

New Church LIFE

A monthly magazine devoted to the teachings
revealed through Emanuel Swedenborg

In this issue:

Being Raised from the Dead
A Sermon by Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh

Church: A Personal Exploration
By Janet Briggs

Influenced
By Richard Linquist

Church News

March 2009

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NEW CHURCH LIFE (USPS 378-180)
PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY
THE GENERAL CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM
The Rev. Dr. Erik E. Sandström, Editor

PRINTED BY FENCOR GRAPHICS, INC. PHILA., PA 19111
SUBSCRIPTION: \$16.00 to any address. SINGLE COPY \$1.50

Postmaster: send address changes to: New Church Life, PO Box 711, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009
E-mail: datacenter@anc-gc.org

Periodicals postage paid at Bryn Athyn, PA 19009
and at additional mailing offices

Notes on This Issue

This month we warmly welcome back our previous Editor of New Church Life, Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh, in a poignant sermon, on how we should not refuse to hear the Lord's invitation.

A thoughtful consideration of what it means to be a "Church" from Janet Briggs, introduces us to a wide range of sources of truth.

The brief reflection on how we are influenced, especially at the Academy Schools, comes from a graduate of the 1950s, Richard Linquist.

Please enjoy the report of Eldergarten and other Church News! Welcome also a new Priest of the General Church! We especially welcome a new priest's inauguration and his Confession of Faith.

Note the invitation to all of you on page 129.

BEING RAISED FROM THE DEAD

A SERMON

BY REV. KURT H. ASPLUNDH

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live (John. 11: 25).

Lazarus had died. Martha said to the Lord: “If You had been here, my brother would not have died” (John. 11:21).

He said: “Your brother will rise again.”

She was not comforted. She thought only of a resurrection of bodies from the earthly grave at some distant last day, not knowing the truth that the spirit of everyone who dies is withdrawn from the physical body and awakened to life in the spiritual world within three days of death.

It was then that the Lord spoke the words of our text: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. Whoever...believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John. 11:25f).

Martha loved the Lord and believed Him, but she didn't know what He was talking about. Neither did Mary, her sister. Their grief in losing their brother overwhelmed them. Who knows what thoughts fed their sorrow? Natural thoughts; even selfish thoughts. Was Lazarus their provider? Did he keep their house in repair? Did he leave a wife and children behind that would now suffer deprivation? Perhaps the underlying cause of their grief was a natural concern for their own welfare and protection. Their life would be diminished by the death of their brother.

In the midst of all of this “Jesus wept,” but not for Lazarus. He wept for the sorrow and pain of Martha and Mary. He grieved over their ignorance. He wept for the misconceptions

and false values of the Jews—and more, for the state of the whole human race whose evils were great.

Later, Jesus wept publicly again as He rode toward Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. “He beheld the city, and wept over it...” (Luke 19:41). There are but two places in the Gospels where the Lord is said to weep. In each place it is to signify His love and mercy. The Jews saw the Lord’s tears and said, “See how He loved him!” Little did they realize *how* He loved them!

When the women who watched the Lord being led away to crucifixion wept, He said: “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children” (Matthew 23:28). The world was incapable of comprehending the Lord’s love and His purpose in coming to be born among men.

What He could not teach directly, He demonstrated in symbolic acts. So here, He told them to remove the stone from the mouth of the grave. Then He called out to a man who had been dead four days: “Lazarus, come forth!” And he came out “bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, and his face wrapped with a cloth” (John. 11: 43, 44).

Martha and Mary did not know what the Lord meant when He spoke of the resurrection. Therefore, the Lord called Lazarus back to earthly life. By this He prepared the minds of the people to understand and accept the greater miracle of His own resurrection. Then He showed that resurrection was not reincarnation, but elevation to spiritual life.

It has been revealed to the New Church that the resurrection also means regeneration; the enlivening of the spirit with new loves. “Because burial signifies resurrection, it also signifies regeneration,” we are told in the Writings, “for regeneration is man’s first resurrection, as he then dies in respect to the former man, and rises again as to the new. By regeneration a man from being dead becomes alive...” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2916).

Like Martha and Mary, we may fail to understand the Lord's teaching. The symbolic act of His miracle also instructs us.

The picture of the Lord calling forth Lazarus from his grave is a picture of the Lord calling each of us from a natural, non-spiritual way of life to a new life that is enlivened with spiritual values and qualities.

The Lord's purpose is to call us out of the graves of selfishness and evil that we have dug for ourselves. The Lord had told His disciples before they came to Bethany: "Lazarus sleeps." "To sleep" signifies to be in ignorance; to be so immersed in what is natural and worldly as to be unaware of the spiritual realities of life. Later, He told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead." This signifies spiritual death.

The Writings expound what is meant by "spiritual death" by reference to the parable of the grain of wheat. Jesus said, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die it abides alone; but if it die it bears much fruit" (John 12:24). The same is true of man," we are told, "who, that he may rise again, must die both as to the body and as to what is his own, which is in itself infernal; for unless both of these die he does not have the life of heaven" (*Apocalypse Explained* 899:13).

When we are in states of evil we are spiritually dead. The Lord comes to us, nevertheless, and stands beside our grave weeping. This is the sign of His mercy. He weeps because He knows that without what is spiritual, our life is limited and destined to be unhappy. He wants to call us forth from that sepulcher of selfishness in which we lie; to awaken us spiritually. He wants the grave-clothes of falsity and conceit in which we have become wrapped to be stripped away so that we are no longer bound up by these things or blinded by a shroud that covers the face.

The miracle of raising Lazarus was the greatest that the Lord had done, having tremendous effect. Many witnessing it became

instant believers; others scuttled to Jerusalem bearing news of this unimaginable marvel. From that day, the Lord's enemies plotted to kill Him.

Imagine! He gave life. They wanted to take His life away. They wanted to kill the Source of life, the One that loved them all. "I am the resurrection and the life!" the Lord had said. "I am come that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly" (John 10: 10) "...that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John. 15:11).

