

Ave atque Vale ! The Bristol Society of the New Church draws to its close

The New Church began its life in Bristol in 1792 and by 1813 the Bristol Society had a congregation of 40 to 50 people. Two centuries later we are reduced to four or five and it is no longer feasible for the church and society to continue.

We like to think that our presence has enriched the Christian community in Bristol - and the spiritual and social lives of members and worshippers. Thus it is that we can collectively retire with good grace and seek in other ways to continue our work to love and serve the Lord and His Word.



Our final service of worship will be conducted by Rev Clifford Curry and will take place at the church on Sunday, 27th October at 3 p.m. All members of the New Church - and, indeed, anyone else - will be most welcome should they wish to come. I can't strictly say 'warmly welcome', for although there will be tea and biscuits to follow, it may be wise to dress warmly as our woes have been compounded by the death of our aged heating system, a loss that two electric heaters will hardly replace ! What the future holds for the church building is unknowable, but its past is secure, as the archives of the Bristol Society will be cared for in the local church history special collection of the University of Bristol. For those with a special interest in our history we also have a few remaining copies of

(Continued on page 15)

Lifeline

Lifeline is published in the first week of the month by the General Conference of the New Church. Articles and notices should reach the editor by the end of the second week of the month prior to publication.

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

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

ISSN 0308-3624



new church Lifeline



New Appointments at the Swedenborg Open Learning Centre (SOLCe)

The Swedenborg Open Learning Centre in Radcliffe, Manchester, is saying a heartfelt farewell to David Lomax who has been in the role of Principal at the New Church College for the last seven years. We wish David every success and thank him for his wonderful dedication and energy at SOLCe.



We are pleased to announce that two new appointments have been made. Please join us in welcoming Helen Brown and Phil Wood, who will be taking complementary roles as Leader of Education and Leader of the Spiritual Centre, in the late Autumn.

As a flourishing Spiritual Centre, supporting personal spiritual growth and developing ministry, we will be planting many new seeds that will need your loving nurturing support to help grow in the coming years. We look forward to sharing the journey with you and widening involvement, both locally and nationally, in the life of SOLCe.



Melanie Bennett Administrator, Swedenborg Open Learning Centre (SOLCe)

October 2013
Number 426

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

From the Council

Purley Chase was feeling autumnal as Council members gathered together at midday in mid September to face the customary three page agenda with its accompanying documents. The full compliment of ten included David Friend, our newly appointed Chairman, who was possibly as timid about chairing us as we were about experiencing what could have been a very different style of chairmanship!

The Council was soon at ease, however, and settled into its usual relaxed, companionship whilst discussing various aspects of the church we all love. Each person's different interests and strengths are valuable: we listen and learn from each other with times for each of us when we can 'take a back seat for a while'. It is a good experience and, if you are thinking that you might be interested to offer your services on this Council, you may arrange to come along and feel how it would be for you, indeed we would like you to do this. Four meetings annually are on Fridays and Saturdays from now on.

As this is the first meeting after Conference, time was taken to review the event and discuss suggestions which have been received. It was agreed that the new Youth Leader presentations successfully kick-started the three day event which was renewing and enjoyable. The question and answer session with the Ministry was much enjoyed and has been requested again! Next year's Conference-for-all-ages is from 29th July to 1st August and prices will be held down. Why not put it in your new diary? Application forms will be available from the Company Secretary or on-line next spring.

The Company Accountant presented financial papers which are very readable
(Continued on page 3)

Contents

New Appointments at SOLCe	1	150 Years Ago	9
From the Council	2	Conference Service Address	13
God created Adam and Eve and possibly ...	4	Ave atque Vale !	15

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

www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk

what it is true, trust and confidence. We read in Arcana Caelestia that 'to believe means to have faith and to trust. This is clear from the meaning of 'believing' as possessing faith, and also trust, since one who possesses faith also possesses trust. Trust is an attribute of love expressed through faith; consequently trust in the Lord, does not exist except with those in whom love is present, that is to say, love to the Lord and towards the neighbour; for faith does not reside with any others.' [Arcana Caelestia 8240] We need to be a loving, kind, thoughtful person for our faith to be strong. What a wonderful feeling of confidence we can have in our Lord. Also we are told that the Lord 'is present with us the moment we start to love the neighbour'. [Arcana Caelestia 904:3] What a wonderful, comforting thought that is!

