

A NEW SPIRITUALITY

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New Ways

We are living in chaotic and uncertain times. Events in the Middle East are affecting the whole world and the threat of another war hangs over our heads. Meanwhile, the war on terrorism is going in circles. Those seeking the terrorists are begetting more terrorism in retaliation for their actions. Can this cycle ever end? Is revenge really the answer? If not, what is?

The answer is the opposite to revenge. It is God's way of responding with understanding and love. To understand that we are all in the same boat is the first thing. We all have negative tendencies inside of us that get us into trouble and need to be dealt with. Difficult life circumstances bring out our destructive behaviours and this is how God brings these behaviours to our attention. Anger and bitterness are the terrorists within us and, just like the terrorists outside of us, the more we fight them on our own strength the more they endure. What we resist persists.

But when we allow God's love to heal the hurts of our past, the impulse to hurt back is quietened. By the same token, if we were to respond to the terrorists of the world with efforts to understand the reasons for their crimes and make approaches towards them from concern for their welfare as fellow human beings, we should find that the violence abates considerably. A person needs to be listened to and heard and to allow acceptance and love to heal their hurts. This doesn't preclude putting them behind bars to think about what they have done and for the safety of others. But we are all one human family of many colours, races, and creeds. Let's take a new approach to solving our problems and bringing us all back together as one people, bridging the gaps in our relationships and seeing if we can't appreciate the wonderful diversity among us. We can take comfort from knowing that there is a way forward into the future if we will work together for the good of the whole. There is room in this world for everyone and what we do for another benefits everyone.

In this issue we look further into new ways of living with our adversaries, and a promise for the future.



The natural person in whom the higher degree is opened knows that his higher mind is being filled by the Lord with thousands of arcana of wisdom and with thousands of joys of love and that he is to come into these after death when he becomes an angel.

EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

Seeing the Face of God by Don Rose

A place in ancient Israel was called Peniel, a name meaning “the face of God.” It was so named by Jacob, for there he wrestled with an angel and exclaimed that he had seen God face to face (Genesis 32:30).

Jacob had another stunning experience when in trepidation he met the twin brother whom he had wronged years before. Expecting to be confronted with anger, he beheld an expression of compassion and forgiveness. Relieved, he said to his brother, *I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God* (Genesis 33:10). The Hebrew word for “face” is plural, as if it were saying, “I have seen your faces.”

Think about that plural. There is a wide range of emotions, and the face is the outward display of their abundance.

In the story of Cain and Abel, God asks Cain why his faces have fallen (Genesis 4:6). The face is where one can read what is going on within a human being. Think of the face as a finely tuned and highly complex organ of the body. There are organs whose vessels and fibres enable them to perform specific vital functions. The face has been designed for a sophisticated purpose. Although the face is a physical thing, it is wonderfully connected and attuned to realities that are definitely not physical.

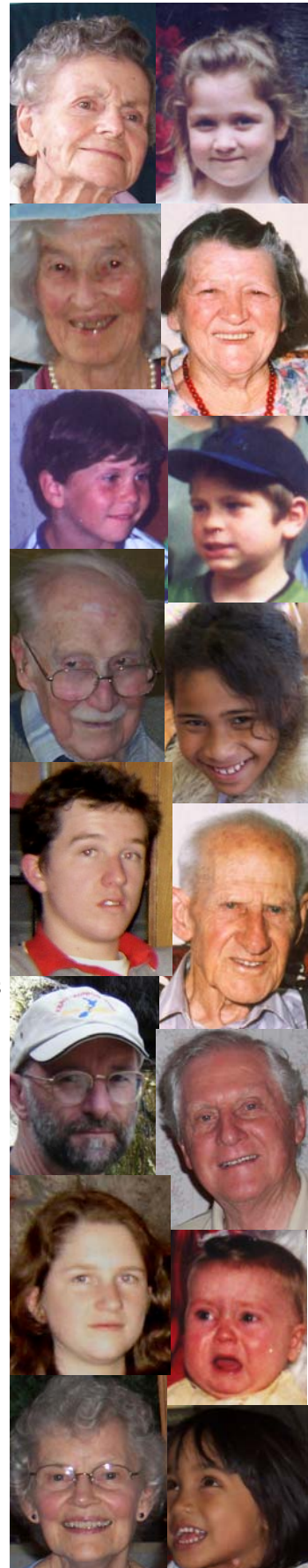
You want to see love? You want to see regret, yearning, sympathy, the whole range of inner feelings? Look at the face.

You and I are not our bodies. We are human beings, conglomerates of virtues, affections and thoughts. And when we are sincere, those inner things may be discerned in our faces. A child’s face touches our feelings because that face is in a special way in touch with the God who created us.

