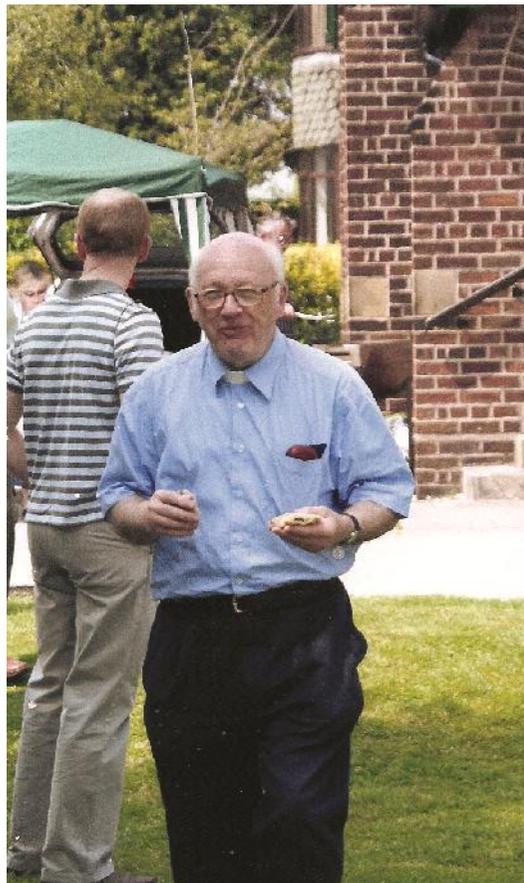


HB to RB

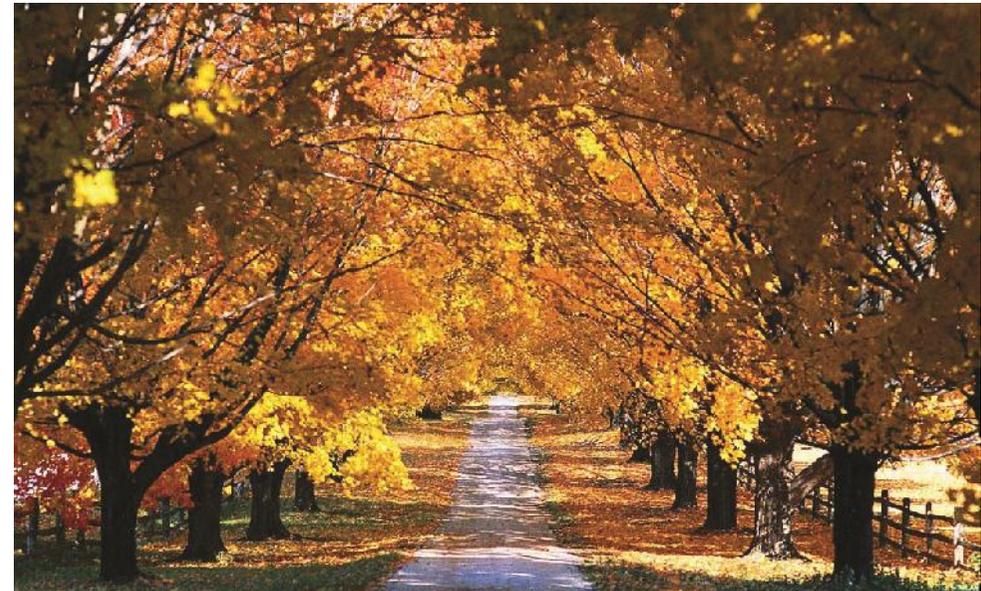
see page 5



Rev Norman Ryder

new church

Lifeline



But when warmth from the sun is not received, only light, nothing grows. All vegetation then becomes inactive, as it does in autumn and winter-time. The same also applies to spiritual warmth and spiritual light which come from the Lord. If a person is spring-like or summer-like he receives the good which flows from love and charity and produces fruit; but if he is autumn-like or winter-like he does not receive that good and therefore does not produce any fruit. Yet he is still able to receive light, that is, he is able to know things that are matters of faith or truth.

Arcana Caelestia 4180:3

Lifeline

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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.