As soon as Jesus steps into their boat which is their structured doctrine – what they feel safe with, what feels right to them in their beliefs – the tempest ceases and those in the boat worship Him. They recognise His saving presence within them. The chapter ends with Jesus healing more and more people – all the parts of us that need His hand, His love, His healing touch.

Let us say within ourselves the words that the Lord said to Joshua, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." [Joshua 1:9 Today's New International Version]

Rev Rita Russell

Errors

I am afraid a number of errors crept into the September issue of Lifeline including an incorrect spelling of Becky Jarratt's surname and identifying the child who played Jonah as Harriet Jones when it should have been Libby Jones. I apologise for these mistakes. **Editor**

(Continued from page 16)

'Like a Great River Flowing': the Story of the Bristol Society of the New Church, which Neil Marchant (our then organist) wrote for the centenary of the present building in 1999. Should you wish for any more information, then please get in touch.

Bob Gilbert 215 Clevedon Road, Tickenham, North Somerset BS21 6RX
Tel: 01275 – 854486
email: sacregis42@hotmail.com

Bristol New Church is situated on Cranbrook Road, Redland, Bristol BS6 7BU, at the junction of Cranbrook Road and Kersteman Road. One final warning: there are local parking restrictions and it may not be easy to find a spot nearby.

Again Jesus apparently separates Himself from the disciples. The disciples are in their boat on the Sea of Galilee whilst Jesus is on the mountainside praying. The Sea of Galilee frequently features in the Gospels as Jesus travelled around Galilee. Jesus called his first disciples from its shores, often taught beside its waters, crossed over it by boat to avoid the crowds and as we've learnt in our reading today He walked on it. It is a large lake which is about ten times larger than Lake Windermere and is nearly 700 feet below sea level. It is surrounded by high hills. The hot air from these is funnelled into deep ravines which lead to sudden, very fierce storms with strong winds blowing over the lake as experienced by the disciples in their boat at night-time.

Just before dawn Jesus goes to them walking on the water. He is all powerful so all the elements are under His control. Has He gone to help and comfort them in their fear and distress? He certainly scares them as He walks on the water to them. Perhaps His presence can trouble our minds but His words to them are so reassuring – *“Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.”* At Peter's request Jesus tells him to come to Him. However, when Peter begins to walk on the water his impulsive courage leaves him. He feels frightened and sinks down into the waters.

Poor old Peter! He often seems to fail, just like we do. He is the disciple who features the most in the stories of Jesus and so we get to know more about what sort of a person he is than any of the other disciples. Peter, with his brother, Andrew, are the first two men to be called by Jesus. He is the one who recognises Jesus to be the Messiah, the Son of the living God. He is present with Jesus' other most trusted disciples, James and John, at the healing of Jairus' daughter and the transfiguration. But when it comes to the crunch, Peter denies knowing Jesus three times. After the resurrection, He is with some of the disciples who are fishing, when Jesus questions Peter about how much love He has for the Lord.

Let us think a little more about Peter's amazing action of stepping down into the water. It carries him towards Jesus but then fear kicks in and he sinks. He sees the effects of the wind which represents the desperate struggles we have inside ourselves. He calls out, *“Lord, save me.”* We also call out to our Saviour when we're fearful, in the depths of despair and sinking into the mire of self-centredness and doubt. We read in the Heavenly Doctrines in True Christian Religion that *‘In temptation it looks as if a person is left to him or herself, but they are not, since God is then most closely present in their inmost, and secretly gives them support. When therefore anyone is victorious over temptation, they are most inwardly linked with God.’* [TCR 126] He is always ready to stretch out His hand when help is sincerely and humbly called for. What a comfort! What a relief! What a reassurance!

