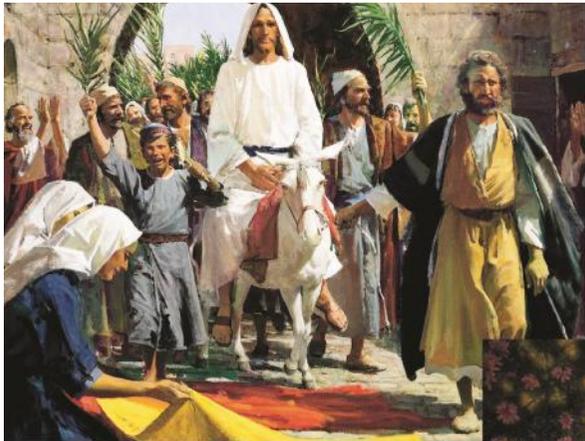


**Do justly,
love kindness,
walk humbly
with your God.**

Micah 6:8

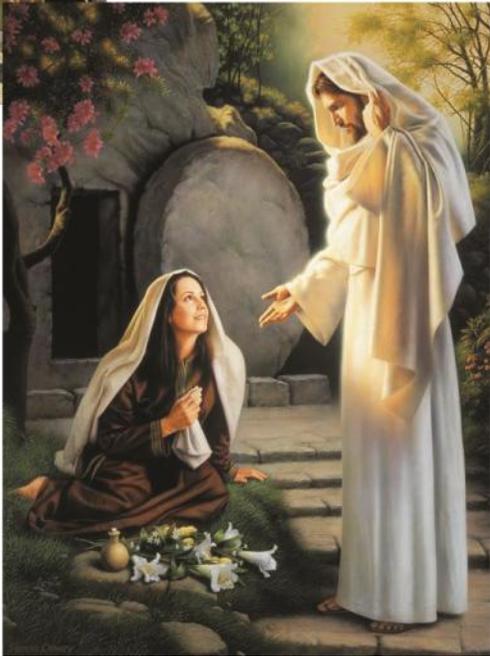
new church

Lifeline



Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!

Luke 19:38



Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.”

John 20:15

Lifeline

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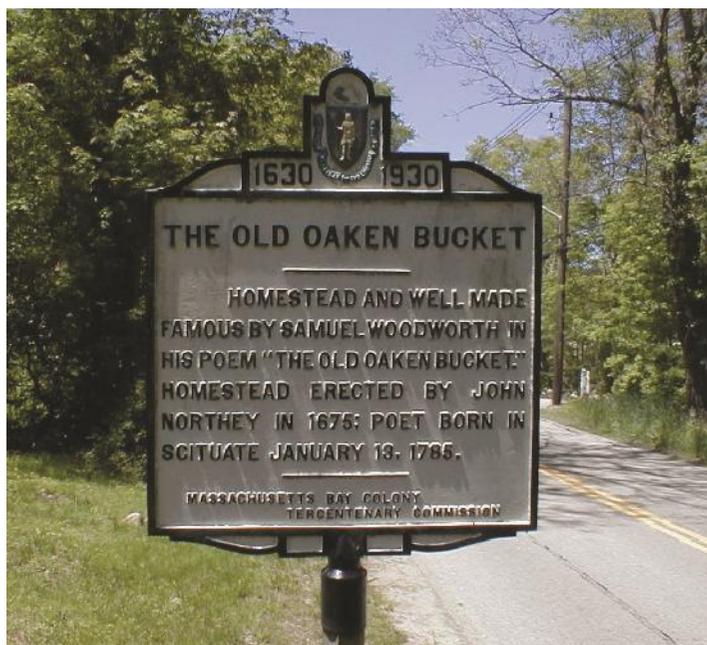
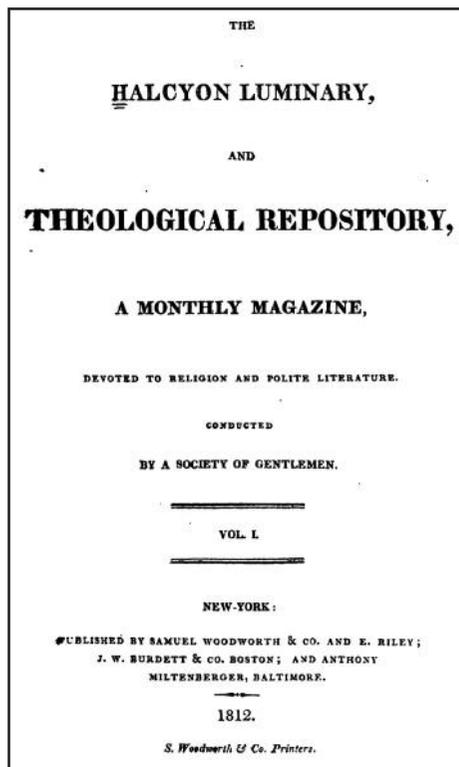


**March &
April 2017**
Number 457

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



See page 14 -
Redemption's Wondrous Plan



Southend Society Closing Service

Southend-on-Sea Society has had to take the sad decision to close.

We will be holding our Closing Service of Thanksgiving on Saturday 13 May at 2.30pm. The service will be followed by afternoon tea.

Visitors are very welcome. If you are able to come and to stay for refreshments afterwards I would be grateful if you can let me know in advance in order to help with planning the catering arrangements.

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Southend-on-Sea Christmas 2016

Potter and Clay

Jeremiah the prophet was told to go to the house of the potter and there he would hear the Lord's message (Jeremiah 18: 3-4) *So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.*

Jeremiah was then inspired to see the process of the potter working with clay in ways that reflected more of the Lord as the 'potter' and how the nation is more like clay that doesn't work easily. The inspiration from the Lord comes to us through the things we know, the things we already understand and can use as ideas or concepts. Give us clay, pastry or dough and we casually work it into shapes, squash it back and make something different again.

Thinking about changing things can be hard work. Taking a piece of clay and making it into a shape is simple; changing that shape into something else is often destructive - squashing all traces of the first shape out before starting again. The Lord asks Jeremiah to think about the relationship of the people and the Lord in this potter and clay situation and that same sort of question is something we can think about for our own situations too. I know things in my life aren't always done to the best of my ability, or that I frequently fail to live up to what I think of as the best standards. Yet the Lord allows me to make changes gradually as I adjust my habits or learn better ways of doing things rather than making me change in ways I that would stop me being 'me' - nothing as drastic as a potter squashing clay and starting again.