Time for Patience

We live in a world where increasingly it seems that speed is of the essence and patience is a thing of the past. In all sorts of ways, from fast food to fast cars, everywhere you look the endeavour is to do go more quickly and take less time. Sometimes the urge to do more is encouraged under the banner of greater efficiency. More is to be done with less, especially less time, because "time is money". Maybe! - but I am reminded of the white rabbit in Lewis Carroll's 'Alice in Wonderland' who rushes off exclaiming "no time to say hello goodbye, I'm late, I'm late, I'm late!"

For some people, virtue has become too strongly linked with rushing around doing things, but in all the things we feel we need to do, we can lose sight of some very valuable qualities in the process. Sometimes it is good to rediscover the value of things like patience, tolerance and the ability to take the time to listen and maybe understand another viewpoint.

The great men and women of prayer challenge us to shift our focus from the quantity of our "doing" to the quality of our "being". The opening Psalm in the book of Psalms compares the righteous man to a tree planted by the water that bears good fruit and has healthy leaves. It is an interesting comparison that I had cause to reflect on when I went to a wood yard recently to buy some timber. In sharp contrast to the often impatient high speed world we often experience, the world of the woodsman works on a timescale of tens of years. The best timber is the slowest grown. Softwood which grows relatively quickly has neither the strength nor the durability of a hardwood because that has taken many more years to grow and mature. Even then, when such a tree is cut down it needs

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

www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk

This is our goal, our aim, our purpose. We still serve our Lord. Now we do so spontaneously. Loving the Lord and the neighbour has become so much a part of our lives that we can do so effortlessly and it gives us delight. Effortlessly because we know that all our strength is from Him who sustains every moment of our living.

This is the state in which we are able at last to love the Lord with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. Reflecting on the above verse, what does it mean to you to love the Lord as a friend?

In this state we can rejoice with the psalmist as we read and meditate on Psalm 100.

Five Essentials - Aspects of Loving - a focus for the Church
 5th Essential: Part 2: Loving the Lord - as a follower, servant and friend
 Published by The General Conference of the New Church.
 Downloadable from www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk

Volunteer Part-Time Pensions Co-ordinator

The paid employees of the Church deserve both a salary and a Pension.

Please consider if you can help provide their pensions by organising the regular fund payments. The work involves only:

- Being in contact with the pensions funds
- Being in contact with the conference payroll organisers
- Sending in payments to the funds
- Two days at the start of each financial year
- Two hours a month to organise payments
- Occasional meetings at the offices of the pensions funds (London area)
- Use of computers (e-mail, spread-sheets, etc)
- Knowledge of pensions (or willingness to learn: this is a combination of common sense and a willingness to take in what the funds are saying).

The present co-ordinator will be available to assist during the hand-over to the new co-ordinator. For more details please contact David Friend at drafriend@aol.com 020 8904 3433

Loving the Lord as a servant

Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a Leader and Commander of peoples. Isaiah 55:4

If you love Me, keep My commandments. He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me.

John 14:15, 21

The first person to call Jesus 'Master' was Simon Peter (Luke 5:5). The word that Luke uses literally means 'one set over' or 'one who stands over' and so 'an appointed leader or commander'. Luke is the one evangelist to use this word.

The word most commonly used for servant means literally 'bondsman'. It is important that we are careful to ensure that we are bonded to the right master.

Having become somewhat skilled in the spiritual life we are now able to serve. This means we can use at least part of our time in a state in which we think and do what we have learned to be right and good. We do what we can and we Love the Lord for enabling us to do so much. We recognise that He has given us all the knowledge and capabilities and power that we need in order to do whatever we are able to do and we love Him for all of that.

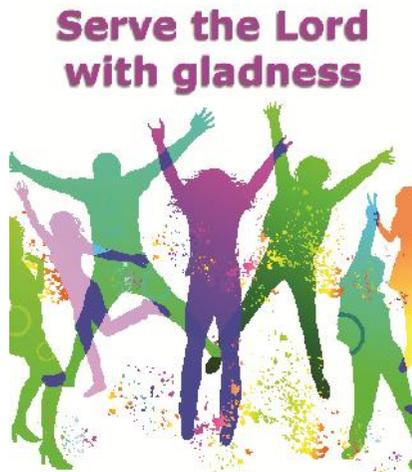
This service is also a time of temptation. Our six days of labour: a state in which we are struggling to improve ourselves. A state in which we often wonder what is happening to us.

Recall an occasion when you have not known what to do. **Reflect** on the alternatives. Who would you be serving in each case?

Loving the Lord as a friend

No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master does. But I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.