Peter's faith is sometimes strong but at other times it's really lacking and he's fearful. How true of us this is! What is faith? It is to do with belief, conviction about

and showed the same steady position as given at Conference. The able Financial Advisory Team was reappointed and other and important annual formalities led into discussion of Risk Management. Thankfully the Council has experts in these areas which are in very competent hands. With a building just sold and another on the market, thanks to the two Building Managers, capital is increasing, bringing benefits in the interest accrued. Council's spending priority is to support 'green shoots' - areas of growth and seeds of ideas. Council tries to respond positively to identified needs for finance. One of these is in the area of Youth and Families where there is a welcome growth spurt. Exciting new events are making extra demands on families' commitments and budgets so the 'deposit and donation' scheme is to be extended for 2015.

2014's brochure is being printed now and will be sent, with a newsy letter, details of websites and a copy of Outlook, to Central Register Members - those who are members of Conference but not members of a church. If you are reading this and have queries please contact Alan Misson, Lifeline Editor, who will refer you on.

As these discussions were proceeding our new Student Minister was holding her first 'Twiglets' event in York. Thanks to the new website www.spiritualfriends.org.uk members of Council were able to receive exciting news about the success of this event and respond accordingly. Before a long discussion about the website, the new Vice-Chairman's paper on 'gender-neutral language' was considered. After looking at various possibilities it was decided to ask next year's Conference to agree the use of the labels 'Chair' and 'Vice-Chair', to be incorporated into the Articles.

So the Council gathering began to draw to a close, in time for a delicious lunch of gammon, cauliflower cheese, vegetables and fresh cream scones! The newest of our websites, Spiritual Friends, offers well presented information on many aspects of the organisation as well as the opportunity to read, and be involved in, discussions or to find material for worship leading. If you choose to become a 'member' there are people with whom you can exchange ideas and news, either privately or publicly - within the limitations of your own list of friends. The site is promoted and supported by Conference with current developments being made by a team which includes two ministers and a web-site 'expert'. If you can, please have a look and investigate what is offered. This is a new venture for the church so let us know how you like it and what you would like to see developed. The meeting ended with a shared Lord's Prayer and a time of quiet and peace together. It was a good meeting and felt to be a healthy start to the work leading up to our next get-together at Conference 2014. Will you be there?

Judith Wilson

God created Adam and Eve, and possibly Sam and Pat

I admire Bruce Jarvis' bravery in tackling the difficult topic of homosexuality in his article "And they will become one flesh" in the June 2013 *Lifeline*.

A New Church person could believe that *Conjugal Love* or *Married Love* or *Love in Marriage* is a Divinely inspired, self-contained manual of sexuality, and therefore, by implication, we don't have to consult the best insights of sociologists, psychologists and psychiatrists, who have "worldly, natural feelings and opinions" and don't have "divine revelation". (page 3 June 2013) A different view is that the Lord works both within and outside New Church organisations. Possibly the Church is not the sole custodian of spirituality and we church people can be as worldly or spiritual as any secular sexologist? I would suggest that it is the duty of New Church Ministers and lay people to find the Lord working in the inspired books of the Bible, the theological Writings of Swedenborg, and the best experiences, theories and studies of professional scholars. I would also argue we cannot develop a good Swedenborgian theology of sexuality without considering what the Lord reveals in the written works of those experts outside our denomination.

One could believe Swedenborg's book *Married Love*, rests on the belief or bias, that heterosexual marriage is the only true expression of the Divine will. However this excludes the significant number of spiritually aware single people, whether unmarried or widowed, in our congregations, and ignores teaching within the book itself about celibates and polygamists in heaven.

One interpretation of *Married Love* is based exclusively on heterosexual marriage, but such a view largely ignores the more fundamental teaching about the "heavenly marriage" or "the marriage of good and truth" without which a genuinely Christian marriage would not exist. The primary definition of Conjugal love as being an inspired union of heart and mind in the individual, explains why Marriage Love can exist in only one partner in a marriage relationship and not in the spouse. Bruce alludes to the teaching about the "heavenly marriage" on pages 5 and 7 of his article.

Some New Church Ministers or priests selectively use passages in *Married Love* to argue that husbands, and therefore men, lead intellectually and wives, and therefore women, direct through their love, but this presents only one facet of the teachings for the New Church. Both men and women can be motivated by love and be enlightened, and can bring these virtues into whatever relationship they are in by virtue of their being human. Either sex can be in the light of heaven and the heat of heaven. Unattached children, teenagers and adults, and maiden aunts and bachelor uncles can still contribute spiritually in our denomination!

