

A NEW SPIRITUALITY

No. 49 September 2015

HEAL THE WORLD



Have you ever thought about the way your thoughts and words might be impacting your physical health? There is an article in this issue pointing out how our mental state has been scientifically proven to affect the health of our DNA. (See 'The Simplest Ways are the Best' on page 2). By the same token, the collective consciousness of the world has an impact on the health of the human race as a whole. We are creating our own reality by the thoughts we choose to have about the people we share this world with, as what is true on a small scale is also true on a larger scale. The body of humanity, like the human body, is made up of many parts. Ideally we would all be working together for the good of the whole. Unfortunately, spiritually, we are not whole and this is reflected in the conflicts and disasters impacting our planet. We insist on being right rather than loving, for example.

But there is good news. We have a beautiful image of the potential of the human race in the Biblical vision of a golden city coming down from God out of heaven. This city pictures a new way of being which will be manifested as we put into practice the spirituality that it represents. (See 'The Measure of a Person or an Angel' on page 4). Gold corresponds to the joy of being loving and this is what is able to unite people despite their differences. For there isn't just one right way to the experience of the Divine (there are many gates to the city, therefore many ways provided). Your purpose and mine is to be a light bringer to those who are in darkness and sorrow so that they may find their way to one of the gates to the heavenly city. Let us send out thoughts of love and healing to all people and be accepting of our differences in the light of God's love, living by what's known as The Golden Rule: "do to others as you would have them do to you." No one will ever be perfect (see 'The Beauty of Imperfection' on page 6) but, if we each work with the Creator to change our own attitudes we will begin to see a shift in the collective consciousness which will start to bring healing to the world.

The higher or spiritual region of the human mind is a heaven in miniature, while the lower or natural region is a world in miniature and, for this reason, man was called by the ancients a microcosm, a little world.

EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

The Simplest Ways Are the Best Ways

Todd Beiswenger

Back in May we had for one of our classes here a Bible study on anxiety. We took a look at some descriptions of anxiety, and then looked at what the Bible said we are to do when we are anxious. For example, we looked at a story where Elijah and his servants were surrounded by an enemy army, and the servant was terrified. Elijah responds with the oh-so-helpful response: “Do not fear.”

Can you imagine being that servant? Can you imagine what you would have said back to Elijah?! “We're surrounded and about to die!! Can't you see all of them?!” Elijah tells the servant that there are more for them than there are against them, and prays that the servant could see all the angels and chariots that have surrounded the enemy and are

Essentially you need to eliminate guilt, shame, hate and fear from your emotional diet.

waiting upon the order to take the victory. When the servant's eyes are opened he no longer fears. He probably feels pretty dumb too.

In other Biblical stories we are also given simple instructions on how to run our lives: don't steal, don't lie, don't commit adultery, and while it isn't one of the 10 Commandments, “do not fear” is something we are commanded many, many times throughout the Scriptures. We can rationally understand why not to steal, so it doesn't require an explanation. We can see that adultery is harmful to the victim of it, and we can see that people can be damaged by our lies and deceit. But fear? I think like Elijah's servant we're inclined to say, “Yeah, but...” In reality, this response to Elijah is our response to the Lord. He tells us not to fear, and we say, “Yeah, but Lord, can't you see the trouble in my life? Aren't you paying attention to what is happening?” We have a hard time taking the simple instruction of “Do not fear” and running with it.

But now science is starting to see the wisdom in what the Bible has taught us for 3,000 years. Findings from a new study published in *Cancer* by a Canadian group suggest that our mental state

has measurable physical influence on us – more specifically on our DNA. That's right: YOU control your DNA. YOU are in charge of it. Lead investigator Dr Linda E. Carlson and her colleagues found, “that in breast cancer patients, support group involvement and mindfulness meditation – an adapted form of Buddhist meditation in which practitioners focus on present thoughts and actions in a non-judgmental way, ignoring past grudges and future concerns—are associated with preserved telomere length.”