My pottery skills begin and end at thumb pots - a ball of clay with thumb or finger pushed into the ball to make a crude hole. A bit of further fiddling and it may become more of a bowl or tea light holder, but never anything really fancy. If I was to then try and enhance my design I'd probably make it worse, not better, and would end up with something unfit for any purpose. Yet the Lord invites us to consider how He works with us. There is change but it is gradual and works from where we are and what we have available now. The Lord doesn't work by destroying us and squashing us into a blob so He can start again, He works with us as we are now and makes adjustments towards achieving the potential he knows is in us. That doesn't mean life feels easy or lacks challenges but the way of the Lord is essentially gentle and caring, not destructive, hurtful or needlessly cruel. Finding our way to try and work with this process of gradual change and development is our own personal spiritual challenge.

Rev Christine Bank

Editorial

Lee Differ is one of our current Ordination Students who is in his first year of study. At Conference last summer he gave a personal introduction which drew upon his great love of music and the Writings and how he came to find the latter through the former. I have printed his introduction in full in this issue so that readers who do not yet know Lee can better appreciate his background.

In the centre section of this issue you will find a series of articles which all relate to Easter in some way beginning with an article by Rev John Elliott on Samuel Woodworth and the hymn we find in Songs for Worship 292.

This series of articles is followed by what is effectively a letter from Rev David Gaffney, Spiritual Leader, to those friends affected by closing churches, but which of course we can all take to heart.

True worship of the Lord consists in performing useful services; and such services during a person's life in the world lie in a proper fulfilment of his function by each person, whatever his own position, that is, in serving his country, its communities, and his neighbour with all his heart. They also lie in honest dealings with fellow human beings and in the diligent discharge of duties, with full regard for each person's character. These useful deeds are the principal ways of exercising charity and the principal means of worshipping the Lord.

Arcana Caelestia 7038

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

www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk

New Church ideas in unexpected places

I'm no longer sure when I first became aware of finding what I regard as "New Church" ideas in unexpected places. In more recent years I have actively sought them out. I drew together some of these and presented them at the New Church College AGM at Swedenborg House in July 2013.

Since then I have been intending to share some of these connections in Lifeline, whilst at the same time continuing to add to them. What follows is an example I have come across recently. I hope to share others as the Editor of Lifeline sees fit.

William Barclay was a university theology professor but also someone who believed passionately in making the sort of scholarship he shared with his students more widely available. One way that he did this was by writing biblical commentaries. Some SOLCe modules make use of his Daily Study Bible series. In his commentary on Mark's gospel we read:

These were the messianic ideas which were in people's minds when Jesus came. They were violent, nationalistic, destructive, vengeful. True, they ended in the perfect reign of God, but they came to it through a bath of blood and a career of conquest. Think of Jesus set against a background like that. No wonder he had to re-educate his disciples in the meaning of Messiahship; and no wonder he was crucified in the end as a heretic. There was no room for a cross and there was little room for suffering love in a picture like that.

(New Daily Study Bible The Gospel of Mark by William Barclay p. 230)

I have found the similarity between this extract and the following quotation from Swedenborg quite striking:

When used in reference to the Jewish Church 'a he-goat of the she-goats' means those who considered internal truths to be worthless; but they did accept external truths, insofar as these were in accord with their loves, which were their desire to be the greatest and to be the wealthiest people. Consequently they did not think of their expected Christ or Messiah as anyone other than a king who would exalt them above all nations and peoples throughout the world and would make these subject to them as the meanest slaves. This was the level to which they reduced their love of Him. As for what love towards the neighbour was, they had no knowledge at all, except as being associated with others with whom they shared the exalted position referred to above and as enjoying material gain.
Arcana Coelestia 4769/2

New Christian Bible Study Project - an update

2017 is off to a good start for the New Christian Bible Study Project. Here are some highlights:

- We're now on pace to welcome more than 1,000,000 visits this year!
- We added new site interfaces in Portuguese (200 million speakers) and German (100 million speakers). Those match up with Bible translations in those languages, and Swedenborg's works in those languages.
- We just imported chapter-level explanations of the inner meaning of the 4 Gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Have a look!
- We also imported our first-ever Georgian translation - Heaven and Hell - and our second Swedish one - Divine Love (Den Gudomliga kärleken).
- The site is bigger, faster, better looking and easier to navigate than ever.

What next? We're pushing forward on several fronts.

The Writings for Everyone: We're trying to make sure that people all over the world can read Swedenborg's works in a comfortable language.

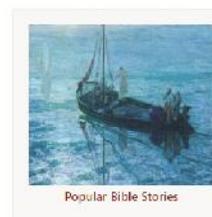
Explain the whole Word: We have a lot of commentary in the system already, and yet... there are still a lot of gaps. There's old New Church commentary on the whole Word. We're importing it, and we're going to make it as easy as we can for people to modernize it, and translate it.

Make Bible Study Pathways: Our site's chock full of information. Lots of truth! One step we're hoping to take soon is to make it easier for people to follow paths through the site, and through the Word, so they can follow their needs and interests, and make steady, visible progress on their spiritual journeys.

Steve David Project Manager

The New Christian Bible Study

Read the Bible, and explore the New Christian perspective on its inner meaning.



respond to prayer in their own way. But I would be surprised if the Lord isn't prompting you to carry on meeting in some way if you can: reading His word, sharing fellowship, and living His way.

I can only suggest that you continue to try to care for each other in your various needs, as I'm sure you will, and to start to think about practical ways in which you can meet and worship the Lord together. I would imagine that in most cases this could be in people's houses, as is already being done by many; in a nice room, perhaps with a small table as a centrepiece, perhaps a linen table cloth, a copy of the Word, a candle, a silver cup and plate. Perhaps a rota of houses can be arranged or whatever is suitable. The fellowship and the worship can still be had.

The real life of the church is to live the life itself. Everything else is a means to that end. When we meet, we take on nourishment and support from the Word, the Holy Spirit of the Lord, and from each other; and we go out into the world and bear witness to the Lord in whatever way we can; by the example of the lives we live and our charitable approaches to others. This is the real life and work of the church; in my view, the surroundings in which we take on board that nourishment are in reality of subordinate importance. They cease to be a support if they have become a burden.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

Rev David Gaffney, Spiritual Leader

Lead a choice session at Conference

Volunteers are needed to lead a choice session at Swanwick this summer.

There are plans to have a choice session on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, so you could do either (or both) if you wish. Topics should interest an adult New Church audience, but be different to the normal day-time business and worship.