Conference Service Address

Jesus immediately said to the disciples:

"Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." Matthew 14:27

What an inspiring Conference we're having – many high points (for example the presentations from our Youth Leaders who are so full of enthusiasm for their new jobs and the induction of Becky Jarratt as a student minister. But then some low points and challenges have also had to be looked at. How much like life that is. We experience a real high and then we dip and experience problems, temptations and challenges. That pattern is repeated in this chapter from Matthew. There is a continuous spiritual sense within God's Word but we so often read parts in isolation without thinking about what comes before and after. Matthew chapter 14 has four parts to it: the beheading of John the Baptist, Jesus feeding the five thousand and Jesus and Peter walking on the water followed by Jesus healing many people. It pictures for us exactly the ups and downs of our lives.

The chapter certainly starts at a very low point: the beheading of John the Baptist, who came to prepare the way for Jesus. We've made some self-centred way of behaving really important in our lives so that it's actually ruling us just like Herod ruled the country. For a minute or two you might find it helpful to begin to recall some self-centred way of behaving which has become really important in your life and has ruled you.

This type of behaviour really goes against what we've learnt from the Word, which John represents. We want to destroy the message and eradicate it from our lives because it makes us feel uncomfortable inside. The truths of the Word are challenging our way of thinking.

Even though, at the end of this part of the chapter, Jesus withdraws to a solitary place we still seek Him for help because we recognise our need of Him. We're not left in a bad state for too long – the Lord is always there for us if we call upon Him with a sincere, loving heart.

Jesus withdraws to a quiet place although a large crowd follow Him. As always He treats the people with compassion, which is the saving operation of His love. He treats us just the same when we come to Him. He heals us and recognises that we need feeding – spiritual food for our hearts, minds and souls. He feeds us bread (His goodness) and fish which pictures for us affection for knowledge that can be used in life. The Lord is able to give us so much that even when we've eaten our fill there is still an absolute abundance of goodness and truth available for us.

la Roche). But he was perplexed by the creeds, articles of religion, and other things contained in the **Book of Common Prayer**; and when he confided his perplexity to Mr Le Clos the latter recommended to him the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, which he read eagerly and accepted with great delight. Very soon the young Mr Rendell became acquainted with other Swedenborgian sympathisers in Salisbury, who then formed themselves into a group that meet regularly for worship. In 1826 the now 23 year old travelled north - by road, for the railway age had yet to arrive - to attend the annual meeting of Conference in Manchester. On his slow journey there he stopped at different places and met other Swedenborgians, from whom he learned that a congregation in Newcastle-on-Tyne were looking for a minister. To be brief, he quickly became that minister, towards the end of 1826, and continued to serve them for 18 years. How often after leaving Salisbury until 1863 did Elias Rendell see Mr Le Clos, his old friend, who had been instrumental in changing the whole course of his life? Theirs must have been a very emotional reunion.

But I must return to the correspondence of early 1863. In a letter dated January 30/63 EDR in reply to Mr Baxter from Jersey wrote –

I was not aware, when I communicated to Mr Pitman the idea of visiting you, that negotiations had been opened out with other gentlemen. I rejoice to learn that the friends in Jersey are so active, and I sincerely hope that they will be able to sustain the Missionary efforts they have in view.

This tells us that the New-Church folk in Jersey, a relatively isolated congregation, were full of zeal to spread the teachings of the church and would welcome all the help they could get from across the Channel to do so. As we've seen already, plans for a visit from the President of Conference were well in hand, but their enthusiasm didn't stop there. The proposed visit in addition by EDR filled them with delight. To judge from further letters to Jersey, the visit actually took place during the end of April and beginning of May. The titles of lectures and sermons may sound very ordinary to us living 150 years later, for example – What is man? Man the subject of influences. The opening of the Book. The God of Revelation. Yet these embody themes contained in the teachings of the church that we still reflect on, try to understand, and share our understanding with others, no longer however through public lectures but by whatever means are appropriate in today's world.