John 15:15



many years to season if it is to be used for first quality work. Used too soon, it will have a far greater tendency to warp, twist and split. As Joseph would no doubt have explained to Jesus, a good craftsman needs to have the patience to store and season timber for many years, or despite all his skill the work will be unsatisfactory.

The great furniture makers like Thomas Chippendale, George Hepplewhite and Thomas Sheraton, whose work we admire in stately homes, depended on timber that their fathers and grandfathers had cut and patiently stored!

The psalmist writes "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him ... do not fret - it leads only to evil" [Psalm 37:7,8 NIV]. Isaiah tells us that "Those that wait upon the Lord will renew their strength; they will mount up with wings as eagles" [40:31 AV].

Rome wasn't built in a day and neither is our understanding of life, and of the wise ways of the love that created us and continues to watch over our lives. There is much to be learnt from the psalmist's picture of a tree that takes many years to reach maturity. As one Christian leader put it, we need to be willing to 'waste time in prayer' to put our hands together in stillness and inactivity. To take the time to 'wait upon' and the patience to 'wait for' the Lord.

The tree by the river takes time to grow and mature. For the best quality work, it can take as long to season the wood as it did to grow it!. It takes time and patience before the harvest of its timber can be used in a carpenter's workshop, such as the one Jesus knew. For so many of us the hardest part of life's journey to understand is the last part, when we have to learn to accept doing less and going slower. It is a time when we have to learn patience and tolerance in new ways, not just with others but with ourselves too.

Perhaps these less active years can serve a greater purpose than we realise, enabling the Lord to increase the QUALITY of our usefulness in His service. Let us seek to learn the ways of patience and tolerance, like timbers seasoning in the Divine Carpenter's woodstore, awaiting the day when they are ready for the fine work for which they have been set aside.



Rev Clifford Curry

Divine Love and Wisdom 47

I am sure many readers of Lifeline are familiar with the beautiful passage in paragraph 47 of Divine Love and Wisdom which describes real love. Here is the passage from the translation in the New Century Edition.

The essence of love is that what is ours should belong to someone else. Feeling the joy of someone else as joy within ourselves - that is loving. Feeling our joy in others, though, and not theirs in ourselves is not loving. That is loving ourselves, while the former is loving our neighbour. These two kinds of love are exact opposites. True, they both unite us; and it does not seem as though loving what belongs to us, or loving ourselves in the other, is divisive. Yet it is so divisive that to the extent that we love others in this way we later harbour hatred for them. Step by step our union with them dissolves, and the love becomes hatred of corresponding intensity.

Feeling the joy of someone else as joy within ourselves - that is loving.

Experiencing loving someone else through feeling their joy in ourselves is I hope a fairly common occurrence. Just think about the times when you have been in the presence of parents, who you love, with their new born baby. Their joy may be indescribable and yet you feel it in yourself - that is loving.

Yet our experience of life and love has to encompass much more than joy. So often we find ourselves trying to express our love when those we love are overcome with sadness or grief or hurt of some other sort. In reflecting on this it has seemed to me that the same spiritual laws of love apply whether the person we are loving is experiencing joy or sadness. Since Swedenborg does not seem to tackle the definition of love in the context of sadness I offer the following re-write of Divine Love and Wisdom 47 to promote reflection on this subject.

The essence of love is that what is ours should belong to someone else. Feeling the sadness of someone else as sadness within ourselves - that is loving. Feeling our sadness in others, though, and not theirs in ourselves is not loving.

A closing comment. Whilst DLW47, in both versions, is describing our loving relationships with each other I think we could also use these words to help us understand the way the Lord loves us and how he truly feels both our joy and our sadness.

Alan Misson

Our Lord calls us to follow Him and to become His disciples. A disciple is one who is undergoing teaching, training and discipline. Not an imposed discipline: for all these things are voluntary or self imposed. Looking in the Gospels we can see that being a disciple and a follower is a constant throughout all of them.

To begin with we are learning our discipline. We are at first apprenticed to our Lord, following Him in all that He does and says. Then as we become skilled in what we have been taught, we are able to serve. Finally we become sufficiently skilled to be set free to live the way we have learned. As we progress through these states our relationship with our Lord changes. The changes may be slow and subtle so that we are unaware of them happening. Or there may be times when we suddenly realise that things are different with us from how they used to be.