If you are interested, please contact **Richard Cunningham** who is presently compiling the programme. You can reach him via email on:

richard.cunningham@generalconference.org.uk

I very much doubt if William Barclay came across, let alone read Swedenborg. Having said that, there is a possible channel of communication in this respect. William Barclay refers to George Macdonald on a number of occasions. One of these has a similar sentiment to the extract quoted above, although it is given in a different context:

*They all were looking for a king
To slay their foes and lift them high;
Thou cam'st, a little baby thing,
That made a woman cry.*

There have long been suggestions that George Macdonald knew of and was indeed well-read in Swedenborg (possibly through his experience of cataloguing the library of a house in north-west Scotland) but this in itself is speculative, let alone any chartable influence through Macdonald of Swedenborg on Barclay.

What seems more likely is that Barclay thought deeply about many aspects of his Christian faith. Part of this was a willingness to "stand out from the crowd" in some of the positions he takes in his writing.

I can't help feeling that this was significant in the case of a number of people I have come across who have written or said something which I find reminiscent of Swedenborg. Are these glimpses of the "New Church", even if they have no direct contact with what Swedenborg wrote? That is difficult to say, however suggestive I find these echoes. However, I can't help feeling that part of the Second Coming may well be the Lord's ability to suggest new ideas to those who are able to hear them, whatever their religious affiliation.

David Lomax

Editor's Note:

It seems that Swedenborg's name appears in two of George Macdonald's books - *Robert Falconer* and *Adela Cathcart*. In both cases the text refers to "Swedenborg's hells". This might suggest that he was at least aware of and had probably read *Heaven and Hell*.

Address Change

Gwendolen Rowe

01282 345873

Lee Differ - a personal introduction

At Conference in July 2016 Lee Differ, who is currently in his first year as an Ordination Student, gave the following personal introduction.

.....

Good evening, everyone. I suspect that, over the past twenty-four hours or so, some of you might have been observing, from a reassuringly safe distance, the new kid on the block, asking your friends or family members with a quite natural curiosity, 'Who's that fella, there - he wasn't here last year, or the year before, or the year before that, and now, heaven forbid, someone's gone and given the chap a microphone. What on earth's happening?!' Well, you'd be quite right to ask! Wisely anticipating such questions, Helen Brown has kindly asked me to say a few words, by way of introduction, as to who I might be, and what on earth it is that I think that I might be doing here!

If you've perhaps taken a glance at this month's Lifeline, or even bravely ventured close enough to read my name badge and have a chat, you might already know that I'm Lee Differ, and that I'm delighted to have been accepted recently, by Council, as a sponsored student for ministry in the New Church. You might also perhaps know, from the same Lifeline article, a little of my background (which, I'm afraid, is not New Church at all!) and how it is that I come to be here. So, I won't bore you here with repetitions of biographical detail available elsewhere, as (a) I have the microphone for only a mercifully short time, and (b) because, like most such material, mine too consists of nothing much more than relatively uninteresting, and merely incidental, factoids. Rather, I would speak, as I hope you might have me speak, of those things that, enliven, enthuse and bring me here, for this latter will certainly tell you more than the former ever could.

As many of you know, for the past twenty years, I've been working in music, lecturing and performing principally in the music college and university music department environment, alongside undertaking other freelance work in ensemble and orchestral conducting. Having been involved with it for so a long time, I'd like to speak first a little about music itself, and share with you something of my response to those friends and acquaintances who, over the past few months, have been asking, in a genuinely concerned way, 'Lee, why on earth is it that you're moving away from music? What's going on?! And you're going to be doing WHAT????!!! Talking about Sweden- WHO????!! We're all very concerned about you, and the state of your mental well-being!!!' To which my basic response has, perhaps rather cryptically, been: I'm not, I'm not moving away from music at all.

To those friends affected by closing churches

One of the main emotions many people must feel when their church is inevitably about to close is guilt; guilt that it has finally come to this and perhaps a feeling that you are partly to blame. I would like to assure you that you are not. We live in a rapidly changing world. There has probably been more change in terms of technology and values over the last - say - seventy years than in the previous seven thousand, and in that seventy years many fashions and fads have come and gone. We can't be expected to keep up with them. The public have gone on an adventurous trip elsewhere in order to find meaning in their lives. The old religions were something which quite often were seen by many as irrational, controlling and bombastic, and people generally wanted to escape from that. In the sixties, many went to India to search out a Guru. A friend of mine in the seventies told me he had gone to India to find God and then eventually found Him in a church around the corner. People have options these days and they want to explore them. The consequence for us is dwindling numbers in our churches. Another reason for this, I believe, is about people taking responsibility for themselves as opposed to following the crowd to church as they did once. Ironically, this is about people exercising their God given gifts of rationality and freedom which we associate with the New Church.

As our churches close, we are bound to grieve; because we are losing something we love; something we are familiar with which has served us most of our lives. To many of us, our churches are inextricably linked to the habits of a lifetime. The people, the happy times, the get togethers, the tea and bun do's, the salmon paste sandwiches, the music, the concerts, the children, the energy, the chatter and the Tom-foolery.

There can be sheer joy on entering into a church building with its reverential atmosphere, beautiful correspondential objects of gold and silver, the light shining through the stained glass, the polished mahogany and the red carpets, the copy of the Word possibly resting atop of a brass eagle representing introspection from the Word of the Lord, and the list goes on; simply beautiful.

But the Lord said, "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev 21:5). Who knows what He has in store for the future, all we can do is plough on and endeavour to follow His command in every new situation, there are no other options. Most people who are closely associated with a closing church are probably getting on in years, some may not have the energy to get up and start again, some may have. There will always be some who will lead the way and some who will follow; that has always been the case. But what could you or we possibly do?

Prayer, I think, is the first answer, and every individual and group will need to

A Warm Spring

The account in Luke's gospel of the disciples walking to Emmaus and being met by the risen Lord, whom they do not recognise, is one of the most beautiful and thought provoking of the stories of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances. It is perhaps particularly so because of these words:



And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. Luke 24:25-27

As we know from Luke's account it is only when they arrive at Emmaus and Jesus blesses and breaks bread before them that the disciples finally recognise him. And then Jesus vanishes. But why does this happen in Emmaus?

Apparently Emmaus is one of those biblical places that is really hard to locate. Various locations have been put forward as having been the Emmaus of Luke's gospel but there doesn't seem to be one that a majority of scholars agree upon. Place names change over the centuries and millennia so it is not surprising that a place mentioned just once in the Bible cannot be reliably located in practice.