Rev John Elliott

Editor's Note: Elias de la Roche Rendell [EDR] (1803-1876) was born in Barnstaple the son of Elias de la Roche Rendell and Anne de Volls. The parents of EDR's father were James Rendell and Mary Delaroché. Mary was descended from a Huguenot family in Barnstaple where Huguenots had settled in the late 17th century.

I struggle personally to see how homosexuality “militates against conjugal love” (page 6), but I can see how selfishness, a desire to dominate (the real “Sodom”) or promiscuity do. Having homosexual relatives and teaching colleagues has enriched my appreciation of how the Lord inspires compassion and creativity in individuals, whatever their sexuality.

Again I am bewildered as to how homosexuality is solely motivated by “lower order spirits”, unless you link the story of Sodom with homosexuality and “the evils of the love of self”. (I believe it is a story of heterosexual men seeking to rape other males - that is why it is “the worst adultery”.) We're all guilty of the desire to dominate. I have read stories of homosexual men caring for their partners dying of AIDS and have been moved to tears by the intense love and genuine compassion shown.

I struggle with Swedenborg's assumption that every human being has “an attraction to the opposite sex in them from creation and so from birth”. I believe that the Lord has revealed wonderful teachings about heterosexual love and marriage in the Writings for the New Church, but occasionally they are limited by Swedenborg himself: the celibate, privileged, heterosexual European male of the eighteenth century: “For influx from angels takes place into what a person knows and believes, not what he does not know or believe” and “in accordance with the quality of” his “reception of the Divine”. If a homosexual New Church person feels that God is calling them to be celibate, then we minister to them. If a homosexual New Church person feels that God wants them to be in a homosexual relationship, then we minister to them. If a homosexual New Church person feels like the Lord wants them to become heterosexual, then we minister to them. However, I have read extremely critical reviews of ex-gay ministries, their statistically, exceedingly low ‘success’ rates and the dubious psychology and theology, which lie behind them, written by clinical psychologists, psychiatrist and sociologists. I am personally struggling to see how homosexuals can be turned into heterosexuals, without causing significant psychological harm to themselves and turmoil to their heterosexual spouses or homosexual partners.

One New Church view is: “But what feels like an unhelpful approach is simply to treat homosexuality as a normal part of God's creative drive and purpose.” (page 7) Another New Church view, could of course, ask “Why not?” I honestly don't know whether God created homosexuals to be homosexual. I would suggest as ministers we help people with their reformation and their regeneration from where they are, not where our beliefs want them to be.

It is right to be concerned about the eternal consequences of homosexuality. (page 4) Yes, there is a hell for heterosexuals who attempt to rape other men. Appealing to Matthew 11:23-24, Swedenborg argues that it is “Those who are instructed by the Lord concerning the truths and goods of the church, and yet reject and deny them, do worse things than those of Sodom”. However we interpret the story of Sodom, here is another indication that what goes on inside

our hearts and minds is more eternally important than our actions. Mercifully we are judged by our motives, not our actions: inner motivation “mitigates or excuses” or “aggravates or censures” crimes or deeds. (CL 530:1) “The case is similar with immoral behaviour, whether fornication, taking a mistress or a concubine or committing adultery, since these acts are imputed to each depending not on what was actually done, but on the state of mind while doing them. For deeds follow the body to the grave, but the mind rises again.” (CL 530:3 [Chadwick]) Whether we believe a faithful homosexual couple are fornicators, or adulterers or not, we can find some comfort in the teaching of this paragraph, that their love and devotion to each other will not be overlooked. Homosexuals and heterosexuals are judged from their motives not their actions.

I would suggest that the Christian Church only has to minister to Christian homosexual couples who are interested in an exclusively faithful relationship. The General Conference might opt for an ‘Anglican compromise’ and allow some of its Ministers to arrange ‘matrimonia’ or ‘nuptulia’ (my suggested alternate terms) - I personally only want to use the word ‘marriage’ in a heterosexual context. Maybe the Marriage (Same Sex) Bill won’t allow some ministers within a denomination to opt in and some to opt out of conducting ceremonies for faithful homosexual couples!