Why would anyone wish to destroy Him who came to restore life and to increase in us the spirit of joy? This is like sick people killing the doctor because he would make them well. It is like starving people killing the baker because he would feed them bread. It seems so simple when we see it in this way. Yet do we realize that we are guilty of the same thing? Daily, we refuse to hear the Lord's invitation to find new life because we don't want to lose the life we have come to love. Our evil loves and false ideas are threatened by the presence of the Lord. At times, we wish to cast Him out. The spirits of hell that abide with us are at work. They whisper in our hearts: "Don't let Him make you feel guilty! Don't give over control of your life to Him. Your life is your own!"

Little wonder Jesus wept beside the grave of Lazarus. He knew what was in the hearts of the people. He wasn't afraid for His own life. He wept for theirs. He wept because He feared for our lives.

The calling forth of Lazarus applies to each of us. Except for the Lord's call, we would be content to sleep in darkness, self-satisfied, wrapped up in our false ideas, blinded by prejudice and ignorance. This is why He has come to us: to raise us from our natural tendencies to a spiritual way of life.

The Lord's words are fulfilled at this day. "Loose him, and let him go" (John. 11:44). When Lazarus came out of the tomb he

was bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, and his face wrapped with a cloth. These bindings signify the falsities by which the hells have held us captive. Now the Lord has come to release us from that tyranny. He has broken the bonds of death. Now we are spiritually free—to choose life eternal, the gift of God. For the Lord said: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (John. 11:25). *Amen.*

Lessons: Ezekiel. 37:12-14; John 11:32-40, 43, 44; *Arcana Coelestia* 5480

AC 5480. And wept. That this signifies mercy is evident from the signification of “weeping,” when predicated of the Lord...as being to be merciful. That weeping is expressive of grief and love, is well known, and consequently it is expressive of mercy or pity, for mercy is love grieving. The Divine love is therefore called mercy, because the human race is of itself in hell; and when man perceives this in himself, he implores mercy. As weeping is also mercy in the internal sense, therefore in the Word “weeping” is sometimes predicated of Jehovah or the Lord.... in Luke [it is said]: “When Jesus drew nigh He beheld the city, and wept over it” (20:41); Jerusalem, over which Jesus wept, or which He pitied and over which He grieved, was not only the city Jerusalem, but also, in the internal sense, the church, and the last day of it when there would no longer be any charity nor consequently any faith...and hence from pity and grief He wept.

We wish to honor Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh as Editor of New Church Life, from 2005 to 2007 (July '05 to July-Aug. »07).



Kurt took over as Editor from the Rev. Donald Rose, who served for a remarkable 25 years. Kurt carried on the use of Editor to the highest standard! I wish to thank him for the care with which he taught me ‘the ropes.’

The Rev. Kurt H. Asplundh has been retired since 1996. He was inaugurated into the priesthood in 1960, and ordained as Pastor in 1960, and ordained as Pastor in 1962. He first served as Assistant to the Pastor in Pittsburgh Society, and in 1963 as Pastor there. In 1972 he answered the call to be Principal of the Bryn Athyn Church School, in 1974 adding the role of Dean of the Bryn Athyn Society. In 1981 he became the well-loved Pastor of Bryn Athyn Society, until retirement in 1996. He stepped out of retirement to take on the Editorship for two years. Kurt lives with his wife Martha (Lindsay) in Bryn Athyn, PA.

CHURCH: A PERSONAL EXPLORATION

BY JANET BRIGGS, IN CONSULTATION WITH
KENNETH BRIGGS

Exploring the essential meaning of the word and concept *Church* has been a life-long preoccupation. Growing up in a small community with its church as a focus was nourishing. Participating in the Wesley Foundation in Harvard Square during college years provided a more rooted dimension to my academic experience, particularly the student nursing experiences in Boston hospitals.

Sometime later, in Kenneth's psychiatric practice in Idaho, which heavily impacted our lives, we attempted to provide spiritual assistance in the workshops and other programs that we and others gave under our sponsorship. We were trying to remedy what we perceived as superficial community church offerings that did not provide enough spiritual nourishment for our patients and others involved in these churches.

Then it was on to Harvard Divinity School, Kenneth having left his medical practice after 17 years, in order that I could pursue this goal; to better understand the implications of the word "church." Studies in the *Gospel of John*, in particular, contributed to this effort as well as Process Theology concerning the focus on on-going and unfolding Revelation. After graduating and still continuing this interest, I entered a Doctor of Ministry program at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge. This provided the opportunity to focus, as an individual study, on what I had deemed "church function design." However, the well established Episcopal agenda did not allow for that kind of inquiry. Later, I realized I did not have the right ingredients for this study and would not, until I had become acquainted with the Writings of Swedenborg and the

Church of the New Jerusalem.

The Woman Clothed With the Sun: “Because the Lord appears as a sun in heaven before the angels, therefore: When He was transfigured, His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment became as the light (Matt.17:1-2). And it is said of the strong angel who came down from heaven that: He was clothed with a cloud and his face was as it were the sun (Rev.10:1) and of the woman, that: She was seen clothed with the sun. The sun in these passages also signifies love and wisdom from the Lord; ‘the woman’ is the church which is called the New Jerusalem” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 53:3).

Swedenborg’s Writings disclose special significance, particularly, of the first books of the Old Testament and the book of Revelation. He discloses that spiritual meanings lie both beneath the surface meaning of the words as well as the surface appearance of the events recounted. Swedenborg was privileged to reveal the spiritual significance of these events in relation to abstract concepts such as faith, wisdom and truth. Such disclosures have also been applied to happenings in the gospels, e.g. Jesus walking on the water, (Jesus standing on the truth). These are important lessons because they open up the scriptures for deeper significance, but are also guideposts in the way we penetrate the happenings in our own life stories.

The Church of the New Jerusalem has been dedicated to keeping such a vision in the institutional church, as well as giving guidance while we look for the deeper realities in our own life experiences.

Although the institutional church can guide us, it cannot be responsible for the direct application of these principles in our day to day lives.

Swedenborg also defines *the church* in a new way, both as married partners and as individuals.

Kenneth and I have tried to learn to bring this focus to our

lives as married partners. Our journey in making this effort has been recorded in a small book called *Experiencing the Light: The Power of Two Squared*. In this paper however I would like to concentrate on the spiritual-temporal focusing of an individual trying to be there as “the church.”