But perhaps what is important about Emmaus is not its physical location but its potential spiritual meaning. Look up the name Emmaus in one of the many online Bible commentaries and you will soon find that the name means 'a warm spring'. Not of course a warm season of the year but warm springs of water rising out of the ground. This is where Jesus reveals himself to his disciples.

The Writings tell us that 'springs of water' stand for truths from the Lord and his Word (see *Arcana Caelestia* 2702). And the fact that they are 'warm' surely involves the idea of love and goodness.

Perhaps then this story of Emmaus can remind us that we will recognise the Lord when we love truth for the good that it can do when applied in daily living.

Maybe we will find Jesus in a warm spring.

It might be useful to spend a little time reflecting on this idea, that one is never moving away from music. You see, in the Writings, Swedenborg tells us on so many occasions of the enormous efforts which the Lord continually invests so as to reach us, and thus we Him. As His essential nature is Love, and a love infinitely beyond our comprehension, what He can make known of Himself He does so by truths emanating directly from that Love, which, like labourers harvesting in the field, work within us when we accept them, in order to fit us to receive yet more of the life which the very source of that life intends for us.

But, inevitably, there are truths regarding the Lord which, given the very limited intellectual capacity of both humans and spirits in the lower realms, can only be communicated to them, to us, through the higher, spiritual and celestial angels, by means, Swedenborg says, of sounds, sounds which he speaks of in the unpublished works - indescribably beautiful sounds which make their way down from the higher spheres (indeed, emanating from the Lord Himself) gradually to the lower. Those spirits that hear them remain transfixed in wonder, as these sounds, perhaps like the truths to which they correspond, seem to work directly upon their interior state - sounds, which, one would presume, make their way eventually to us here, through the efforts of those who are able to capture and transmit them, in a form best suited to our rather coarse faculties of perception.

For us, however, located physically, in the illusion of a supposed here and now, music comes to present itself as the experience of structured time, requiring as it does, time, and space, through which to be transmitted and work its effects upon us. But we know full well now, and have done for a century at least, that the space-time we experience here is illusory, not real, and yet, by way of the medium of music, the Lord penetrates it, simultaneously working through it and negating it, in order to work upon our inner life, re-order us, and heighten our awareness of, almost making directly palpable, the ever-present celestial, outside of space-time. If that, then, is what music does - work on and effect the state of the interiors of both people and, in the higher realms, angels - then it should perhaps should come as little surprise to us that music, [and, no, it's not just Mozart!] enhances, as is well-known, the all-round performance of our schoolchildren, as it is doubtless having the same effect on them, flowing in from the Lord, through the heavens, working away at their interiors, re-structuring, and bringing all into order, just like anything that flows in from the Lord, as Swedenborg repeatedly says in the natural just as the spiritual - not that one could ever attempt to explain such a possibility to even the most progressive of educational psychologists (although it's a nice thought that ground-breaking research in this regard functions in itself as a scientific proof of what Swedenborg himself details, even in the unpublished works.

So what, then, might music be, if that which we experience of it here, even by way of the illusion of space-time, is able to do this, effecting our interiors so profoundly as to improve and re-order them!

As these sounds emanate from the Lord Himself, moving through the heavens, in order to finally reach us, it could be argued that, in a certain way, music is something not altogether unlike a form of 'Word' itself, with its own unending, and presently untranslatable, inaccessible degrees of inner meaning, significance, and 'internal' function. Extending all the way, from the Lord Himself, to us here, where we perceive only its outermost, yet nonetheless utterly enchanting, form, what we experience, emanating as it does from the very source of things, might be something of that source its very self, revealing something of its own interior to us, by way of the only means available for it to do so. Or, like the angels of the higher spheres of which we often read in the Writings, music perhaps comes down to us as a form of gentle protection, both surrounding and lifting us into the higher degrees of heaven in order to have us experience, for a brief moment, the indescribable bliss of such a place, doing so (as the poet Rilke says) without destroying us. Not that those two ideas mutually exclude each other, of course! Such is its value that even the atheist philosopher Nietzsche would declare that life, without music, would be a mistake, without perhaps ever realising that what he might actually have been saying in that famous aphorism was that without the Lord, and His heaven, there is no life a life for which music, in itself, acts as a conduit.

It's perhaps no accident then that many a non-believer, when in the midst of music transmitted to us by a Bach, or a Bruckner, say that, when steeped in the experience of such a work, they believe - unquestioningly, they believe. Proof perhaps, indeed, if it were needed, of the interiors being lifted into a state of heavenly perception by virtue of this miraculous medium.

And Swedenborg is not the only one to see it thus. In the revelations reportedly received through a 19th-century Austrian, one Jakob Lorber, revelations from a man who was himself a dedicated reader of Swedenborg, and in whose work the master from Uppsala is mentioned on a number of occasions by name, it seems that the Lord attempts to communicate to us the fact that music really is nothing other than the true language of the spirit which cannot ever be verbally translated as its beginnings do indeed lie buried deep within that which is in itself incomprehensible, namely, Himself. Because of these origins, the experience of music arouses within every soul's very centre a yearning for its true homeland, for music is the means, from within His own self, that the Lord uses directly to show us the road to that very homeland, and thus His very self. In the Lorber writings, the Lord, then, exhorts us directly to 'Use music to show others the road to their inner life, and thus to Me! For see', He says, 'within every single harmony, only one sound ever prevails as the fundamental tone, serving everything else as a basis, and permeating all, and that sound is: I am. Behold - without tone, nothing is.'

So, the Lord Himself says 'Use music to show others the road to their inner life, and thus to Me!' as it is the Lord, in Himself, both generating it, and operating

“Do not be afraid”

What a shock the women were in for when they visited Jesus' tomb on that Easter Sunday morning. On Friday they had stood at the foot of the cross, their hearts full of horror and grief; now without any warning they were met by the risen Lord! Jesus was alive, all glorious to behold. What a mix of emotions they must have felt: amazement, awe, bewilderment and fear. I'm sure that it would be such emotions as these that I would feel if I were suddenly and unexpectedly met by the Lord in His risen glory.

We tend to live our lives immersed in the world and our own selfish agenda, so a first encounter with the Lord and a call to the spiritual life can be scary. The realization that the Lord sees everything we do and knows even our deepest and most intimate secrets can be very frightening. The fear may grow when we ponder what our encounter with the Lord is going to mean for our lives. What am I going to have to give up? Where am I going to find the strength to sustain a spiritual life? Am I really willing to surrender all control over my own life by putting it in the Lord's hands? No wonder many avert their eyes and attention from the Lord. Yet His response to us is the same as it was to the Easter women, "Do not be afraid". These words signify renewal by Him. Instead of being a terrifying power beyond our endurance, Jesus proves to be a gentle and loving friend. He accommodates Himself to our individual state; He measures and controls His presence with us to just that level that is healthy and helpful for us. The message of Easter Day is that Jesus did not come on earth to pour out His wrath upon us, but to help us, save us, and make us happier.