Pause now and reflect on how your relationship with the Lord changes. What states do you recognise?

Loving the Lord as a follower

When we are first called we are far from perfect. This is reflected in the Gospels where the first people to call Jesus 'Teacher' were scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 8:19 & 9:11) and the first people to call Jesus 'Lord' were a leper and a centurion (Matthew 8:2 & 6). We can only hope to improve.

When we are first called to follow Him we leave certain material attitudes behind - see Matthew 4:18-22

What, for you, are the nets, ship and father that are left behind?

Now read Matthew 8:21 & 22. What in your life is dead and can be left behind?

And when He calls Matthew - look at Matthew 9:9

In what ways are you called to leave a secular service to follow a higher one, to serve the Lord himself?

There is a lot of work involved between the call of the first disciples and the call of Matthew. The teaching and preaching of 'The Sermon on the Mount' is given and is followed by much healing. We learn, we are encouraged, we follow and our life is transformed. And we love the Lord for all that He gives us.

Pause and consider. Note the ways in which you have sought to follow the Lord.

5th Essential: Part 2 - Loving the Lord - as a follower, servant and friend

You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. John 13:13-15

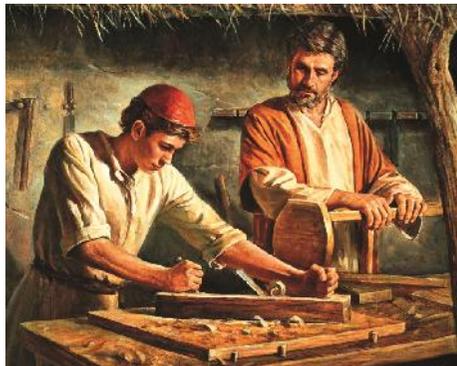
If you love me, you will obey what I command ... Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. John 14:15, 21

There have been religious and secular organisations of people with a common cause from antiquity in many civilisations. We are perhaps most familiar with these in the form of the mediaeval Guild. The training would involve all aspects of living, from the physical requirements of how to perform tasks, through the code of conduct or honour to the spiritual. Similar 'all life' practices can be seen in the Eastern schools of martial arts training which stem from, and which have their foundations in, an ancient spiritual ancestry. This form of association existed in Egypt and was familiar to the Israelites and Jews. Jesus would have recognised them from his own experience as a carpenter.

There is a parallel to be seen between the way these were organised and our own spiritual growth.

In the case of a craft, such as carpentry, the would-be craftsman would be apprenticed to a Master craftsman under whom he would study. After a period of apprenticeship he would become a bondsman who practised his craft under the overseer-ship of the Master. Finally he would be recognised as Master Craftsman in his own right.

Being a follower can be likened to the apprenticeship; a servant to serving as a bondsman; a friend of our Lord to becoming a master craftsman. There are of course limitations to this parallelism for we are each finite recipients whereas our Lord and Master is the infinite supplier.



HB to RB

When I was in my teens in the mid-to-late 1940s, attending services of worship at the Kensington New Church, an elderly lady sat from time to time in the pew in front of my father and me. We learned after a while that her name was Mrs Hyde, and later on that she was the widow of a New-Church minister, the Revd James Hyde, who was no relative apparently of the Revd John Hyde, whose hymn *Angels our brothers*, was often sung by the congregation. (This hymn is number 20 in the present **Songs for Worship**.) Later still while a student at the New Church College, I came to know of James Hyde as the compiler of **A Bibliography of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg**, published by the Swedenborg Society in 1906. I guess few members of the New Church have heard of, fewer still even seen, this book, for only 500 copies were printed. Yet this volume of over 700 pages is a mine of information; it has served me as a student, then a minister, for some 60 years, though I was well into my first pastorate before acquiring an already well-used copy of one of the 500. For convenience it is commonly referred to as **Hyde's Bibliography**, and for even greater convenience as **HB**.

Two of the books prescribed for close study during my first year as an ordinand were **Doctrine of the Lord** and **Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture**. It was HB, on page 366, that provided details of the interrelationship between these two and four other works, all written in Latin, that were published by Swedenborg in Amsterdam in 1763. And Hyde added some other interesting facts, for instance, that the author donated a copy of **Doctrina de Domino**, to use the Latin title, to Worcester College, Oxford (Is it still there?), and that 'Bishop Heber's copy is in the library of C. B. Bragg, Esq.' (Where is it now?)