Jesus said not to despise one of these little ones, for they are in the presence of angels - angels who continually behold “the face” of the Heavenly Father (Matthew 18:10).

There is a “fact” (if that’s the right word) about human faces that is of great significance. Throughout all creation no two human faces are exactly alike. Can we grasp this?

If it is so, the myriad different faces bespeak the very infinity of God. This infinite variety would be impossible except from an infinity in God the Creator, since we are created in God’s image and likeness. The variety in distinctly different faces portrays a far greater complexity of variety in human minds.



Editorial

All Things New

There is a startling statement in the last chapter of the Bible - "Behold, I make all things new." Let me give you an example of what I think is meant by this statement. It is a way of making the point that there is to be a new way of doing things in the world, new attitudes, and good outcomes. These must happen within each one of us first and eventually affect the world as a whole.

Put yourself in the shoes of a person who has suffered a lot and does not know how to find peace of mind within their feelings of grief, anger, bitterness and despair. If you were this person you might find yourself attacking the world in frustration or throwing fits of temper, taking out your bitterness on others. Think, for example, of the bully in the world today. Can you see that this person is someone in need of much loving attention and in need of being made new?

Can this person be blamed? We must understand a person's background and what has lead them to their behaviour before passing judgment. Often a cycle of abuse or deprivation has gone on for many generations. Who should get the blame? Before we judge another by their cover let's look within and see if we can't bring a little compassion to the situation. We all have inherited tendencies that get us into trouble and parts that are hurting as a result of someone else's tendency let loose. Unless our hurts are healed we will continue to lash out or behave in ways that are detrimental to ourselves and others.

Its hard to be trained out of a bad habit without our understanding what has been behind it all along. If those hurts and shame that are hidden in the heart of the bully are brought out into the open the bully can begin to understand his or her own behaviour. Only love can heal a hurting heart - love from the source of all love and goodness. Each time a symptom appears - the harming of another in some way - we have the opportunity to bring God's love to a hurting heart. God's healing of the hurts and shame of the bully is the way they are made new and their destructive tendencies are made quiescent. This is a gradual process. If God were to take away all our imperfections of character in one fell swoop, it would leave a gaping hole. We cannot be changed overnight. But new life can be ours if we keep opening up to his love, and giving up hurtful ways. As these old ways are relinquished, gradually the old tendencies are pushed aside and new life takes their place.

"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away... Behold I make all things new" (Revelation 21: 4, 5).

The time has come for us to break the cycle of violence in the world and start seeing one another with new understanding - respecting our diversity; listening; looking beneath the surface for the Lord's goodness and lovingly encouraging one another to bring the things that stand in the way of that goodness out in the open to be healed. All things new is the promise but we must do our part if new ways of living are to flourish, bringing peace and harmony to the world.

Jenny

The New Age by Ian Arnold

When the Christian church, in its early decades, was grappling with the question of which books it would include in the New Testament, uncertainty surrounded the book of Revelation as to whether it qualified as a book of scripture. People found it "strange." And to this day, people find the book of Revelation strange, and I've come across references to it as being "weird," "impenetrable," "difficult to get into," "off-putting" and its contents "seemingly random."

Now, as far as the book of Revelation being off-putting is concerned, I want you to realise that it is a book that is based within the spiritual world. The apostle John, in his old age, had his spiritual eyes opened so that he saw all sorts of things represented before him, strange and weird. The words are applicable: "strange" and "weird." But we've got to remember that when it comes to the book of Revelation, in many ways it's not unlike dreams. In dreams, all sorts of imagery can cross our mind, and even trouble us, but behind it all there can be disappointments or changes, decisions to be made, or crises being gone through. The dream can often be penetrated and interpreted, so we get to bottom of what lies behind - the cause, the truth, of what is going on with us or with the person who is dreaming.

But so far as the book coming across as "random" is concerned, it is not random. It is not nearly as random or as disconnected as it first may seem. The reality is that the contents of the book of Revelation fall into three main sections, and each follows the other in wonderful sequence. The book begins with a vision of the Lord, and a call to a right relationship with him. What follows next are chapters of what seem like chaos and upheaval - beasts, and strange things happening. And finally there comes breakthrough and a new beginning - the holy city New Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God.

In the Writings of Swedenborg, the statement is made that "all things contained in the book of Revelation are, at this day, being fulfilled" (*The Last Judgement* 40). So the book warrants our attention because it is speaking to us about a time you and I are living in. We would have to have our heads buried in the sand to deny that we live in an age of chaos and upheaval. Just contemplate for a moment the things that are going on in the world: the anxieties, for example, with regard to the proliferation of nuclear war and armaments; the concern there is over the environment, global warming; and the difficulty that even the greatest and most powerful nation on

earth is having containing and controlling and resisting terrorism. How can we, as we look out on the world, deny that this is a time of chaos, anxiety and upheaval? And so it is also, when we go a little bit deeper and look at things on a spiritual level, where there are competing religious teachings and philosophies. How can we say that this is not a time of chaos and upheaval, even at a spiritual level?