We need never fear the Lord, except in one particular sense, represented by words of the psalmist, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." [Psalm 111:10] Such fear is not a terror of sufferings that the Lord might inflict upon us but rather, "a fear lest harm is done to the Lord in any way.... and so to good and truth in any way." [Arcana Coelestia 3718]. To fear the Lord is to fear hurting Him or harming His kingdom in any way. Such fear is not terror, but rather respect, worship, awe, and love.

Because of the Lord's Easter victory we need have no fear of evil or death. The forces of hell have no power to harm those in whom the Lord lives. Because He has conquered hell in His life, hell can never conquer anyone in whom He now lives. Indeed, by His resurrection Jesus has overcome death and the grave. He is resurrection life, and those in whom He lives He will also raise from death to life in heaven. The Risen Lord brings spiritual renewal. His Easter greeting, "Do not be afraid", brings comfort, hope, and strength. Where there is Jesus, there is ultimately nothing to be afraid of, for He brings to our life the gifts of faith, hope, and love.

Rev Robert Gill

“to lay down one’s life”

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. John 15:12 -13

For me what comes through strongly from this passage is the Lord’s eager desire for us to listen and take His advice. At Easter time He laid down His life and resurrected it as an example for us to follow. If you have ever tried to guide a young person you dearly love you will surely feel the Lord’s desire for us to listen to and act on His words. After giving us guidance He must then leave us in freedom to choose or reject it. So, we are to love each other as He has loved us. That is curious because we know that the Lord loves us more than we could ever love others. Unless that is, the Lord can only love us to the extent we are open to receiving His love. Then, the more we are able to receive the more we are able to love others. Once we realise that we have the eternal, capacity to increase our reception of His love, then these words take on a more progressive feel.

The Lord also tells us that the greatest love we can have is through laying down our lives. Does this mean we are to lay down our physical lives for others as He Himself did for us all? If we think about it, the Lord did not just lay down His physical life, He also laid down the life which could have prospered Him in the world. He could have had power over any or all the kingdoms of the world. As we read in Matthew: *the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. ‘All this I will give you,’ he said, ‘if you will bow down and worship me.’* In resisting such a temptation the Lord shows that it was not just His physical life which He laid down. So what else might be meant by the Lord laying down His life? He was mocked and scorned, humiliated, tortured and crucified. Can we imagine what we might do if people did that to us unjustly and we knew that we could easily free ourselves from it? How much more could the Lord have shown them the power they were dealing with!

But no, He also laid down all these things for our sake. In truth, that which the Lord laid down for us is more than we could ever imagine. It was in doing this that the Lord shows us the life we are to lay down: the life of self pride, of vengeance, greed, self seeking, holding grudges, jealousy etc. It is only by laying down these things and the like that we are truly able to love one another as He has loved us.

Amazingly, the Lord loves us so much that He would even desire that we were equal to Him! We never could be of course, but we can grow more in His image. By commanding us the Lord offers us a mechanism for growing into an image of Him. Through His death and resurrection He shows that we need not fear to lay these things down, because it is only by doing so that we can acquire His life and become true friends of the Lord’s.

Rev Jack Dunion

through it.

Hardly surprising, then, that in the messages received by a 20th Century Italian mystic, one Maria Valtorta (many of whose ideas, like Lorber’s, correspond quite closely to the content of the Writings) when Maria asks of the Lord: ‘Lord, what then is your response to the atheists, and all who deny you?’ the Lord replies ‘Maria, my child, do you not know? It’s music.’ It’s perhaps hardly surprising also, that in that same body of work, we find paradise itself described by the Lord as luminous harmony.

It’s with a gentle smile then, that I can recall over the years, as a musician, having spent countless hours, with those all too ready to identify themselves with the appellation ‘atheist’, discussing with them, and they with me, exceedingly intensely, and with utmost conviction, their most profound love of music, and how they simply couldn’t cope if it ever were to be taken away from them. And there He is again, right in their own very heart, the great fundamental tone, the great I AM, the great initial vibration in whose overtones, whose harmonics, whose world, we are all gently caught. As it says in the Hindu Bhagavad Gita, *anything, anything at all, that we see of beauty in the world, and experience some desire to possess, or conjoin ourselves to, that attractiveness, that beauty, is nothing but the Lord, for everything there is, is from Him, is out of Him, as Swedenborg also describes - the Lord has brought forth all from Himself, and not from nothing.* So, perhaps there might come an opportunity to gently and kindly hint to our supposedly atheist friends and colleagues, that everything they have ever loved in this world, everything to which they have ever been attracted, IS the Lord, and that the very feeling of love which they’ve experienced for the object or person of their desire, that feeling, too, is nothing but the Lord, operating within them.

It’s no surprise in the least to find the Lord referred to in the Word AS the Word, or, in John’s Greek, the Logos, as that word itself, Logos, did not just mean ‘word’ to the ancient Greeks, but also ratio, just proportion, and therefore beauty. And what, is ratio, proportion, and beauty, or Logos, in sound?! It is, of course, the Lord, but, perhaps under the effect of the illusion of time and space, we choose to call it music.

So, in answer to my friends’ queries of why it is that I’m moving away from music, and supposedly throwing it all away, my response is - how could that ever in the least be possible? I’m not moving away from music at all, I’m only ever moving closer to it, as are we all.

And one final thought on this topic - music, whilst it works quietly away in our internal, like other truths from the Lord, re-ordering our interiors, it also, in its external aspect, helps us to fulfil the Lord’s two great commandments, thus even further ensuring our path home to the celestial; for, in singing and performing, it

brings individuals together in concert (as Helen said, it's a great connector) thus promoting love of the neighbour, in the act of rendering a phenomenon, which, as we've seen, in itself, clears our path to, and promotes our love for, the Lord. So, I'm afraid, via music, that the Lord has us captured every which way! No surprise then, that it was through music that I first came both to Him, and, eventually, to the Writings.

