him safely to pasture. The shepherd had names for all the sheep of his flock and would call to them individually. The sheep would recognise the voice of their shepherd. He was absolutely responsible for his sheep. No flock ever grazed without a shepherd because they were liable to stray and become lost or become prey to wild animals. When the sheep were flocked together the shepherd could wonderfully separate them from other herds by calling out his own individual sound for his particular flock. The sheep became his friends and loving companions and he put them first and himself last.

SOLCe Student Information

A new Sponsored Student Monitoring Group (known as the SSMG) has been formed to meet with Becky Jarratt as she gradually moves towards ordination. The group met at Purley Chase in mid March and consists of: David Lomax, SOLCe Principal; David Gaffney, Spiritual Leader; Pauline Grimshaw, lay representative named by the Chairman and Judith Wilson, Council representative.

The agenda is to consider progress being made and the developing vision of ministry while, at the same time, supporting the candidate in her journey. If you have any questions or wish to comment, please contact one of the above who will be pleased to talk with you.

From the Committee of Ministers

At the Committee of Ministers' meeting in March, time was spent reviewing the processes and procedures which were in place during the events which eventually led to Helen Newton deciding she was no longer able to work towards New Church ordination in 2012. We acknowledge and regret the difficulties that arose, and hope and intend that similar circumstances will be better managed in the future. We also recognise that this whole issue has caused pain and distress to Helen herself and her family, to other individuals, and to the wider Church. For this we sincerely apologise.

The CoM has been mindful of views expressed in these pages and through other routes, and our own discussions have covered many areas around human sexuality, and issues relating to the implications for an individual, for colleagues and for the Church when more than one ordination ceremony is involved. Readers will not be entirely surprised to know that there is a wide range of views and interpretations of Scripture passages and our theological teachings. It may well not be possible to reconcile very divergent opinions, but we are agreed and united that we shall work together in love, respect and charity as we seek to discern the Lord's will for His Church.

It is intended in the near future to share something of this discussion through Lifeline, offering something of the spectrum of Ministerial thought and opinions, to encourage some open and honest discussion within our Church and at the forthcoming annual meeting of the Conference.

and giving out a sense of forgiveness to others.

Absorb a possibility that you know and accept you are able to be nurtured and developed by the Lord. He has a role for you participating in heavenly states of life.

If you feel you are being reprieved or forgiven from some error, could you also be being shown possibilities for future attitudes or behaviour?

At this point let's try one more mirror, here from the world of nature as a correspondence of something heavenly. There is a song called 'Who put the colours in the rainbow' which includes the words - 'Who put the tree inside the acorn?' - a favourite line of many people. In relation to the Lord as Creator, what do you feel this image of a huge oak tree being inside an acorn means for you as a person with an *angelic self*?

Do you know of any seeds or fruits in your inner life that have grown or are growing from something tiny into something large or truly significant and magnificent?

Reflect on the meaning of this for your *angelic self*.

Teaching focus

At length God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; so God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him.
Genesis 1:26, 27

From this it follows that a human being is an organ capable of receiving God, and that its capability as an organ depends upon its capacity to receive.
True Christian Religion 34

Then ... those who sat on the east side [of heaven] rose from their seats and looked up to the Lord. Then they sat down again and said that an image of God was a receiver of God, and since God is Love itself and Wisdom itself, the image of God is the receiving of love and wisdom from God in the man; but the likeness of God was the perfect likeness and complete appearance of love and wisdom being present in man and of belonging to him. 'For man does not know but that he loves and is wise of himself, or that he wills good and understands truth of himself. In fact not a whit is of himself, but from God. It is only God who loves of Himself and is wise of Himself, because God is Love itself and Wisdom itself. The likeness or appearance that love and wisdom, or good and truth, are present in man as if they belonged to him is what makes a man human,

and thus able to be linked to God and so to live for ever. ...True Christian Religion 48:5

Notice the statement: "... the **image** of God is the receiving of love and wisdom from God"

Let the wonder of this receiving truly sink in. You have been made in this image!

Notice the statement: "The **likeness** or appearance that love and wisdom, or good and truth, are present in man [male and female] as if they belonged to him is what makes a man [male and female] human,"

Let the wonder of what makes a person genuinely human make an impact on you. You have been made in this likeness!

Biblical focus

The following biblical passages may offer you insight into aspects of your *angelic self*. That is, what your angelic self [you] receives and what your angelic self [you] needs to deal with.

Reflect on as many of these passages below as you wish. You may find that your *angelic self* feels generosity, receives insight, knows the love of the Lord, finds solace, practises love of the neighbour, overcomes the shadow-side of life, and so on:

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"
Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven."
Matthew 16:15-17

... my cup overflows. Psalm 23:5

This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.
Luke 22:20

Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Luke 6:37-38

Beatitudes Matthew 5:1-12

and: Psalm 121

Summary

Your *angelic self* is constantly being given to and by the very nature of what it [you] receive there is an ever present power to give out likewise, as a reflection of your God within.

Continue the mirror activity over the coming days and weeks. Keeping your *angelic self* healthy is really important. You may find it helpful to reflect every now and again on your activities, contact with people and your relationship with the Lord. For example, here are two ideas of mirrors that may bring you into touch with the image and likeness of God into which you were created:

- Lord's abundance
- Facing the shadow-side of life

Now use some of your own mirrors:

- First image:
- Second image:
- Third image:

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4th Essential: Part 3: Loving ourselves - our angelic self
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