Essentially you need to eliminate guilt, shame, hate and fear from your emotional diet. So what are telomeres? The doctors liken them to the plastic tips at the ends of shoelaces, and when intact they help prevent the deterioration of our chromosomes. Worn out telomeres don't actually cause disease, but “they do wither with age and are shorter in people with cancer, diabetes, heart disease and high stress levels.”

The researchers ran a blind test among women who were breast cancer survivors, and found that in both groups where extensive mental and emotional treatments were given, telomere length was maintained. However, in the control group the telomeres were all shorter. To me, this is like Elijah having his servant's eyes opened. Now we can see! Now we can see that there is a reason not to fear. Psalm 37:8 says, “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret—it only causes harm.” Folks, that isn't just some old Jewish saying, it is the truth! It sounds just like what the researchers said too: focus on present thoughts and actions in a non-judgmental way, ignoring past grudges and future concerns.

It turns out that Dr Carlson isn't the only one investigating the relationship between stress, anger and telomeres. In 2008 another doctor reported that, “the combination of a vegan diet, stress management, aerobic exercise and participation in a support group for 3 months resulted in increased telomerase activity in men with prostate cancer, telomerase being the enzyme that maintains telomeres by adding DNA to the ends of our chromosomes.” Another

study was done in 2013 showing that, “lifestyle interventions are associated with longer telomeres.”

Now in reality we don't – or shouldn't – need a big study to prove to us that our mind has a huge effect on our body. All we need to do is think about the placebo effect. Most everybody knows what this is: being given a pill of nothing but being told it is a cure for your ailment... and it works! As one puts it, the placebo effect is, “a complicated yet very real psychobiological benefit achieved from a patient’s expectations of a treatment rather than the treatment itself.” We know from this alone that our mind affects our biology, yet others try to convince us that we are prisoners to our biology, that we cannot

change it, as if our base genetic factors predetermine our physical life. True, you can't change your eyes from brown to blue just by thinking positively, but my sense is that we underestimate how much we can do when we are willing to make small, simple adjustments regarding our outlook on life.

At this point it remains unclear whether or not preserved telomeres actually prolong survival in cancer patients; or in anyone for that matter. But stress reduction in the interest of chromosomal preservation, and other possible health benefits, seems like a simple solution and pursuit that we all should be able to get behind.

From the New Church Newsletter
Hurstville Society July 2015

Infecting the World

Smiling is infectious, you catch it like the flu.
When someone smiled at me today, I started smiling too.

I passed around the corner and someone saw my grin;
When he smiled I realised I'd passed it on to him.

I thought about that smile, then I realised its worth.
A single smile, just like mine could travel round the earth.

So if you feel a smile begin, don't leave it undetected;
Let's start an epidemic quick, and get the world infected!



The Measure of a Person or an Angel

John Sutton

Society uses a variety of criteria to measure the worth of a person; looks, wealth, status, age, talents. In Chapter 21 of the Book of Revelation an angel who shows John the Holy City “New Jerusalem,” measures the city with a golden rod which is said to be the measure of a human being and the measure of an angel. According to Swedenborg all physical things in the Bible, like the measuring rod and the physical dimensions of the city, represent the **spiritual** dimensions of a new era of God’s Church on earth. This is not a description of any ecclesiastical organisation but of people who develop those spiritual dimensions in their lives.

The explanation of these dimensions can be found in Swedenborg’s [Apocalypse Explained](#) and [Apocalypse Revealed](#). The particular detail I find inspirational is the use of gold. In addition to the measuring rod, gold is mentioned twice more;

‘the city was pure gold, clear as glass; the street was of gold, transparent as glass.’ Gold represents the joys and delights which come from loving others for their own sake.

Gold represents the joys and delights which come from loving others for their own sake.

Like gold this love is incorruptible and shines in human relationships. Swedenborg calls it ‘the good of love’. In other words, the good that love does or the delight that comes from doing good to others with no thought of being rewarded. It is so strong it cannot be manipulated, or threatened. When it governs all our attitudes, speech and actions we experience the joy of heaven. It is the measure of an angel. It is the essence of the second of the two great commandments— ‘love your neighbour as yourself.’ It is innocent of all self-seeking, greed, jealousy, and bitterness.