With regard, then, to the Writings, and on the topic of reaching out to those who do not know of them ... I was fortunate enough, just last week, to spend an evening in the company of some old friends of mine who happen to subscribe to the school of so-called progressive Christian (i.e., Protestant) theology (which, by the way, in comparison to the content of the Writings, is barely progressive at all [!] but, that aside .) After chatting with them, I took the time to review some of the advances made in this branch of theology in recent decades by arguably one of its most renowned exponents (who, by the way, will be coming to the UK, the Midlands, in October), the now-retired American bishop, John Shelby Spong (a name which might be familiar to some of you). The plague of evangelical fundamentalists, his latest book, which deals with the many potential heresies inherent in narrow-minded biblical literalism, outlines but one of the many areas of his theology which, after years of careful thought and study, he has slowly produced, much to the chagrin of many of his fellow Protestants. His progressive theology includes postulates such as: the Bible, he dares to say, is probably filled with reams of inner meanings (but we don't yet know what they could be), and, the Lord wasn't simply born as the Lord, but had to gradually become the Lord, and, furthermore, the act of the cross was not one of an expiatory sacrifice for sin, as such an idea is barbaric, revealing a primitive idea of God, and should now be totally discarded. Now, hang on there, is it me, or is this beginning to ring any bells?!

These, and a number of his other ideas, seem to me, without doubt, to be pushing toward the teachings of the new church (and seem to be proof of the presence of the Lord with all those who profess him), but it will take our progressive Protestant brothers and sisters hundreds of years, given their present rate of work, to attain to anywhere near that which we have been blessed to have in our possession already for a quarter of a millennium now. What we have, then, in our possession, is a very great light, a light of which our brothers and sisters in the wider Christian world might be in very great need (and which might, after all, spare them years of internal struggle!).

Would it be prudent then, henceforth, to keep such a great light under a bushel whilst of course, at the same time, always being mindful of the risk involved to others of potentially profaning that which the Lord has given. I think, in this year's Conference papers, that David Gaffney and David Haseler have reminded us both of the Lord's own continuing work in bringing the concepts found in Swedenborg's writings to the attention of our brothers and sisters of all

over the city of Jerusalem. We can perhaps also see that Jesus weeping over Jerusalem can be interpreted at several levels.

Firstly we can consider Jerusalem as the City of David, built on the hills, encompassing the great Temple built by Herod, the centre of Jewish faith and life. Jesus weeps over *this* Jerusalem because the teachers of the law enforce religious law without any concern for the goodness that should be at the heart of it. Remember, for example, that Jesus said:

But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.

and

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

Going deeper we might then see Jerusalem as picturing the Jewish church as a whole or the prevailing spiritual consciousness of the time which was devoid or empty of any love, goodwill and charity - having a faith that was just a shell based on truth that had been perverted. Jesus weeps over *this* Jerusalem because he knows that this spiritual dispensation is at a dead end and a new one is about to begin.

But can we perhaps go deeper still?

To do so we must begin to look within ourselves and see how the events of Palm Sunday mirror the way the Lord enters into our own inner spiritual lives. If we allowed the Lord to enter the core of our inner being would he be met with recognition, praise and thanksgiving or indifference or even hatred by some unregenerate part of us? Would he be met by a faith that has a heart of goodwill for others or just an empty shell of pretence? Would Jesus weep over the church within us, that is, the union of good and truth or goodwill and faith within us because it is a shadow of what it could be?

Perhaps that is something we ought to quietly reflect on Palm Sunday.

Alan Misson

city would do so in their place.

Swedenborg tells us the following about 'crying out' in Arcana Caelestia 5323:

As a "cry" also is an act that corresponds to a living confession or acknowledgment from faith, the rite of crying out was observed among the ancients when this confession was to be signified; and for this reason "crying" or "shouting" is frequently mentioned in the Word in connection with confession and acknowledgment from faith.

I am sure we would not find it hard to see that stones represent basic down to earth truths in all their forms. Recall, for example, that David killed Goliath with a stone and Jesus is referred to as the cornerstone or foundation stone that the builders rejected. Jesus is making the point that the truth we know, even at its most basic natural level, ought to give witness to Jesus as God with us, the King who comes in the name of the Lord. This is a concept we find in Isaiah 28:16,17 which uses the image of a wall being built:

"Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'Whoever believes will not be in haste.' And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plumb line;

On Palm Sunday we should let even the very foundation stones of our own belief cry out "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

Before Luke continues with an account of Jesus cleansing the temple he adds a passage not found in any of the other gospels.

*And when he drew near and saw the city, he **wept** over it, saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation." Luke 19:41-44*

Isn't it true that sometimes we become upset and perhaps even cry out over some dreadful event we see happening in the world around especially if it is something that has happened through the callous indifference or hatred of one group of people for another. Such feelings arise from a mixture of love for the people involved and sadness and grief that such a situation should occur.

In such feelings we may begin to grasp the feelings Jesus had when he wept

denominations, and the need for us to be a potential means of further growth for them by bringing their attention to the inestimable gift that we ourselves have in the form of these Writings.

So, then, to round off, and in answer to my initial question of what an earth it is I think that I, an old errant son of Rome, might be doing here: (a) I'm certainly not moving away from music in the least, as it constantly emanates from the Lord (b) I'm here to explore and share with you all, in great depth, the joy of the Writings we've been given, and (c) in doing so, I hope to be able to extend to our friends travelling along similar spiritual paths the hand of friendship that will enable them, too, to make the connections and join up the varying dots of their own interior experience, all of which might help, at least in some small way, to bring about the development on earth of that which will, as Swedenborg says, become the crown of all churches.

Right, before I commend this paper to the house and clear the floor, just a little amusing fact by way of the Lord Himself, in the form of His Providence, which I recalled, with a little chuckle to myself, just the other day. I initially came to the writings of Swedenborg by way of a very brief reference to them in the theoretical works of one Arnold Schoenberg, a Viennese composer active a century ago. Prior to studying Swedenborg, I was a student of the work of this Schoenberg, but how was it that I came to this Schoenberg, who in turn eventually led me to Swedenborg? Well, one of the earliest recordings I had of Schoenberg's music, and which was just so exciting that I listened to it repeatedly, repeatedly, repeatedly, (you know, just how you do when you're a youngster, listening repeatedly to some thrillingly exciting track, you know, like Perry Como, or Ken Dodd) was a recording of his First Chamber Symphony, but a performance not in its original version for chamber orchestra, but in the composer's later version of it for full symphony orchestra, and this performance of the orchestral version, was given by the BBC Symphony orchestra, conducted by one Lionel Friend. So, Lionel helped lead me to Schoenberg, Schoenberg led me to Swedenborg, and, well, some time later, here we are! In that detail, I think, lies the tiny, subtle little signature of Providence, guiding every detail, and smiling gently at us, as we glimpse it, in hindsight, amazed.