The Church, like heaven, is in man, and therefore the Church consists in general of the men in whom the Church is (*Arcana Coelestia* 3884). Knowing truth and good, and acting therefrom, constitute the External of the Church; but willing and loving truth and good, and acting therefrom, constitute the Internal of the Church (*Arcana Coelestia* 4899).

MEMORY

The first requirement, I believe, in attempting to be there as “church” is to develop memory. Owen Barfield in his book, *Saving the Appearances*, speaks of the contribution of the Hebrew Church: “The Jews, with their language trailing vestiges of the world’s Creator and their special awareness of history, were the dawning memory in the human race. They too tore the phenomena from their setting of original participation and made them inward, with intent to re-utter them from within as word. They cultivated the inwardness of the represented. They pinpointed participation to the Divine Name, the I Am spoken only from within, and it was the logic of their whole development that the cosmos of wisdom should henceforth have as its perennial source, not without, and behind the appearances but within the consciousness of man; not in front of his senses and figuration, but behind them” (Op. cit. p.155).

From Swedenborg’s Writings we are told that “the internal man is purified by knowing, understanding and thinking the truths of the Word, and the external man by willing and doing them” (*Arcana Coelestia* 8742-8747). However, “The external man is [must be] purified by the Lord through his internal”

(*Apocalypse Explained* 475:7). But in order to cleanse the inside first, there must be a comprehensive gathering of the factors involved in each situation.

In a book of Midrashes called *Biblical Women Unbound* by Norma Rosen, the author attempts to bring to the ancient women of the Bible sufficient empathy to penetrate the complexities of their existential situations. Through her empathy and by the naming of the existential predicaments of these “Biblical” women, Rosen helps to engage us in looking at the hard questions. She recounts how, in her studies with a great Talmudic scholar, she asked him to clarify the text, “Do not place a stumbling block before a blind man.” She then proceeded to ask about the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden and wondered if that was not a stumbling block. “That,” replied the Talmudic scholar, “was a question the sages said should never be asked.”

The author went on to say, “The truth is, nothing seemed as important to me as asking the question the sages said should never be asked. In this way, we sometimes suppress questions for whose difficult answers we yearn, and settle instead for those whose answers we know will more readily come forth.” She then asks, “How did the ancient sages, and how did the very modern sage, our Talmud teacher, find it possible to live without asking?” (Op. cit. p. xi)

She went on to explore her premise that asking the hard questions is just the kind of effort we must make and that to retrieve the really difficult questions we must tenderly gather all the issues together as best we can.

Why was Sarah so summarily dismissive of Hagar? This is a painful question for Jewish women. What were Ruth’s options? Whatever happened to Esther? These are several of the difficult questions Norma Rosen addresses in her Midrashes, or stories that provide alternative perspectives to scripture.

The cleansing call for an altered hold of reality that attempts to hold the spiritual considerations prayerfully with all the temporal questions involved in a specific situation, calls for a disciplined development of *focus* existentially that calls one out of a merely temporal focus.

Such a disciplined focus is the basic foundation of trying to be there as individual, as church. It calls for a persisting decision to hold that focus, even when the “hard questions” do not provide ready answers but only a sustained faith that staying with the unanswered question is the important task. This is the task of true faith.

It is also the task in great poetry. Paolo Vivante, in his book *The Homeric Imagination: A Study of Homer’s Poetic Perception of Reality* describes Homer as viewing his characters from the advantage of this spiritual-temporal focus. First, this frees the stories from a narrative composed of a pure chronology of events and leads to a perspective that deals with a deeper reality.

“Even remote events could be sympathetically drawn into the present daylight hour whenever they appeared to be relevant. The Homeric scenes are thus often pregnant moments. A poetic synthesis occurred absorbing many elements which a prosaic Memory would have left in the background and combined to casual points scattered over the course of time” (Vivante, p. 146).

Vivante goes on to explain how images are gathered from different periods in our lives to make for compact imagery “as if past scenes could not be fully realized in their present relevance unless they were conjured up to share the atmosphere of one common day” (*ibid.*).

Such a dual focus allowing us to be mindful of the deeper streams operating in our lives is a true discipline. Dangers of inadequate focus may allow us to settle for concepts as abstractions or concretize the plane that we operate on (particularly the temporal plane, where the possibilities in existence in a given moment are diluted). Falling into power and

success scenarios may be a result. Swedenborg was very mindful of this perspective. I feel that it is necessary to emphasize one of the most significant statements, for me, which Swedenborg wrote in *Divine Providence*: “The person who has become spiritual by the acknowledgment of God and wise by the rejection of his proprium sees the Divine Providence in the whole world and in all things therein in general and in particular. If he looks at natural things he sees it; if he looks at civil matters he sees it; if he looks at spiritual things he sees it; and this in things both in their simultaneous and in their successive relationships. He sees it in ends, in causes, in effects, in uses, in forms, in things great and small. Especially does he see it in matters concerning the salvation of men, as that Jehovah gave the Word, taught men by it concerning God, heaven and hell and eternal life, and that He Himself came into the world that He might redeem and save men. These things and many others, and the Divine Providence in them, man sees from spiritual light in natural light” (Op. cit. 189).

It is difficult to encompass in thought the extraordinary comprehensiveness of the spiritual-temporal focus of his vision. Yet in the stream of life amidst the unexpected difficulties and complex challenges that we encounter and may feel inadequate to grope our way through, this dual focus is even more important to maintain. In our home, Kenneth and I attempt to bring this focus, in an on-going way, to the situations in our lives through prayer together. Would that we had done this more consistently in the past.

But the individual can by oneself keep this dual focus as through the day, moment by moment, situation by situation is experienced. What are the possibilities of this moment? What does the Lord wish me to bring to this situation? Often, these questions entail risk. Did I attempt to respond as I was called to do? Did I miss the mark?

Swedenborg also keeps the spiritual-temporal focus as he looks at civil matters. This can be very painful for us also as we see our world grope forward, becoming increasingly more organized despite vast areas of terror and destruction. Could we even imagine the European community, as organized as it now is, following the ghastly destruction and devastation of World War II?