Swedenborg says that this was the joy of life amongst ancient people which is why it was called the Golden Age. The golden Holy City represents mankind being led full circle to another but different golden age based on that same love and delight. Sadly as mankind became more worldly it forgot the spiritual significance

of gold and valued the metal for its own sake. It made it the measure of a person. Even the churches did this as can be seen when visiting churches in Europe filled with gold objects and gilt covered walls. They lost sight of the true measure of a person.

A love which unites

Many religions seem to be divisive, in contrast to this golden love which seeks to unite people with different outlooks on life. In ancient times people accepted that, as long as that love was present in a person, their faith was of secondary importance. As the Writings of Swedenborg say:

A person who is in goodness of life does not condemn another who has a different opinion, but leaves the matter to his faith and conscience, and this even as regards those who are outside the church; for he says in his heart that ignorance cannot condemn any who live in innocence and mutual love, as do little children, who also are in ignorance when they die (Arcana Coelestia 4468).

And when in every single respect love to the Lord and charity towards the neighbour, that is, the good of life, is the essential thing, then no matter how many churches there are they all make one, and each is a united whole in the Lord's kingdom (Arcana Coelestia 2982).

A love bringing enlightenment

Swedenborg teaches that the quality of our love governs our ability to be enlightened about spiritual things. This accounts for the strange descriptions about gold being as clear as glass. ‘By, “the gold like unto pure glass,” of which the city and its street were made, the angels understand the good of love which makes doctrine and its truths transparent. (Heaven & Hell 302)

History shows that people who may have a wonderful knowledge of their Word of God but do not have goodness of life, tend to justify condemning of people of different faiths. They are blind to any feelings of mercy and forgiveness for people who differ. In contrast, the good of love enlightens thinking and attitudes towards family, friends, work colleagues, ourselves and

enemies. It enhances and enriches relationships. It shows us why and how to forgive others. It prevents feelings of superiority and the desire to dominate and instead seeks consensus and compromise. It is this love that makes us truly human in our attitudes and behaviour.

A love which is the image and likeness of God

The stumbling block for many is the idea that this love can only be received by having a relationship with a God of love. The good of love is the image and likeness of the creator of the universe. His Divine love reaches all people regardless of race or creed. He is constantly seeking to build personal relationships with everyone. His life is the source of everyone's life. At the heart of the life we all receive is the good of love. So it is present in everyone. However, we choose

The measure of a human being and an angel is the measure of their richness in the good of love.

how we use it. We can pervert it to become the opposite, a self-centred love. God's desire is to help people find the joy and delight that the good of love brings. He knows that we do not always find this easy and initially we cannot see the joy that this love brings. He is urging us to

find this love as well as the Laodiceans when He says in Rev. 3: "*For you say, I am rich, I have prospered and need nothing, not realising that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire so that you may be rich.*"

A love which brings joy

The measure of a human being and an angel is the measure of their richness in the good of love. It is a gold standard for us to monitor our attitudes and relationships.

(Inspired by articles by Rev. George Dole)



The New Christian Church

Sunday services and sharing groups

5 Ballarat Street,
Ellerslie, Auckland

Phone 09 579 6819
www.newchurch.org.nz

ALL WELCOME

Golden City

A Song by Jenny Keal

There is a golden city
Coming down from heaven above,
And there's peace and joy
For the Lord dwells within
And it shines with His light and love.

CHORUS:

LetYour kingdom come
Letus all be one.
Build Your city, Lord, within our midst,
Bringing peace and happiness.

Make us like that city, Lord,
Measuring strong and true,
Open and honest, kind and good
Made of everything that comes from
You.

Let Your kingdom come

Standing on the principles
Of Your Word, so clear and bright,
Let us walk those golden streets –
Live Your way of love and light.

Let Your kingdom come ...

There is a golden city
Coming down from heaven above.
And there's peace and joy,
for the Lord dwells within
And it shines with His light and love.