Thank you.

Lee Differ

Lifeline Deadlines	Latest date for copy	Publication
May/June	Friday 21st April	First week of May
July/August	Friday 16th June	First week of July

Intelligence in Old Age

I can't remember precisely when I joined Mensa but it was in the early 1950s and, apart from a short lapse, I have been a member ever since. I am now over 85. I doubt that I would now qualify - the intelligence has worn off a bit - but it has been a comfort to me to reflect from time to time that I must once, at any rate, have been reasonably bright. With old age intelligence tends, not to fail exactly, but to change into something else - a kind of tortoise mentality whilst modern life slips away much more quickly than ever it did before portable telephones, computers, high speed travel, television and so forth - and meanwhile terrible things are happening to the English language.

I was never very competitive, and puzzles now simply annoy me. As the brain demands more energy, so we are more sparing with it. Something strange seems also to have happened with academia: the pursuit of learning has been overtaken by an obsessive desire to succeed by scoring points - a tendency evident in the popularity of quiz shows requiring stores of information rather than creative thinking.

As the years fall away so do one's lifelong friends and relations. The challenge of bereavement brings loneliness but intelligence helps in coming to terms with the need to make sense of mortality. In my case it has fostered an increasing interest in religion and theology. The Christian Forum (Mensa special interest group) offers a link with others who wrestle with the meanings of life and death. The ever-present menace of senility makes urgent demands upon one's mental resources.

People of my generation have survived a horrific war and now a technological revolution. It is scarcely surprising that we are left with the nasty feeling that this world is really not a very safe place to be. Everything used to be so simple didn't it? When my telephone bill comes it consists of seven or eight pages, closely printed and full of mathematical information I don't need. I am expected to reply using methods quicker than the speed of thought. Likewise, other bodies will only talk to me by pressing buttons. The all-powerful intelligence that apparently governs our lives is, after all, we suspect, only artificial. Maybe we are all only artificial. I have wasted more time arguing with my computer than I have ever gained from the use of it.

Because I am old, I do not trust calculators and computers as I should. I will do the sum again on a piece of paper to make doubly sure that the machine was right. I long ago stubbornly abandoned e-mail and devoted myself to the Royal Mail - one of the finest and most civilised organisations ever devised by the wit of man. Thank God it still takes a day or two for a letter to reach its destination - long enough to regret the content of the message and wish I had put it differently. When a letter comes for me I can usually, with intelligence, recognise the

Jesus weeps over Jerusalem

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is one of those episodes in the Gospels which is full of drama and spectacle. Firstly we have two of the disciples being sent by Jesus to find a colt on which no one has ever sat and being primed what to say if the owner questions their need of the animal. Then we have cloaks thrown on the colt and on the road as Jesus makes his progress towards Jerusalem.

But I want to concentrate on what Luke tells us happened next and what Jesus said. Luke tells us:

As he was drawing near - already on the way down the Mount of Olives - the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" Luke 19:37-38

Picture Jesus riding slowly down from the Mount of Olives across the top of the Kidron Valley and up into the city, possibly through the gate described in Acts chapter 3 as the Beautiful Gate. All around is a multitude of his disciples who are rejoicing and praising God for all the mighty works they had seen. Notice what Luke is telling us - the people are thanking God for all the wonderful things Jesus has done and they really recognise Jesus for who he is and in an echo of Psalm 118 they shout out:

"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

But amongst all the happiness and joy there are those who are against Jesus. Can you picture them lurking in the shadows, criticising Jesus' at every step and objecting to the praise and adulation the people are showering on Jesus? Luke captures this brilliantly with his description:

And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." Luke 19:39

And Luke then follows this by giving us Jesus' words:

"I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out." Luke 19:40

Jesus is having nothing to do with the Pharisees demands and instead shows them that what is taking place is so important and so worthy of praise and thanksgiving to God that even if the people could not shout out the walls of the

satans, or evil spirits. (The rhythm and metre of the poem demands that *fiends* must be pronounced as a single syllable – *feends*, not *fee-unds*.)

In the concluding verse the author returns to his wonder and astonishment that He who is the creator and preserver of all things 'became a Man' to accomplish for human beings what no one else could achieve. It was an act of 'amazing mercy, love immense, surpassing every human sense.' The immensity of that mercy and love lies beyond all human powers of imagination ; it is mind-blowing, to use a modern way of speaking. The triumph over hell or the powers of evil and the consequent redemption of all mankind was the work of the Lord alone, and our gratitude to Him must be at the forefront of all our worship and praise. Samuel Wordsworth's poem is rightly included among our songs of praise.

In July this year the **Swedenborgian Church of North America**, previously known as the **General Convention of the Church of the New Jerusalem**, will be holding its annual meeting or convention in a suburb of Philadelphia, 200 years after people had gathered together in the same city for the very first convention. Plans for the celebration of this 'bicentennial' appear in the January issue of *the Messenger* and they are no doubt repeated elsewhere. Did Samuel Woodworth, I wonder, travel from New York city to Philadelphia to be present at that first convention? How long would the eighty-mile journey by stage-coach have taken him and other travellers in 1817? Well, whether or not he actually attended that first convention he was certainly present at the one held four years later in New York, for he was elected to be the secretary of it. And did his poem – which I have entitled *Redemption's wondrous plan*, since I do not know any other – feature in any way among the worship-services, lectures, discussions, and so on, during these and subsequent annual conventions? Will it have any place during the forthcoming annual meeting of the British Conference at the end of July, when the theme will be Heaven? After all the work **Heaven and Hell** focuses on the Lord before moving on to various aspects of angelic life.

Rev John Elliott

Editor's Note:

Here are the opening lines of *The Old Oaken Bucket* referred to on page 14.

*How dear to this heart are the scenes of my childhood,
When fond recollection presents them to view!
The orchard, the meadow, the deep-tangled wild-wood,
And every loved spot which my infancy knew!
And e'en the rude bucket that hung in the well—
The old oaken bucket, the iron-bound bucket,
The moss-covered bucket which hung in the well.*

handwriting before even opening the envelope - very satisfactory, one may say. You can tell quite a lot from someone's handwriting.