But the book of Revelation, as we saw before, doesn't end there. And it is so important for us to grasp this. Yes, chaos occupies the chapters 4 to 19, but that's not where the book cuts off. The book goes on to describe a wonderful breakthrough, a new beginning: the holy city New Jerusalem descending from God out of heaven: *And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.*

What has been said with regard to humankind as a whole also applies to you and me in our individual lives

It is important and useful for us to pause a moment and to realise that what has just been said with regard to humankind as a whole also applies to you and me in our individual lives. Of course there are times of chaos and upheaval that we go through, times of anxiety and uncertainty, times when we feel challenged and can't make sense often enough of what is happening. The book also, you see, speaks to us personally. But hold on to this again: that it doesn't finish at chapter 19. It doesn't finish with chaos and upheaval: it goes on to talk about breakthrough and new beginnings. And so it is with our own experience and lives. Though there be dark and difficult, anxious and uncertain, troubled and challenging times we go through, beyond it there is breakthrough and a new beginning.

There is an amazing passage in Swedenborg's *Arcana Caelestia*, which, ever since my attention was drawn to it years and years and years ago, I have never forgotten: *Before anything is restored to order, it is very common for everything to be reduced, first of all, to a state of confusion resembling chaos, so that things that are not compatible may be separated from one another. Once these have been separated, the Lord arranges them into order. Phenomena comparable to this take place in nature. There too, every single thing is first reduced to a state of confusion before being put into its proper place. Unless atmospheric conditions included strong winds to disperse alien substances, the air could not possibly be cleared, and harmful toxic substances would accumulate in it. The same applies to the human body. Unless all things in the bloodstream, those that are alien as well as those that are congenial, were flowing along together unceasingly and repeatedly into the same heart where they*

are mixed together, the vital fluids would be in danger of clotting and each constituent could not possibly be precisely disposed to perform its proper function. The same also applies to a person's regeneration.

Chaos, yes. Expect it; don't be surprised by it. But hold onto what lies beyond it - break-through and new beginnings.

Its one of those things, always so important to remember, that, with regard to our times of chaos and uncertainty when things are so much in upheaval whether personally or collectively, God doesn't come riding in over human freedom and personal responsibility, openly intervening to rescue us. We would all like him to, that's for sure! At such times we would like him to set everything back on track, right the obvious wrongs, replace strife with peace and take away hardened hearts. But it's not the way he operates. Its not what would be in our best, eternal interests.

If we think back 2000 years, that's exactly what people expected of the Lord when he made his first coming into the world. There is a description in Luke's gospel of two of the disciples returning from Jerusalem to Emmaus on the day of the resurrection with their faces as long as a wet week. When the Lord unknowingly came in alongside them, they complained that "we were hoping that it was he who was going to redeem Israel; we were hoping that he was going to openly intervene and rescue us; and he didn't do it." That says so much of how it was with people and their expectations of the coming of the Messiah.

It doesn't happen that way. The Lord never openly intervenes and rescues us, plucks us out of a situation. But what he does do is that he restores and replenishes the resources that we need to deal with the situation in which we are, or into which we have entered; and that's very important. There was news item once about a one-armed shearer who lost his arm in an accident. He was interviewed, and was so remarkably positive about it. I only cite this because the help, the strength, is available to be called upon. Can you imagine what chaos he must have gone through when the doctors said, "Sorry, but your arm is going to have to come off"? Yet he found the resources to deal with the situation that had arisen. And that's God's promise: that he will always restore and replenish the resources that are needed for us to deal with the situations that have come upon us or into which we have entered.

In this day and age, the Lord has restored and renewed

the resources that the human race needs to negotiate these uncertain, difficult, challenging, chaotic times we are living in, and these renewed resources are sufficient to bring us through to the other side to breakthrough and a new beginning.

When Jesus was here in this world in Galilee, what did he do? He opened the Word to people, the Word that he said the people had made of no effect by their tradition. He showed them that there was beauty and truth and light and insight, treasures within that they had not even begun to see. And so it is in our own time and age, that the Lord has opened the Word again, so that we may discover levels of meaning and treasures that you never dreamed of exist within there. He has provided, he has restored, and he has renewed the spiritual resources that the human race needs to find its way forward in the age we are living in and to come through to breakthrough and a new beginning.