Let Your kingdom come ...

Repeat chorus to end

May be sung to the tune of
'Jeremiah was a Bullfrog'
by Credence Clearwater



The Beauty of Imperfection

Walter E. Orthwein

Beauty's Impermanence

In this world of time, beauty does not last. And yet, our awareness of how fleeting it is actually makes it all the more affecting. An essential aspect of the beauty of cherry blossoms in the spring, which are so revered in Japan, is that they don't last long.

The very evidence of beauty's impermanence – the marks of wear and old age that remind us of the transitory nature of earthly things – at the same time gives rise to thoughts of an eternal realm in which it is permanent. A receding tide draws the eye to the same ocean from which the rising tide came and will come again. A fresh young tree blooming in the spring is beautiful; but an ancient, twisted, weather-beaten, half-dead bristlecone pine also has a poignant kind of beauty about it.

What would "new" mean to us if we had no idea of "old"? What meaning would there be to the Lord's words, "Behold, I make all things new," if things did not grow old? (Revelation 21:5) The New Jerusalem implies the existence of an old Jerusalem. When the "earth" – the "clay" of our natural being – is formed into a vessel receptive of spiritual life, then it becomes a new work of Divine art that fairly sings. "O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth." (Psalm 96:1; cf. Revelation 14:3)

The Utopian Heresy

One of the reasons people doubt the existence of God is that the world seems so imperfect. Van Gogh believed in God and saw Him as the supreme Artist, but said the world was like "a study that didn't quite come off." The idea that the imperfection of the world, and especially human beings, represents a failure on God's part is perennial. But there is no failure. This world is not meant to be perfect, and its very imperfections cause us to look beyond the things of this world to the perfection of heaven.

This world may be a "study," populated by imperfect people, but it is a study that succeeds in the only way a study can, by leading to the finished work. That work is heaven, for the sake of which this world exists. Heaven itself is never really finished, however, but is always growing, which is part of what makes it perfect.

Utopian reformers dream of correcting the world's imperfections and creating a better world, but somehow the efforts of those who manage to seize the power to enforce their vision on society always end up making things worse. The flaw in all utopian schemes is the assumption that man can save himself from himself.

The key to improving a society and its institutions is for the individuals and families that constitute it to become better spiritually, and this is the work of religion: repentance, reformation and regeneration. Spiritual improvement comes from within, from the Lord, not from human prudence and planning. The earth will never be heaven, but the life of heaven can become ever more present on earth in so far as the Lord is present in the hearts and minds of people.

Trying to transform the earth from without or below by building towers of Babel is a vain exercise, but receiving the Holy City New Jerusalem from above is a real possibility. Hubris leads to disappointment and ruin; humility to success. "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5) "He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly" (Luke 1:52).

The life of heaven can become ever more present on earth in so far as the Lord is present in the hearts and minds of people

Repentance is the first stage of regeneration. Acknowledging our imperfection is the first step in becoming more perfect. It was when Naaman finally acknowledged his lack of power to cure himself of his leprosy and did what the prophet of the Lord told him that he was made whole (II Kings 5:1-19). It was when the woman who had sinned washed the Lord's feet with her tears that she was forgiven (Luke 7:44-48).

When we turn away from evil and toward the Lord, His beauty can then be reflected in us. It is only Beauty itself that can make the world a more beautiful place, and it can only be received by those who acknowledge that they have no beauty of their own.

Human Perfectibility

The most important "work of art" each of us is engaged in producing is the form we impose upon our own life. Throughout our lives we are fashioning a natural vessel into which spiritual life will flow, its quality to be determined by that of the receiving vessel. Really, though, we are just assistants working in the Master's studio. If we let Him, He will add the finishing touches that will redeem our humble efforts and endow our

imperfect work with a beautiful spirit. Then our most ordinary bowl of clay will have somehow become worthy of being classified as “in the style of” the Supreme Artist.

Human beings “suggest something beyond themselves” by having the image of God impressed upon their mortal clay. And just as the flaws in a work of art recede from view when its spiritual quality is perceived, so the flaws in a person’s character are “pushed to the circumference” by the process of regeneration.