“The faith that the very hairs of our head are numbered, the confidence that the Lord’s providence reaches down to the very least details of our lives is represented in the story by the sea and the Lord’s power over the sea. Seas stand for the ultimate, last or lowest particularities of our lives.”¹



Such a focus may reveal an unfolding journey with shifts both large and small along the way. I could visualize the spiritual-temporal plane ratio as a kind of teeter-totter which in certain periods of life may have different angles. The challenges of young adulthood for family and career may radically shift during mid-life experience where the earlier life handholds may require a new vision. Later in life, an overly sustained emphasis on temporal goals may constitute a “misreading” of the new tasks that yearn to unfold.

¹ Sermon “Walking on Water” by Rev. Stephen Cole, *New Church Life*, March, 2008, pp. 81-82.

A maintained dual focus may enable our personal lives to disclose our goals and meanings. The windows of disclosure become the stained glass windows of revelation that inform our individual “church.”

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The picture of “African Woman” is from a sculpture group created by Lladro of Madrid, Spain.

INFLUENCED

BY RICHARD LINQUIST

“Diligently to read and meditate on the Word of God” – so begins Swedenborg’s Rules of Life. This is a good habit for everyone to establish and obviously does require self-discipline. “Act precedes, man’s willing follows; for that which man does from the understanding, he at last does from the will, and finally puts on as a habit” (*Arcana Coelestia* 4353). Just read each day and the affection for doing so will follow.

Let’s see now, when we shun evils as sins against the Lord, He can then enter into our lives to produce good. When we shun what is evil we provide an opportunity for good to be done through us. Stop slavishly obeying the old natural man’s delights, and make room for a new spiritual man to be born in us. Yes, I think I understand that. I know that it is not easy but I do know that the influence of others can help. Let me offer two examples, on a less than spiritual plane, in fact on a bodily plane, about how we can shun what is unhealthy so that we then have the opportunity to develop habits of healthy living.

When I was student at the Academy of the New Church Boys Schools I wrote a paper on the harm to the human body that is caused by smoking cigarettes. This was way back in the 1950s. My teacher gave me high praise in front of the class. I was extremely proud of myself, but not too proud, a few years later, to try smoking cigarettes. So I smoked about 5 cigarettes, one after another. Apparently I got nicotine poisoning. I, as the expression goes, was “sick as a dog” for about a week. I have never smoked since. So by not smoking, I believe, so far at least, that I have been able to sustain good health.

Another example of not doing something harmful to the body so that it could serve uses in this world has to do with the consumption of alcohol. I still can see and hear Rev. Hugo Odhner declaring that drunkenness robs man of his manhood. As an adolescent boy in High School the last thing I wanted was to be robbed of manliness. He wrote of his conviction in

his book, *Spirits and Men*: “Drunkenness causes man to lose his manhood, since it is his intellectual faculty that marks him a man” (p.186).

Fortunately I did not have to learn by bitter personal experience that the excessive consumption of alcohol harms man’s ability to think and act rationally. So far in my life’s journey I have drunk wine a maximum of about 40 times – on social occasions and at the Holy Supper. I have tasted beer but have no idea what other alcoholic drinks taste like. My own standard of judgment in these matters is: smoking one cigarette is excessive; drinking more than one glass of wine is excessive. I would suggest that each of us, especially young folks, cultivate good habits of living and caring for our bodies and minds so that we may become fit servants of the Lord.

I am greatly indebted to my Academy teachers. They guided me well. I am sure that I speak for most of my fellow classmates from the 1950s.

About drunkenness: I spoke with spirits about drunkenness, and they confirmed that it is an enormous sin, both because a person becomes like a brute, no longer human-because being human consists in the faculty of understanding, so one becomes like a brute-and also because it brings harm on the body and thus hastens death, besides wasting by excess resources that could be useful for many purposes. *Spiritual Experiences* 2422.

Editorial

JUDAS

Have you wondered whether Judas Iscariot was among the twelve disciples who proclaimed the June 19th message “throughout the spiritual world” in 1770? Many have written about it in *New Church Life*, with one verdict being that “Judas repented” and so, yes, he was now also in heaven. Another thought was that whether he was in heaven or not, the June 19th event was not affected by it in the slightest!

With Easter coming near, it is interesting to consider what Judas involved. For the Lord selected disciples to represent some “truth from good” of the Church (*Apocalypse Revealed* 348), and men who could be “like” what they represented (*Spiritual Experiences* 1217). Judas represented what the Lord Himself was as to the maternal human, for only Judas and Jesus were fully Jewish: all the other disciples were Galileans, who were more uncultured and uncouth than the Jews. Thus Judas stood for the heredity that the Lord had to overcome (*Apocalypse Explained* 433:32).

Thus during the Lord’s temptations Judas represented avarice, faith separate, contradictory thoughts and consulting scientifics of higher learning against the Word. That was why the Lord said to Judas and the band of men that came to arrest Him at night, “But this is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53). These words however were directed against the “chief priests, the captains of the temple and the elders, who seized Him by the aid of Judas Iscariot. For Judas went by the command of the chief priests” (*Apocalypse Explained* 526:12). This certainly makes it possible that Judas repented his own betrayal. Whoever were guilty of this darkness, it involved “falsity of evil, [namely] falsity respecting the Lord and the evil against Him. Darkness means hell, because such falsities and evils are there” (*Apocalypse Explained* 526:12).

It may be that Judas made himself an agent for the chief priests, but that he had an even greater trust in the Lord, i.e. that He would declare Himself the King of Judea, for the throne was vacant after Herod Archilaus was deposed in 6 A.D. Judas may

therefore willingly have obeyed the Lord's last command: "That thou doest, do quickly." Perhaps he was a simple but forthright man, easily prompted into rash actions, but negatively motivated by avarice, as when he objected, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and the money given to the poor?" (John 12:4, 6). Perhaps Judas wanted Jesus crowned King.

Another point about Judas was his second name, Iscariot. This comes from the Hebrew "Ish-Kerioth" meaning the "Man from Kerioth," a city in the tribe of Judah. Kerioth means "cities" referring to intelligence in truths, doctrine and learning. Judas Iscariot could thus translate as celestial love for these things! But Kerioth is never given a good meaning in the Writings, but with Moab and Ammon an opposite meaning of falsity by which goods are adulterated and truths extinguished (*Arcana Coelestia* 2468:17). Judas Iscariot in that he betrayed the Lord, could therefore mean the evil which adulterates good and extinguishes truth, a "destroyer of cities."