I remember when television stories usually followed a kind of sequential pattern. Now-a-days, however, the elements of the plot (if there is one) are flung at random and you are left to pick up the scattered pieces yourself. I am no good at this new logic. Maybe my intelligence has deserted me, but I think not: story telling has undergone a quantum leap into the unknown and I have just been left behind. 'Slow' television is a welcome innovation - no commentary, no sound-effects, no music - just vision and one's own private thoughts - wonderful!

Or perhaps it has something to do with memory. The short-term memory is usually the first to go. When it lets you down absent-mindedness takes over and you may begin to look stupid. But let us not jump to conclusions - the mind may be 'absent': it is not therefore dead. Old people like me often have rich and colourful long-term memories which, with intelligence, they can revisit and explore meaningfully all by themselves or to the boredom of their companions.

We hear about 'wise men', especially at Christmas, and tend to assume, of course, that they must be pretty old. The elderly can lay claim to wisdom because they have 'seen it all before' and can therefore foretell the probable outcome of a course of action: their intelligence is derived from experience. But, alas, this may no longer be true. The rate of social change is now so rapid that the wisdom of the aged soon becomes outmoded and we 'old duffers' must defer to the whizz-kids of today. Wise women, however, are different: theirs tends to be a kind of intuitive intelligence which is why, I suppose, they are so much better at the caring professions. These are, of course, only wild generalities on my part. No doubt someone has already done a properly disciplined research study of the whole age-related situation backed up with statistical evidence. I am simply saying here how it feels for me. Having spent short spells in hospital, I know that an active mind is a great help in enduring the experience. Practical goodness is worth more than scientific curiosity.

There are several fine charitable organisations doing the best they can for those of us in our declining years. I am thinking of Age UK, Age Concern and others who do wonderfully helpful work, especially for those who may be disabled or demented. They can be provided with Zimmers, hearing aids and talking books. But for those who still have our wits about us there may be not so much that need to be done. The day-centres where people can play party games, engage in community singing or bingo are no doubt a godsend for those who are lonely or isolated. Those of us blessed with high intelligence, however, may feel a different kind of isolation - a detachment of our own making that causes us to look stand-offish. We do not mean to be, but human relations in old age can be tricky. We can still make decisions - even good ones - but it is a slow process.

G Roland Smith

Redemption's Wondrous Plan

1
Oh for a seraph's golden lyre,
With chords of light and tones of fire,
To sing Jehovah's love;
To tell redemption's wondrous plan,
How God Himself came down to man,
That man might rise above.

2
His creatures fell: no pitying eye,
No mighty arm to save was nigh,
Or aid our feeble powers;
He saw, He came, He fought alone,
And conquered evils not His own,
That we might conquer ours.

3
Temptation's thorny path He trod,
In form a man, in soul a God,
And trod the path alone;
In vain the direst fiends assailed,
His mighty arm of power prevailed,
And hell was overthrown.

4
He passed the dismal vale of death,
The human frame resigned its breath,
And like a mortal died;
But death was crushed beneath His feet,
He rose both God and Man complete,
His Human Glorified.

5
Amazing mercy, love immense,
Surpassing every human sense
Since sense and time began;
That man might shun the realms of pain,
And know and love his God again,
His God became a Man!

Samuel Woodworth 1785-1842

Samuel Woodworth was an American poet, recognised perhaps most of all for his *The Old Oaken Bucket*; but he was also a play-write, composer of libretti, and by profession a journalist and publisher. In short, he was a master of the written word. When he came to live and work in New York in 1808 he joined a group of people in that city who had been gathering together for New-Church worship as well as seeking to make known the teachings found in the religious works of Emanuel Swedenborg. Not long after his arrival among them his literary skills were employed in the publication of the first, but short-lived, American New-Church periodical, called the *Halcyon Luminary*; and his literary talents were called on again in 1823-1824, when he served as the editor and publisher of an equally short-lived journal entitled *The New Jerusalem Missionary*. The latter included, in 12 monthly parts, the English translation by John Clowes of the first nine chapters **Arcana Coelestia**.

Woodworth's poem set out above soon became a hymn used in New-Church services of worship. It has been included in four hymn-books published in Britain, three by the General Conference (1880, 1946, 1986) and one by the

New-Church Sunday School Union (1936); and it was no doubt being recited or sung by the author's fellow Americans in the years before it reached our shores.

The whole poem is an expression of the author's deep feelings of awe and wonder when he considers 'redemption's wondrous plan'. He finds this theme so amazing that he calls for a seraph's golden lyre, an instrument far more beautiful to behold and listen to than any on earth. The image of an angelic being holding a golden lyre comes from the fifth chapter of the Book of Revelation. True, verse 8 does not specifically say that the *citara* or lyre in the hand of each of the four living creatures and twenty-four elders was golden, but it is assumed to have been such because each of the four and the twenty-four was also holding a golden bowl full of incense. (One Christmas carol similarly speaks of 'angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold'.)

The theme of the poem or song is declared in simple, perhaps prosaic, words – Jehovah's love, the love of God Himself, was such that He 'came down to man, that man might rise above.' This sounds rather similar to what Irenaeus, a second-century Christian author wrote, 'God became what we are in order to make us what He is Himself.' But Woodworth was surely drawing on what is stated plainly in the heading above paragraph 82 of **The True Christian Religion** – 'Jehovah God came down and took upon Himself human form, in order to redeem and save mankind.' And for the rest of the poem he was drawing on the teachings to be found not only in that last book but also in earlier ones published by Swedenborg.

The middle three verses poetically express the accomplishment by our Lord, when in the world, of the wondrous plan to redeem all human beings. That is, He came to rescue them from a domination by the powers of evil that would have prevented them from freely loving God and leading lives in keeping with His will. To engage with those powers and defeat them He trod 'temptation's thorny path', and He did so alone. They used all their wicked cunning and deceit to overcome Him but without success. 'In vain the direst fiends assailed.'

Direst fiends! The very expression sends shivers down the spine. In an effort to define the adjective 'dire' *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* gives us – dreadful, dismal, mournful, horrible, terrible, evil in a great degree. And 'fiend' denotes someone who is extremely wicked. John Bunyan's poem or hymn about the Christian pilgrim includes the phrase 'foul fiend', and Shakespeare before him put into the mouth of Edgar words even more alliterative, 'the foul fiend follows me.' Alliteration is the use of words close together that begin with the same letter or sound, and Shakespeare again employs an *eff* alliteration to convey the thoughts and intentions of a wicked witch who declares, Fair is foul and foul is fair, hover through the fog and filthy air. Woodworth does not use alliteration in his poem, yet the single-syllable term *fiends*, preceded by the superlative adjective *direst*, has a sickening ring about it, more so than devils,