No one is perfect, even the greatest of human beings have feet of clay, but we tend, rightly, to overlook the flaws of those in whom we perceive some fine quality. In our view their flaws become peripheral. We make them into angels in our minds. In this way we are imitating what the Lord does in actuality when He removes a person’s evils “to the side” permanently and makes them angels." Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect," the Lord says in the Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew 5:48)

God’s infinite perfection consists in the absolute union of love and wisdom in Him. Our finite perfection comes with the joining together of the love and wisdom we receive from the Lord in our lives. This is the work of regeneration. How much love and wisdom each person is capable of receiving varies, and they will never be as purely One with us as they are in the Lord, but the important thing is the degree to which they are “married” in us and bear fruit. We cannot, of course, ever become perfect in the same degree as God; and any thought that we can would be the height of human imperfection. It was the serpent, remember, who said “you shall be like God” (Genesis 3.5). Even the angels need to be reminded occasionally that they are not perfect.

There is no definite period of time within which man’s regeneration is completed, so that he can say, “I am now perfect;” for there are illimitable states of evil and falsity with every man . . . which must be so far shaken off as no longer to appear. In some states the man may be said to be more perfect, but in very many others not so. Those who have been regenerated in the life of the body and have lived in faith in the Lord and in charity toward

the neighbour, are continually being perfected in the other life. (Heavenly Secrets 894)

“They’re All Perfect”

The angels of heaven are beautiful beyond words; their beauty comes from within, from the spirit of love and wisdom that shines forth from their outer form. But each of their infinitely various faces is unique, so no one can be said to be perfectly beautiful. Each one is a part of a larger picture only the Lord can see in its entirety, the Maximus Homo (Grand Human) of heaven. Heaven is the most perfect representation of the human form, and since the population of heaven is always growing, its perfection is always increasing. The more angels there are, the more uses take form from the Divine love and wisdom emanating from the Lord, and the more heaven’s beauty grows. In a sense, then, heaven’s perfection is its imperfection, or the fact that it can always be improved. Each new “imperfect” person who enters it adds to its overall perfection, which only the Lord can fully comprehend.

I remember a scene from a movie, ‘The Last Samurai,’ in which one of the main characters, a Japanese warrior, is standing beside a large cherry tree in full flower in a beautiful Japanese garden. “A perfect flower is a rare thing to find,” he says. “You could spend your whole life looking for one and it would not be a wasted life.”

Later in the movie, near the end, on another spring day after a great and terrible battle, as that man lies mortally wounded on the battlefield he looks up and at the edge of the field sees a rain of pink blossoms drifting down from flowering trees, and with his dying breath says: “They’re all perfect.”

(Excerpted from an article in New Church Life July/Aug 2015)



<input type="checkbox"/> Please put me on your mailing list for this paper		<input type="checkbox"/> Donation enclosed \$	
<input type="checkbox"/> Please send me information on			
<input type="checkbox"/> Please send me a booklist			
Name:		Phone Nos:	
Address:			
Email Address:			

A New Spirituality comes to you quarterly, courtesy of the **Swedenborg Centre for Spiritual Development**. Its aim is to support people on their spiritual life journey and promote awareness and appreciation of the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg—eighteenth century spiritual explorer and Divinely inspired writer. Available to you in hard copy or by email. Your donation will help print the next edition.

A New Spirituality

Editor: Jenny Keal

Enquiries Ph: 09 817 7949

Email: swedenborg@newchurch.org.nz

Websites of interest:

www.newchurch.net.au

www.spiritualwisdom.org.uk

www.swedenborgmovement.org

www.swedenborgdigitallibrary.org

www.swedenborg-openlearning.org.uk/

www.swedenborg.com

www.swedenborg.org

www.swedenborg.org.uk

www.spiritandlife.net

www.newchurch.org.nz

A New Spirituality

Swedenborg Centre for Spiritual Development

5 Ballarat Street

Ellerslie 1051

Auckland

New Zealand