Still the Lord did call him to be a disciple, for the Lord knew exactly what was happening! The Lord on earth was His own Providence: He disposed His own mental states and associations with the spirits and angels in the after life, day by day. It was in His Providence, i.e. foresight of what must happen, that Judas should fulfill the purposes of His Advent. For while the Lord was on earth, His providence and omnipotence were in His own hands, and the states of His glorification were as it were planned ahead of time. We hear to our astonishment, that "the Lord Himself, when He lived in the world, *these things were directed by Himself*, because He was Divine, and the very being of His life was Jehovah" (#2796). He could thus by His own volition "*introduce Himself* (into a super-eminence of wisdom and intelligence) by successive steps...by His own power" (#2500:3). This was because the Word was opened to His Divine eyes, and there all the states He was to pass through, were already written! The Divine sense of the Torah contained "the Lord's entire life, even as to the thoughts and intentions" (#2523). Thus the Lord from His "Divine Essence" could "introduce the Human Essence in order that it might overcome from its own power" (#1661). "The Divine led the Human into the most grievous temptations" (#2816). Still, to the Lord's earthly consciousness,

as the Son of Man on earth, it seemed that He himself was “admitting temptations into Himself, in order to expel (the mere human) until nothing but the Divine remained” (ibid. all emphases added).

The Lord was alternately conscious on different levels, and that is how He governed His own states. We men can never know how to govern our own states: for the Lord directs all *our* changes of state by means of spirits and angels, to ends which He alone foresees. But the Lord was in charge of Himself! He had a perception of “all things that were taking place, and knew very clearly the quality and source of all that took place in connection with Himself” (#1701).

Not only did the Lord direct His own states, and introduce Himself to them, but He revealed to Himself what was going to happen before they did.

“The Lord had *revelations from Himself*...He spoke with Jehovah as with Himself” (#1999). He had a “continual communication and internal conversation with Jehovah” (#1791). He “revealed and answered to Himself” (#2519e). In the human it was thus “made known to Him how the Divine Itself, the Divine Human and the Holy Proceeding, were to be united in Him; then how the rational was to be made Divine, and finally of what quality was the human race, and that it was to be saved by Him” (#2171). This revelation is represented by Joseph interpreting dreams (#5121e).

This revelation to Himself from Himself, meant that His Divine eyes were opened to see everything in the whole spiritual world (#1806e, 1807e), in the heavens, the world of spirits (#1786), and on earth (#1919).

If these passages give us a notion that the Lord as it were “orchestrated” His own glorification, we might think we were wrong, until we read, “The Lord from His own power conjoined His external man with His internal and filled His knowledge with celestial things...according to Divine order: first in the celestial things of His childhood, next in the celestial things of the age between childhood and infancy; and finally in the celestial things of His infancy....As the Lord implanted knowledge in celestial things, so He had perception” (#1616:5).

Does this look as though the Lord “manipulated” His own glorification? He certainly controlled His association with angels and spirits around Himself, for He “summoned to Himself such as might be of service, and changed them *at His good pleasure*” (#4075). “The Lord from His Divine could *induce upon Himself whatever states He pleased*, and...He prepared Himself for temptations by inducing many states.” First He induced peace and innocence, prepared the Natural Man, the Rational Man and then adjoined “the merit of righteousness and in this manner elevated Himself” (#2786 emphases added). “When He was to undergo the most grievous and inmost temptations, He adjoined to Himself the prior human, that is the rational and natural of it, and He afterwards separated Himself from these, nevertheless retaining something by means of which He could be tempted” again (#2795 all emphases added).

If the Lord from revelations and answers within Himself could induce upon Himself whatever states He pleased, and retain any states to allow subsequent temptations, and could summon angelic societies to be of service at His good pleasure, we can perhaps see a new meaning in these words of the Gospels:

To the Jews: “I lay down My life that I might take it up again. No man takes it from Me, for I lay it down Myself. I have power to lay it down...and to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father” (John 10:17, 18). In Gethsemane: “Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him...” (John 18:4). And: “O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me. Nevertheless not as I will but as Thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39). To Peter: “The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11). To Pilate: “Thou could have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above” (John 19:11). And to Judas: “That thou doest, do quickly” (John 13:29). The Lord knew what Judas would do. When at another occasion the Lord was tempted “not to drink of this cup” or to have this “cup taken from Him,” it involved the entire means whereby He would be crucified! Judas’ betrayal must therefore have been specially permitted or even provided.

All of these scriptures confirm the doctrine of how the Lord

governed everything to do with His own glorification. The Lord governed His own states. It had even started in the Lord's childhood, for it was at that time that the Lord on earth read His own Scripture, and then revealed to Himself how to fulfill them: "For in His childhood, the Lord did not will to imbue Himself with any other knowledge than those of the Word, which was open to Him...from Jehovah Himself His Father...and *this the more because nothing is said in the Word that does not in its inmost have regard to Him*, and that has not first come from Him" (*Arcana Coelestia* 1461). And these scriptures were the very ones which contained the "entire life of the Lord on earth, such as it was to be, even as to the thoughts and intentions" (*Arcana Coelestia* 2523).

In other words, the Lord revealed to Himself, while reading the Word that the Word not only dealt with Himself, but also had been written by Himself. He had caused the Word to be written so that He could later read it on earth. He could read "His life" even before it had occurred! Thus He could fulfill the scriptures even as an actor plays his role! That was why 1300 years earlier Joseph had served under Potiphar, in Providence "in order that (Joseph) might represent how the Lord progressively made the Human in Himself Divine, *about which the Word was to be written, that it might contain Divine things in the internal sense*" (*Arcana Coelestia* 5307:3). Providence was over the events themselves, which were next recorded so as to contain an internal sense. There must have been a "special providence" over this (*Arcana Coelestia* 6025). And when the events were recorded, only such words were used, and only in such a sequence, that the internal sense told of the Lord, throughout (*Arcana Coelestia* 1468e). Joseph represented the Lord's public ministry, all the way up to the Resurrection – meant by the butler restored to serve Pharaoh!