But HB deals not only with what Swedenborg wrote - usually in Latin, sometimes in Swedish - from when he was aged 12 or 13 until his death in his 85th year, but also with the translations of his works into English and other languages published up to 1906. Indeed most of HB has to do with these translations, reprints, and revisions. A small part provides information concerning biographies, portraits, and other matters. Excellent though HB has been, however, the very fact that it was published more than a hundred years ago means that it needs to be up-dated. An attempt to do so was made in 1967 when a list of additions to HB, compiled by Stanley Wainscot, was produced by the Swedenborg Society in loose-leaf format. But now **HB** is being superseded by **RB**.

Twenty-two years ago the Revd Norman Ryder accepted an invitation by the Swedenborg Society to work on a revision of the Hyde Bibliography, since when he has been compiling what is turning out to be more of a new, far more

extensive publication running into four or even five volumes. Volume One appeared in 2010, the next volume is, as I write, at the printing and binding stage, and a third will appear in the next year or two.

Ryder's Bibliography or **RB**, like its predecessor, is of course a reference work, and for many years to come will be of use primarily to ministers, teachers of religion, and students, not only in the United Kingdom but throughout the world. It was an invaluable source of information to me when writing a preface to **The Interaction of Soul and Body**, published this past summer by the Swedenborg Society. Readers of my preface will see in the footnotes a dozen references to RB. Without the latter I would never have known that thirty-four years before he wrote that small work in 1769, Swedenborg had approached the Swedish Board of Censors for permission to print 'an extensive work' on how soul and body interact. RB told me, 'The manuscript is no longer extant, and the work is known only from a Minute ... of the Board of Censors ...'. If you wish to know where Norman found out about this minute, go to page 401.

The value of RB to scholars throughout the world, New Church and others, cannot be overestimated. Yet is it of value only to them? I think back to my father, mentioned already, who left school aged 14, and indeed to my mother also, who left when she was only 12. What would they have found to arrest their attention in Volume One of RB? From time to time, when I was doing my homework, Dad would look through one of my schoolbooks and stop to read anything that caught his eye. Were he here today flipping through the pages of Volume One of RB he would have stopped many times to read the description below a title of something written by Swedenborg before 1742. I can imagine him pausing at *The Rule of Youth* (1709), *Submarine Ship* (1714), *A New System of Reckoning which turns at 8* (1718), *On the Magnet* (1722), and many more of approximately 160 headings and their descriptions in that volume. People who have a general interest, as my father had, in the life, work, and teaching of Emanuel Swedenborg and who go through the pages of RB will be fascinated to see the great variety of matters that Swedenborg wrote about prior to his 'illumination'.

But how are such people to lay their hands on Volume One of **A Descriptive Bibliography of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg 1688-1772**, to give the full title of RB? Being a reference work it has been very costly to produce, so no one will be surprised to learn that it is being sold at £50.00 per copy. Who is able and willing to fork out that amount of money for one? The Swedenborg Society, the publishers, have generously donated copies to libraries and other institutions, which means that anyone present at the Swedenborg Learning Centre, Purley Chase, and of course Swedenborg House, can ask to see a copy. And perhaps any individual congregation holding reference books should obtain one in a similar way.

The Gospels do speak of people being possessed by demons, and New Church teaching is that this was literally true during Jesus' earthly life - but not since his liberating mission was completed. I do wonder whether (as spiritual truth is deeper than space and time) there could still be situations in which individuals are genuinely trapped by hellish influences, and exceptional means might be called for to help them escape. The quotation just above from *True Christian Religion* is worth continuing: Since all have been redeemed, everyone can be regenerated, *in each case depending on the person's state*.

Then the following paragraph (no.580) gives examples of factors that make spiritual growth different, and insists,

In this there is infinite variety, just as there is in faces and characters.

So I guess no form of education or religious discipline will work for everybody, and we need to respect different approaches. Things like exorcism and dramatic conversions, which I for one find repellent, may genuinely help some people. Various psychotherapies can surely contribute – even some colourful and commercialised programmes for personal transformation.

Realistically our church cannot cater for all sorts and conditions of people, but we can aim to be flexible – flexible enough to serve more sorts than we have done in the past.

Ian Johnson

Letter to the Editor

At this year's Conference I believe I heard a respected scholar say that Swedenborg would have been influenced by the fashions, fancies and foibles of his time and we need to interpret the Writings to take account of this.