Evangelical Christians regard it as a virtue to take the Bible literally. (cf. pg 4) However, it is not necessarily true in New Church circles. In AC 10453:3 we read:

“the literal sense of the Word would have been different if the Word had been written among another people, or if the character of the Israelite people had not been such as it was. For the literal sense of the Word is all about that people since the Word was written among them, as is evident from both the historical sections and the prophetic parts of the Word. ... Most of the things furthermore that present themselves in and constitute the outward sense of the Word were ones that were permitted on account of their hardness of heart, such as those referred to in Matt. 19:8 and also others which need not be mentioned here.”

So for example if we want to find Divine teaching about marriage relationships in the Old Testament, we won’t find it in the custom that Israelite men were allowed many wives, concubines or sex-slaves. Under Israelite patriarchal law wives are the possessions of their husbands. In Israelite tradition if a man rapes a woman, he has to pay a fine and may have to marry her, but will be executed if she is engaged. The woman’s perspective is totally ignored, she might have to spend the rest of her life with her rapist, because only the father’s honour has been violated. Another example is levirate marriage: if a man’s brother dies childless, under Israelite law he has to marry his sister-in-law. What she thinks about it is irrelevant! He can refuse but one of his shoes is taken off him and his sister-in-law spits in his face and has to approach another male relative. A woman’s vows

lengthy unsigned obituary, also a ‘Funeral Discourse’ or sermon delivered by the Revd Dr Jonathan Bayley, that were included in issues of **The Intellectual Repository** published in 1876. The obit and the sermon have helped me to understand more clearly the Rendell-Baxter correspondence of 1863.

Dated Jan 9, 1863, the earliest of the letters addressed to Mr Baxter in Jersey concerning the Rendell visit came from Fred^k Pitman in London. It reads –

Dear Sir

The Rev. E. D. Rendell being desirous of visiting Jersey, partly to visit an old friend, and partly to perform missionary work, the Com^{ee} of the Nat. Missy Instⁿ have agreed to contribute the sum Three Pounds towards the expenses of such a visit, on the condition of the friends in St. Helier,s [sic] being willing to receive such a visit, and being in a position to meet the balance of the expenses.

This is not so certain, we presume, in consequence of the cost to you of Mr Kennerley’s contemplated visit. I think in the event of your desiring to see Mr Rendell, you had better write direct to him

EDR’s offer to visit Jersey seems to have come out of the blue, for negotiations were well under way for John Kennerley, President of Conference for the year 1862-3, to visit the congregation there and carry out missionary work. But clearly the proposed Presidential visit was no barrier to the Rendell offer, for on receipt of the letter from London Mr Baxter immediately acted on the recommendation to ‘write direct’ to Mr Rendell, whose reply was equally immediate. The latter’s letter, dated Jan^y 15/63, begins –

My dear Sir

I have duly received your obliging letter of the 12th instant.

From this it is clear that 150 years ago it normally took no more than three days for mail from the mainland to Jersey, and vice versa, to be delivered after it had been posted. But far more interesting is the final paragraph of this letter to Mr Baxter –

I am indebted to Mr Le Cros for my introduction into the Church, and it will afford me much satisfaction to meet with him once more. To be his guest on the occasion of my contemplated visit will hold very much pleasure. Have the goodness to convey to him and his good Lady my lively remembrances, ...

So the ‘old friend’ that EDR wished to visit was a gentleman with a Jersey surname. The two had first met each other forty years previously, when the Rendell family were residing in Salisbury, and Mr Le Clos owned in that city a stationer’s shop which the young Elias used to visit to obtain materials he needed for his work as a painter of miniatures. Till then the 20 year old Elias had been connected with the Church of England, even though he was of Huguenot, that is, French Protestant descent (hence his obviously French middle name, de

would have spent nearly a whole day passing over land, then across the sea, to reach his destination. But how do I know, you may ask, about this trip he made to Jersey almost exactly a century and a half ago?

During our holiday in Jersey Judy and I visited Viola Moubray and Audrey Gem, who had done so much, in the final years of the life of the New-Church congregation, to maintain services of worship in its square temple and to attend to necessary admin. Indeed that admin lasted for many years after the temple was sold and the Society ceased to exist. Recently Audrey's grandson, while looking through old books in her loft, emerged with an old notebook that contained hand-written letters and other documents pasted into it. Though now dog-eared and faded these letters, it was clear to him, were written in the 1860s; and one or two documents were plainly posters announcing public lectures on religious themes. But he was left wondering who the authors and recipients of the many letters were, why the letters had been assembled and stuck in the notebook, what if any significance they had now, and so on. And since Audrey, and Viola too, were equally curious I was asked to take a look at this notebook and its contents, and then hand it over for safe-keeping in London or wherever.