We read in Scripture how the Lord knew all the things of Scripture being fulfilled. "Jesus, knowing that all things were *accomplished*, that the scriptures might be *fulfilled*, said I thirst. When He had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished" (John 19:28, 30). These words, "It is finished" involved the Lord here, namely how the Lord's *fulfillment of Scripture* was itself *fulfilled in Scripture*!! This completion of fulfillment is signified by the

scriptural quote: “It is finished” (cf. *Lord 11, True Christian Religion 262*).

Even to the bitter end, the Lord governed His own states.

Judas was chosen because he was of such a character that he could represent everything the Lord had to overcome through His maternal heredity. “Hereditary evil *reacts* against God. But so far as man believes that all his life is from God, and that all good of life is from the *action* of God, and all evil of life from the *reaction* of man, so far his *reaction* comes from God’s *action*, and man *acts* with God as if from himself” (*Divine Love and Wisdom 68* emphases added). The Lord’s maternal human reacted against Him: so the Divine had to lead the Human to overcome temptations from its own power (*Arcana Coelestia 1661*). So, did Judas *react* against God, or did he *react* as of self from the Lord’s action? Perhaps both, since both duplicity and simplicity can be ascribed to him. Judas’ “faith” (= Simon’s son) in the chief priests, and his “faith” in the Lord may have been in direct opposition and conflict. He may thus have intended that his betrayal would “provide a crisis that would compel Him to show His power,” the result of which would be that the priests would also have acknowledged the Lord as the Messiah, and would have crowned Him as King of the Jews, even as Judas and every disciple expected. They all wanted a kingdom of this world (Henderson, *New Church Life*, 1972, p. 183).

But when Judas “saw that He was condemned,” he may have seen what Reuben’s words signify when he found Joseph gone from the pit: “And I, where am I come?” meaning “Where is now the Church?” Judas may have thought the same as Reuben, representing part of the Lord’s glorification in the Joseph story: “And I, where am I come?” Did Judas see the “depravity of the Church” which Reuben’s words signify? Judas was himself a proud member. He may have seen how the Church at this particular time had perverted that simple goodness, championed by the Lord; the simple goodness which, before, it had seen no profit in destroying, i.e. when instead of killing Joseph they had said, “Come let us sell Joseph.” And if indeed Judas acted “by the command of the priests” (*Apocalypse Explained 526*; John 18:3),

these words have the same internal sense as Judas' betrayal! (*Arcana Coelestia* 4751e), then Judas was himself betrayed by the Jewish Church's handling of the consequences. For Judas may have expected the result to be Jesus proclaimed as the Messiah, by everyone! When this did not occur, he repented, and hanged himself. But his crime was not a capital offense. He punished himself more harshly than the law would have.

Being thus himself betrayed, and in despair over the way his betrayal of the Lord had misfired, Judas and his representation was by his death transferred to the World of Spirits, where presumably he was awake in time to witness the last Judgment performed by the Lord on the cross. It may even be that Judas represented the celestial sovereignty which the Lord had taken on from the angels, meant first by Judah whose "scepter should not depart until Shiloh come", meaning the Lord's Advent. The risen Lord then had "all power given to [Him] in heaven and on earth," which would require Judas and his better representation to be transferred to the spiritual world. For the celestial angels themselves – Judah/Judas – were also conquered by the Lord, the most subtle of all temptations (*Arcana Coelestia* 4295, 9715). Shiloh means peace, the Lord as the Prince of Peace, which He now could establish in the spiritual world, and from it, in the natural. For that's where peace comes from, and where it is known in its very essence. "And on earth, peace" as the angels prophesied.

The Lord foresaw all these consequences of His betrayal. For on earth, the Lord's omnipotence and providence were in His own hands. His words and deeds were the means for His Divine Mercy to save mankind.

Perhaps the consequences of Judas' betrayal were that *certain*, meant by *quick*. Perhaps we can see this, and much more, summed up in the Lord's words to Judas, "That thou doest, do quickly." We do not know, but it may still be that Judas was also among the twelve on June 19, 1770. Thus in Judas, we have seen how Christmas stretches through Easter, all the way to June 19th, 1770, New Church Day.

BOOK REVIEW BY REV. GÖRAN APPELGREN

*Personal Revelation – A Guide to a Personal Interpretation of
the Book of Revelation*

By Rev. Michael Stanley

Manchester 2006

90 pages, 9 illustrations by G. Roland Smith

“Personal Revelation” is a pertinent shortening of the full title, “A Guide to a Personal Interpretation of the Book of Revelation”. We are familiar with the Book of Revelation. In the New Church we are in the advantageous position of having a sensible interpretation. Before the Second Coming, and even to this day, many have attempted to fit all the strange events in Revelation into political conflicts or upheavals in this world. Revelation has been a favorite part of the Bible for those who love to predict the downfall of civilization and the coming of the Lord to the chosen few.

Yes, we are lucky to have a different interpretation. We don’t have to make guesses about when earthquakes in Revelation happened or will happen. We know from Writings that the imagery describes developments in the world of spirits, notably a judgment of false beliefs represented by the two deviations of a true faith, the dragon standing for faith alone and Babylon standing for love of dominion in religious matters.

We are familiar with this interpretation given in especially *The Apocalypse Revealed*, published by Swedenborg, but certainly also in the more extensive work *The Apocalypse Explained*, not published until after Swedenborg’s death.

Standing on this familiar ground this book “Personal Revelation – A Guide to a Personal Interpretation of the Book of Revelation” is meant to be an eye-opener to those who read Revelation according to this standard interpretation.

We know from the Writings that the literal sense of the Word

contains three different themes in the spiritual sense. The first or the lowest level has to do with how the Lord is received in more general terms or by groups of people called “churches”. The second level relates to how individuals respond to the Lord. That is where we look for guidance in the process of rebirth or regeneration with which we should always busy ourselves. The third and last level describes how the Lord Himself went through the necessary changes in order to glorify His Human. The terms used are the internal historical, the spiritual and the celestial senses (*Arcana Coelestia* 4279:3).