Interpretation can so easily slide into 'revisionism' but perhaps we are much wiser than our predecessors. After all, we can send a large tractor to Mars and, using vast subterranean machines, search for minute particles of matter.

So, maybe it is acceptable for us to interpret the Writings but can we be sure that our interpretations will not be corrupted by the fashions, fancies and foibles of our time? I'm left with a slight unease about the robustness of the Church's foundations.

Yours faithfully,
G D Fisher

A Curse

'Do you do exorcising?' The questioner had just arrived at our front door, stout and solemn, and quite unknown to me. So my answer was guarded, but I hope not unfriendly – something like 'Well, no, it's not usual.'

'But that's what I'm needing.' So I invited him in to tell me what was troubling him. In brief, he told me that a woman had put a curse on him, making a ball of fire lodge in his brain, and he believed that only exorcism could remove it. He showed no interest in talking about evil powers, stuck to his story, and was urgent to find an exorcist. As my prayers seemed to be of no help, I phoned a friend living close by who was reputed to have some healing power, and took him to visit her. Her healing touch and words of assurance proved equally unconvincing to him, so we suggested that he try a Catholic priest, and directed him to the local presbytery. What joy he found there I shall never know.

People who read literally passages like *Matthew 10:1* –

Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to cure every kind of disease and sickness

- may conclude that I was a poor sort of Christian minister in so disappointing my visitor. I was certainly worried that I had not found a way to ease his obvious distress. But the subject of 'demonic possession' is much broader (this case clearly not being typical). Can it happen? What does it mean? What can be done to prevent or end it?

The overall message of the Prophets and the Gospels is that by Jesus' great mission all humankind have been redeemed (meaning liberated or set free) from hellish domination, so that every individual is free to choose the true, heavenly way of life. Inherited tendencies and/or social influences may make this very difficult for some, leading them into severe temptation (or testing), but no evil power can take that freedom away. New Church teaching reinforces this:

Since all have been redeemed, everyone can be regenerated,...

[*True Christian Religion* 579]

It is from God's provision that every person can be rescued, and those are rescued who acknowledge God and live rightly. [Divine Providence 325]

So, if anyone feels trapped in wicked feelings, thoughts, and behaviour, is it better to insist, 'You know, you *are* free to resist'? Is a claim to 'being possessed' really just a handy excuse for not making the effort to control oneself?

So far only one review has, to my knowledge, been published in the past two years.

Why there have not been any others is a matter for speculation. One explanation may be that no one feels competent to review so 'specialized' a subject. Well be that as it may, let me say that although the bulk of the material in the book is highly specialized, there are sections which the non-specialist may like to read and know about, such as the twenty-two page Introduction and the twenty-four pages headed *Swedenborg's Literary Corpus*. Though much of Norman's Introduction is technical, he has used language which is easy to follow, and what he has written is set out in such a way that the average reader can easily skim over some of the technical details. And the *Literary Corpus* is in effect a list in chronological order of all that Swedenborg is known to have written – that is, works actually published by him, documents he wrote and presented to the Swedish parliament, letters written on numerous subjects to various people, manuscripts found among his books and papers after his death, and other things written by him which are known of but no longer exist.

Probably only a few of those people who in the past 100 years have relied on the 500 copies of HB have known that James Hyde was a minister ordained by the General Conference, and not all users of RB in the future will know that Norman Ryder is a Conference minister. Even so, both have made a truly gigantic contribution to the whole New-Church world, for which I hope every member of Conference is thankful and full of admiration.

Rev John Elliott

Youth Leader

We are looking for a Youth Leader
and are offering a salaried, permanent post for 16 hours weekly

Might you be the person we are looking for?
Do you feel called to work with children, youth and families?
Would you like more details?