The letters clearly belong to one side of a frequent correspondence that went on between Jersey and mainland Britain. All of them - written by various persons, mainly New-Church ministers - were sent in reply first to a Mr Duchemin, then at a later date to a Mr Baxter. The letters of these two gentlemen to the mainland were probably destroyed long ago, though it is just possible that some have survived in files of old documents. The replies they received from ministers naturally discussed dates, travel arrangements, and so on, but also titles of public lectures to be given on weekdays and those of sermons to be delivered during Sunday services. I will confine myself here to ED Rendell, mentioned already, and write at some other time about the other ministerial visits to Jersey in 1860s.

All my life, it seems, I've been aware of the name James Robson Rendell, author of the hymn, Lord of every good the Giver. (He lived 1850-1926, as **Songs for Worship** tells us beneath its altered version of the original.) And ever since I became a student for the ministry I've been aware that JRR was involved in translating Swedenborg's works from Latin into English, played a leading role in the International Swedenborg Congress held in 1910 in London, in addition to his serving as pastor to the large New-Church congregation in Accrington. But till very recently ED Rendell, his father, had been little more than a name to me. By searching through various books in my study, after returning from our holiday in Jersey, I discovered that his initials stand for Elias de la Roche, that his dates were 1803-76, and that he was a New-Church author. To find out more about him I contacted James Wilson, librarian of the Swedenborg Society. James not only directed me to titles of books and pamphlets by ED Rendell that are listed on the Society's library website but also kindly found and printed out for me a

to the Lord can be annulled by her father or her husband. So we have to be very careful about drawing doctrines about sexuality and relationships from the Old Testament.

I find it fascinating that, the Lord permitted the Israelites, or permits us, to hold partially truthful, or even false ideas, which we've held from infancy, so as not to break us. Even though sacrificing animals was "unacceptable in the heavens", the Israelites were permitted to sacrifice them to prevent them from sacrificing their children, because they held the false belief that they would stop God being angry with them. But in commenting on Exodus 32:5,6, Swedenborg goes on to say that for Israelites sacrificing animals was their "chief holy thing. Once something has been implanted in people from their earliest years as being holy, the more so if received from their fathers, and thus is inrooted, the Lord in no way breaks it - provided it is not contrary to order itself - but bends it. This was the reason for its being laid down that the sacrificial system should be established, such as one reads in the books of Moses." (AC 2180:5) A good proof text for not taking some or most Israelite laws literally is Ezekiel 20:25 "Moreover, I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live."

Conservative Swedenborgians believe that pro-homosexual means that we "intellectualise away any challenges which the literal meaning of the Word of God pose so that we change the meaning of Scripture in a way that doesn't allow it to change us. The Writings describe this tendency as 'innovation' ... [see Arcana Coelestia 1241]" All New Church people would argue that our Lord Jesus and Swedenborg were innovators! Dealing with all the six or so passages in the Bible, which appear to be anti-homosexual is beyond this reply. Maybe another letter is needed!!

Having, from Doctrine, legitimately intellectualised away having to believe that certain Old Testament laws are God's laws, I would like to make a couple of comments on Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. I have been reading a book by a homosexual Orthodox Jewish Rabbi, Steven Greenberg, (2004) who has great reverence for the literal Hebrew of the Torah, and finds it grossly offensive to intellectualise any Biblical teaching away, and argues that Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 refer to homosexual activity with force or violence. His translation of Leviticus 18:22 is "You shall not lie with a man to humiliate him; this is abhorrent." He bases his argument on the use of the Hebrew verb SHAKAV "to lie down" or "to have sexual intercourse with" in the rape of Dinah (Genesis 34:2, 7) which is related to the noun MISHKAV "lying down" which is used in the Leviticus passages.