When we read Psalm 105 it is the internal historical sense that first comes to mind. In Psalm 51 we most easily see the spiritual sense shining through, and in Psalm 22 we see the celestial sense being closest to our perception. But there is no doubt that all three levels are present in the literal sense.

The same is of course true for The Book of Revelation, and that is what the author of this book sets out to show us. He points to the spiritual sense, the ambition being to pull us out of the habitual internal historical reading. He wants to make Revelation just as much alive as a spiritual guide-book to our regeneration as we may consider the four Gospels to be as well as many other parts of the Word. It is an approach that has good qualities.

The book is divided into 12 chapters each based on 12 principles as defined by the author. These principles follow the theme of the book to make everything applicable to a person’s own spiritual development. Principle #2 for instance reads “Transition from Historical to Personal Application”. Principle #8 is “Revealing of Egoistic Destructiveness”, and the last principle deals with “Joyful Aspects of the Apocalyptic process”.

It is fascinating to see how we are led in each chapter to redefine a more “outer” interpretation and make it more of the

Lord's personal speech with us. We are encouraged to leave the safe knowledge about the text behind or rather as a foundation and open our minds to a personal revelation. Yes, personal revelation. That is why the book is called "Personal Revelation".

I think the approach of the author is useful and the book a useful tool for a person convinced of the truths in the Heavenly Doctrine. With most of the parts of the Word we are limited in our reading to the three basic principles for being taught directly by the Lord, the Doctrine of Genuine Truth, the science of correspondences and enlightenment. With Revelation we have so much given to us in plain language that we are tempted to stop short of using that text to the full. The Book of Revelation describes the New Church, not just as a prediction of a collective body of people but each individual who is in the full process of regeneration – a key concept in the faith of the New Church.

An interesting point that is raised by the author and which puts further emphasis on a need to look deeper into the interpretation of Revelation is that, if we stay in the internal historical sense and believe that we are already THE NEW CHURCH, then we run the risk of being subjected to the same processes of a judgment that we see in Revelation. To avoid that we should use what the Lord has given us – each one on a personal level. (see page 28-29)

Lastly a warning. One principle (# 3) is called "Beaming Searchlight of Truth results in Inner Turmoil". When the Truth comes alive in a person's regeneration it is not always just pleasant. It gives a sense of awe and inspiration but it also stirs the waters. (see page 31-33) But what else does the Lord want from us but to "cease to do evil, and learn to do good" (Isaiah 1:16, 17).

CHURCH NEWS

Caryndale Society. The Rt. Rev. Kline inaugurated the Rev. Nathan Cole into the Priesthood on January 11, 2009. Our congratulations, welcome and good wishes to Nathan and his family.



Nathan's Confession of Faith at his inauguration:

I believe that God is one in essence and in person, in Whom is a Divine trinity, and that He is the Lord God the Savior Jesus Christ. I believe in His Second Coming revealed in the Word and in the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Church.

I believe that the Lord from eternity, Who is Yehowah, came into the world to subjugate the hells and to glorify His Human; and without this no mortal could have been saved; and those are saved who believe in Him.

I will teach people to believe in the Lord; for by believing in

Him there is conjunction with Him and thereby salvation. To believe in Him is to have confidence that He saves, and no one can have this confidence except him who lives well.

I will teach people that to live well is to follow the commandments in the Lord's Word, and that all His commandments are for the sake of their eternal happiness, so that they may see that the Lord's yoke is easy and His burden is light.

I pray that I may be the Lord's servant to help establish His New Church on the earth with people, that they may become angels in heaven and happy citizens of the Lord's kingdom on earth.

I am filled with the hope that I might be an instrument for the Lord in His restoration of Conjugal Love; for Conjugal Love goes hand in hand with Religion.

I swear to teach not from myself or for my own glory, but from the Lord and His Word for the glory of His name. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I swear that I believe and intend to do this. Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief. I will trust in Yehowah, my help and shield.

(Quotes and Ideas drawn from: Psalm 115:1,10; Matt 11:30; AR 67,956;TCR 2,3,297,787, CL 79-81,497.

Eldergarten 2009

Eldergarten is an educational experience for senior members and friends of the New Church. The first such event took place at the church in Boynton Beach under the direction of the Rev. Fred Schnarr in 1995. Its success and popularity led to numerous repeat performances which have resulted in a well established tradition. The most recent production of Eldergarten took place, again in Boynton Beach, from Sunday, January 18th to Friday, January 23rd with about 140 participants in attendance.

The event got off to a good start Sunday evening with registration and a delicious buffet supper, which made a wonderful opportunity for us all to get acquainted, or re-acquainted, with the other senior students. Four of the following five days, Monday through Friday, were to be class days, that is days that would begin with a brief worship service followed by three lecture periods. The other day, Wednesday, was set aside as a day for sightseeing or recreation at the discretion of each participant.

The educational content of the event was provided by three seasoned and distinguished lecturers who are well-known New Church clergymen. The Rt. Rev. Peter Buss spoke to us about the influence of our spiritual environment, with special and very appropriate attention to doctrinal teachings pertaining to old age. The Rev. George McCurdy drew on his expertise with the Minor Prophets to expound for us the interior spiritual meaning that lies within the literal sense of the book of Micah. The Rev. Walter Orthwein explained some of the profound teachings of *Divine Love and Wisdom*, relating them to all the discrete degrees of our lives. The lecture periods allowed time for questions and comments from the students, whose responses indicated clearly that the hoped-for exchange of knowledge was indeed taking place.

There were ample opportunities for socializing at the mid-morning coffee breaks and the lunch periods after each day's series of lectures. A major designated social event was the Tuesday evening reception at the Delray Beach Golf Club. And then of course there was that entire Wednesday that could be used for any number of social activities. A group of 43 participants went by bus to a famous attraction called Jungle Island down Miami way.

There were trips to Flagler museum, the Palm Beach Zoo, Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, and Wakodahatchee Wetlands to name a few. Also four foursomes of golfers played in the Don Synnestvedt Memorial Golf Tournament, which was followed by a great dinner buffet at the Cypress Creek Country Club.