Please contact Judith Wilson on 01425 279408
or at judith.wilson@generalconference.org.uk

The job description is available on www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk
- click on 'Youth Leader' towards the top of the Home Page

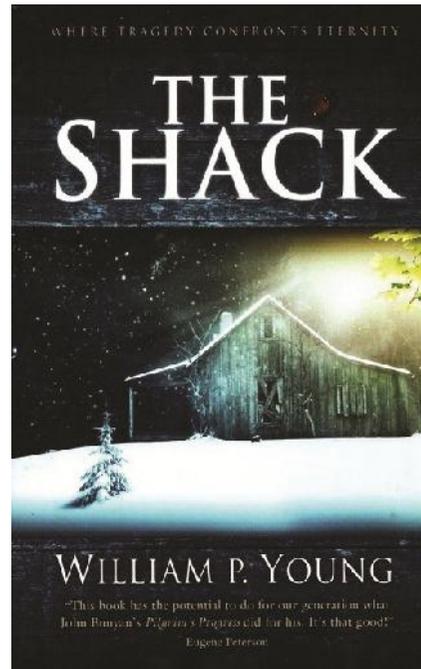
The Shock of *The Shack*

The Shack is a book which appeared several years ago. Originally self-published, it is now reported to have sold more than ten million copies and has often provided its readers with no small degree of challenge. A very brief review, taken from the Derby newsletter, appeared in *Lifeline* in October 2010. It's taken me some time to act on that recommendation. I'm glad I have and I thought I'd share why I feel that with readers of *Lifeline*.

It's a novel and I'm therefore cautious of sharing too much of the content because of not wanting to spoil its impact. Through the characters and the story it packs quite an emotional punch. However, it also contains a significant number of pages of thoughtful and indeed thought-provoking conversation and that's what I'll be tending to focus on, although there is much more to the novel than this.

There are two principal reasons why I think this may be of interest to *Lifeline* readers. There are some clear links which could be made with New Church theology. At the same time, "church" is called into question repeatedly. I'll return to the latter below, but let's look first at a central theme in the book, that of why God lets certain things happen: "He [God] doesn't stop a lot of things that cause him pain. Your world is severely broken. You demanded your independence, and now you are angry with the one who loved you enough to give it to you. Nothing is as it should be, as Papa [God] desires it to be, and as it will be one day." Although concepts like "freedom" and "free will" are not used, the way the presence of evil in our world is explained resonates strongly with what Swedenborg presents in *Divine Providence*. Part of this is our desire for "independence": "declaring independence will result in evil because apart from me, you can only draw upon yourself. That is death because you have separated yourself from me: Life"; "the world is broken because in Eden you abandoned relationship with [God] to assert your own independence."

There are a number of crossovers with explicit New Church teaching in such areas as the nature of God (including some aspects of the Trinity), our proprium or sense of self (see above, for example) and how God nevertheless dwells within us, even if we are not always in touch with this.



However, although ideas such as this are deeply rooted in the Christian tradition, at the same time elements of that tradition are also challenged. Partly for that reason, the book has stirred up a certain amount of controversy and some from within the Christian faith see it as of dubious value, even heretical.

A few quotations may give a flavour of this: "that's because you're only seeing the institution... That's not what I [Jesus] came to build. What I see are people and their lives, a living breathing community of all those who love me, not buildings and programs... It's all about relationships and simply sharing life... My church is all about people and life is all about relationships."; "I [God] am not who you think I am... I don't need to punish people for sin. Sin is its own punishment, devouring you from the inside. It's not my purpose to punish it; it's my joy to cure it"; "what was he witnessing? Something simple, warm, intimate, genuine; this was holy. Holiness had always been a cold and sterile concept [to him], but *this* was neither."

These quotations are given out of context and perhaps illustrate one of the reasons why reactions to the book are so divided. Ideas which can work within the context of the story, and especially through the reactions of the main character, Mack, don't always work as well when detached from this. Putting them down as I have just done almost reduces them to "soundbites" which may not be fair on them, because their significance in the book is more their impact on Mack than their importance as ideas which stand alone. The description on the back of the book perhaps gives some insight into this: "the answers Mack gets will astound you and perhaps transform you as much as it did him".

Although it may not be without shortcomings, *The Shack* can perhaps give us some insight into the intersection between religious teaching and the lives which give it its context and even its "raison d'être". We may even feel encouraged, as the book itself suggests, to look again at what effect the teachings we believe in have on a personal level in our own lives. More generally, perhaps this type of book can suggest to us how some of the teachings we cherish can be communicated to a wider audience.

Rev David Lomax

Editorial Déjà Vu

After 135 issues and nearly 13 years as Editor I made the most serious error of my career in the October 2012 issue by repeating an article that had appeared just 3 months earlier! I do not know how this happened and I apologise to readers of *Lifeline* and to the author Rev Christopher Hasler for this mistake.