Cheryl B. Anderson (2009) and other liberal Biblical scholars would argue that to get to God's Word in the Bible you have to go beyond the patriarchal passages, which is excitingly similar to Swedenborg's concept of the "face, [forearms] and hands" of the Word. According to this doctrine there is very little in the Bible that we are to take literally: compare the surface area of the face and hands of a

person to that of their robes. Sadly Swedenborg gives us few clues as to which passages we can read at face-value. Biblical scholars surmise that in a society where men make the rules and women obey them, another group who suffer are men who are attracted to other men. The Biblical experts suggest that homosexuals challenge the Israelite gender paradigm of a male being actively dominant and women being submissively passive. Such laws I would argue reflect Israelite thinking not God's thinking.

Another suggestion Anderson notes is that the Israelites over-rated or over-valued male sperm, after all copulation for ancient Jews was just insemination: male seed being inserted in female 'ground', and so they saw homosexuality amongst males and bestiality as a misuse or abuse of male seed. Swedenborg explains the patriarchy in the Old Testament is due to the need for ideas and doctrines to shape how we feel and act. (AC 568:2) So, in summary, New Church teachings argue that the Old Testament was adapted to the Israelites and changed to suit them, so we have to carefully distinguish their prejudices from God's truth.

I will finish by quoting Swedenborg's apparently sexist explanation of patriarchal laws in the Old Testament:

"The reason 'daughters' means things constituting the will, which are evil desires when the will for good is non-existent, while 'sons' means those constituting the understanding, which are delusions when the understanding of truth is non-existent, is that the female disposition and make-up is such that the will or evil desire reigns rather than understanding. Every one of their fibres runs in that direction; and it is their very nature. The male make-up however is such that the understanding or reason reigns; every one of their fibres too runs in that direction, and it is their very nature. Consequently the marriage of the two sexes is like that of the will and the understanding in the individual. And because nowadays the will for good does not exist, but only evil desire, when yet it is possible for something of the understanding or reason to exist, so many laws were for that reason laid down in the Jewish Church concerning the husband's rights and the wife's obedience." (AC 568:2)

I hope and pray that my thoughts open up the discussion.

Rev Brian Talbot

Editor's Note: Brian's original text had a very full set of references throughout the document which I felt would not make for easy reading in Lifeline. However the full version is available to download from www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk On the Home Page select Resources and on that page select Human Sexuality where you will find the full article at number 15.

150 Years Ago

Through his TV series entitled Great British Railway Journeys Michael Portillo has made viewers aware of George Bradshaw's handbook published in 1863, which describes the then-growing network of British and Irish railways, and the places which tourists or travellers could then reach by train. Towards the end of May this year Judy and I went for a holiday to Jersey, by air, and after we got back home I consulted my copy of the 2012 reprint of Bradshaw, which she had bought for me a few months before, to see what he had to say about the Channel Islands and what the journey to get there in the middle of the nineteenth century entailed.

In his lengthy description of the sights of Jersey Bradshaw speaks about 'the town of St Helier's [sic] where the steam-boat passengers from Southampton disembark.' (You will still see people leaving the ferry from Southampton or Weymouth who prefer to cross the English Channel by sea.) He also mentions that the town has 'an old parish church and a modern district one – built in what is called the Gothic style – two or three dissenting chapels, a theatre, and shops of quiet respectability'. One of those chapels in St Helier was probably that where New-Church people in Jersey gathered for worship and other activities. Anyone walking along Victoria Street today will see that chapel, or rather square temple, which still has high above its front doors the two words **New Church**, and beneath these the date **1848**. (After the building ceased to be a place of worship a number of years ago it became some kind of warehouse; but when we were there in May a Christian organisation which had recently bought the building was proposing to establish a social centre there.)



New Church, Jersey
Google Street View

One person travelling to Jersey 150 years ago - in 1863, when Bradshaw's guide appeared in print - was almost certainly the Revd E D Rendell, who had been invited to carry out some 'missionary work' sponsored in part by 'The National Missionary Institution' centred in London. He was living in Preston at that time, so his journey from Lancashire to Southampton or Weymouth to catch the steam-boat would have lasted many hours, probably more than twice the number it takes to make the same journey today. In all, this New-Church minister