Friday, the final day of Eldergarten, was a day of special significance. In addition to the usual lectures, it was the occasion of an afternoon Holy Supper service, which of course was the culminating sacrament of worship for the week. And finally, on Friday evening, we enjoyed a delightful banquet at the Delray Beach Golf Club. This last social gathering was not only a wonderful opportunity for lively conversation among the diners, but we were also treated to a humorous poetic account of the week's activities written and read by the Rev. Kurt Asplundh as well as inspirational final remarks by the Rt. Rev. Brian Keith.

The 2009 Eldergarten was a clear demonstration that the numerous experienced committees involved, under the capable direction of Gale Arnoux, are more than up to the job of putting on an outstanding event in the best Eldergarten tradition. Those of us who were the beneficiaries are deeply grateful to the members of the Boynton Beach Society and to the talented lecturers who made it all possible.

Forrest Dristy

Eldergarten



Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss, Rev. George McCurdy & Rev. Walter Orthwein

President of Bryn Athyn College

General Church members and friends around the globe will be interested to hear that together with the tremendous explosion in building activity on the Bryn Athyn College Campus, shown briefly in earlier issues, the Academy Board of Trustees has recently voted to “establish the Position of President of Bryn Athyn College and to offer the job to Dr. Christopher M. Clark, effective July 1” of this year.

The announcement by President of the Academy, Rev. Eric H. Carswell, continues: “Dr. Clark has more than three decades of experience in higher education, including chairing the Department of Education at the University of Delaware, and currently directing a doctoral program in Leadership and Innovation at Arizona State University. He has been a member of the General Church for 35 years and an active member of the Academy Corporation since 2003. He is very enthusiastic about leading Bryn Athyn College through this exciting period of anticipated growth.”

How many readers have attended the Academy Schools, or sent your sons and daughters to it? The expansion toward university status goes on apace, and you may rest assured that quality New Church Education leading to Baccalaureate degrees are available at Bryn Athyn College. There is also the Master of Arts in Religious Studies Post-Graduate degree beckoning as well, under the Academy Theological School aegis.

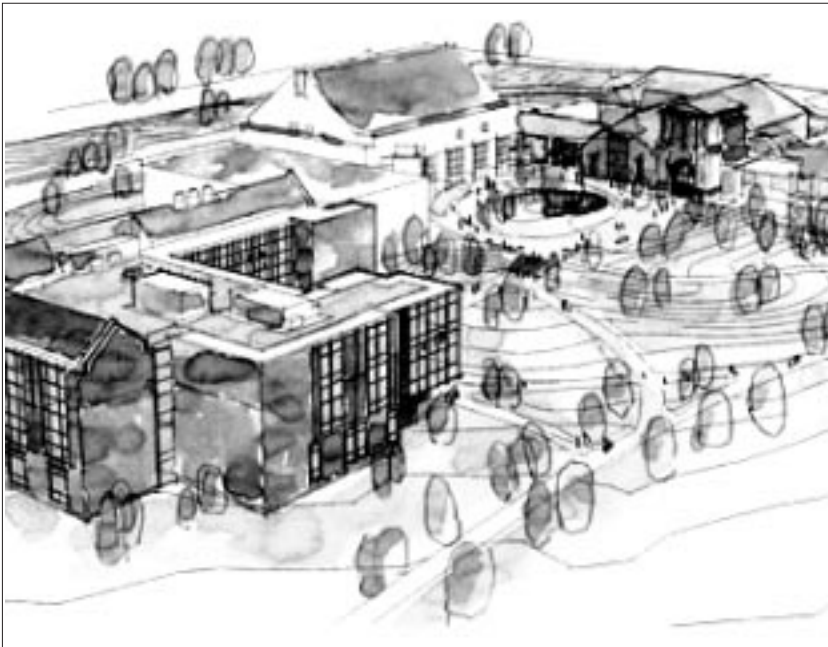
The announcement by President Carswell also named “Stefanie D. Niles ... to serve as Vice President of Enrollment Management for Bryn Athyn College and the Academy Secondary Schools beginning in July 2009.” The Admissions Building is taking shape for this future role. The Science Building also is receiving its roof. But the “ceiling” for New Church Education at Bryn Athyn is infinite.

Ed.

The Brickman Center for Student Life and Admissions is taking shape, and will look like this in September 2009.



Below, the new Bryn Athyn College Campus, with the Doering Science Center on the left.



Olivet Church Society, Toronto

Last year, 2008, the Olivet New Church School won the award for “Best Private School” in Etobicoke, the district where the Church is located in Toronto, Canada. The school is nominated for the same award this year. Good news from one of our longest existing General Church Societies. Congratulations, Olivet Society.



*From the Website of Olivet Church and School
Toronto, Ontario, Canada*

**Outreach Training Event
May 10-13, 2009**

Understanding, Welcoming, Engaging and Enrolling
New People in the Life of Your Church

Hosted by Glenview New Church
74 Park Drive
Glenview, IL 60025

Re-fuel, have fun, find new focus and energy

Who should attend?

- People looking to improve their local congregation's outreach and spiritual growth program enrollment efforts.
- Leaders looking to recharge their batteries, get new ideas and energy for reaching out to people in their area.
- Anyone passionate about the New Church and wanting to find more ways to share the transforming message with a greater audience.
- Pastors, staff, volunteers, board members, leaders, ...you.

This year's training event will focus on enrolling new people into your congregation's spiritual growth campaigns. There will also be opportunities to explore the content of the next featured spiritual growth campaign, **Living Courageously**, with the authors.

To register for this event:

By e-mail: send the completed form below to
Lydia.Boericke@newchurch.org

By mail: send the completed form to Lydia Boericke, General
Church Outreach, PO BOX 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

If you have questions or comments, please call 267-502-4915
Contact local Pastor for forms

It is recorded that in their garden or paradise were placed two trees, a tree of life and a tree of knowledge, the latter as a stumbling-block. Also, that from the mere eating of this tree they so far transgressed that not only they but the whole human race, their posterity, became subject to condemnation.... The interior truths involved in all these things which are contained in the spiritual sense that is in every detail of the story, may be seen explained in the *ARCANA CAELESTIA*, on Genesis and Exodus, published in London, from which it may be evident that by the tree of life is there meant the Lord in respect to His Divine Providence, and by the tree of knowledge is meant man in respect to his own prudence. *Divine Providence* 241:2 *emphases added*.