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I mentioned earlier things like concern over the environment, global warming, anxiety about the proliferation of nuclear armaments, the wasting away of our mineral resources, the religious ideologies which have people at one another's throats and at loggerheads with one another. It's not surprising, that at times it seems as if this planet, and this race, is winding down and will eventually come to an end of its own doing. But that is not what the Lord has in mind! The Lord has lead the human race down though the ages, through its infancy, through its childhood, through its adolescence, through its early adulthood; and he has now brought it to the cusp of its adulthood. In other words, the human race is only now at the point at which the Lord hoped from the beginning would be the case: when, with insight and understanding, people everywhere could enter into a mature partnership with him, understanding and seeing the truths of human existence in a new way, and so connecting more closely with him and enabling him to connect more closely with us.

Though we love our children as infants, the richest relationship that it is possible for us to have with them is when they are adults, because then they have entered into that relationship of their own free will. And so it is with the human race that now we have come to this point of adulthood, the Lord can enter into the richest kind of relationship with us as a race. We may seem to be going against the crowd, but we need to hold onto what we believe. We have in our hands both the promise of, and the basis for, a new spiritual age for humanity.

Our Gate to Heaven

In the book of Revelation, the following vision is recorded:

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates... And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl.

The Writings of Swedenborg talk about the twelve gates in this vision as being the gates to heaven. No matter what direction in life we have come from, if we are seeking the way to heaven we will find one of these gates. Our personal gate to heaven is within us but we will not find it open unless we open ourselves to God's love and turn our dysfunctional lives over to him. The Writings say that there are two paths that lead into a person's rational mind; a higher or internal path along which goodness and truth enters, and a lower or external path along which what is destructive and false enters. The rational mind is compared in the Bible to a city, and is actually called a city and described as having gates, as above. We are told that there are two gates in every person. One gate opens towards heaven and, by means of angels, lets in what is good and true. The other gate opens downwards away from heaven and, by means of lower order spirits, lets in destructive thoughts and feelings. When we live a life of kindness to others and seek to know what is true so as to live usefully, our gate to heaven is open. However, if we choose to live a destructive or selfish life, possessing little kindness towards others, we close our gate to heaven (See Arcana Coelestia 2851).

The Lord refers to these two gates in Matthew: *Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road is broad that leads away to destruction; and those who enter by it are many. For narrow and strait is the road that leads to life, and those who find it are few (Matthew 7:12-14).* This means that the gate that opens to heaven does not appear until we truly seek it. Even though the Lord continually invites and urges and presses us to open the gate to him and to heaven, it is only when we resist what is negative and destructive for the sake of the spiritual life, and because those things are hurtful to God, that it is possible for us to see and to have the gate of heaven open.

Each gate to heaven is described as a single pearl. This pearl has been formed within us to the extent that we have done the work of overcoming those things in our lives that irritate us, just as the oyster overcomes a little particle of grit with a fluid that coats it and makes it, over time, a beautiful thing. We overcome our irritations by responding in loving ways to the thoughts and actions of others., surrendering our irritations to the Lord. This is the work required of us if we are to enter heaven. None of us is perfect but, if we are sincerely seeking this heavenly way of life, we will find our gate to heaven open. "The kingdom of heaven is within you," and when you pass over you will find yourself among others of a similar character. Swedenborg's Writings have much to say about the life of angels - people who have done the work and entered in through the strait gate to happiness. One such passage says:

There is no real point in saying that heaven is outside anyone - it is within him. For every angel accepts the heaven outside himself which agrees with the heaven inside of him. So we can see how mistaken a person is if he believes that getting into heaven means simply being raised up among angels, no matter what he is like inwardly (that heaven is granted to people by direct mercy). On the contrary, unless heaven is in a person, the heaven outside of him cannot flow in and be accepted (See Heaven and Hell 54).



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An Excerpt from Shortcuts to God by Gerald Jampolski

When we choose to believe that our purpose is to love, we begin to experience life's deeper meaning. The act of giving, choosing to be helpful to others without expecting anything in return, allows us to experience the presence of God and to know that we are extensions of God's Love.

We can choose to see our purpose in life as messengers of love, messengers of God.

Our egos are convinced that their purpose in life is to make judgments, to attack, to create conflict, to be unforgiving, to see chaos and scarcity instead of inner peace and abundance. When we act from our egos, our actions are based on fear of love and fear of God, and we become messengers of judgment, anger, hate, and destruction.

This is because the purpose of the ego is to GET rather than to GIVE. Its appetite is unending. No matter how much we acquire or hold on to, it is never enough.

Our egos see peace and God as enemies. Our egos would have us make material possessions, financial security, and money our gods.

For me the experience of Love and Joy is beyond time and space and is outside anything that has to do with the physical senses. It is where nothing exists but never-ending love, a reality where love is all there is, and everything that there is.

When I am able to experience my oneness with God, it is as if my soul is resonating with all the love in the universe, where everything is joined and there is no separation. This experience continues to be beyond my imagination or intellectual comprehension.



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