

A NEW SPIRITUALITY

No. 60 June 2018

Being of Light

A being of light is a person who is full of the light of God's love as the angels are, and also one who is not heavy-laden. When we are heavy-laden, spiritually, we are weighed down with all the cares of the world, our anger, our fears, resentments, and even our sense of being not-good-enough. In this issue we have a near-death experience in which a young man meets with a Being of Light and feels at home there. To feel at home with a Being of Light is to be able to identify with the light. In order to identify with the light, we need to be a light being ourselves. How to become a light being is the theme of this issue. So on page 3 there is an article about shining our light in the world. On page 4 we have an article on walking in the light, and our other pieces continue the theme. When we walk in the light, it is to live a life of joy—it is to choose to lighten our load and make ourselves worthy of a place in heaven.

The light of heaven comes from the Lord alone, and the whole of heaven is bathed in that light.

EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

A Near-Death Experience *Blane Bostock as told to Sasha Silverman*



One night, while sitting in a car with a friend, 21 year old Blane's heart stopped beating. Just before this cardiac arrest, Blane remembers turning to his friend and asking, "Can I go?" When his friend said, "yes," Blane surrendered to a mighty force that seemed to be taking him out of this world. The darkness got darker. He heard a strong wind and then saw everything around him collapse. It wrinkled, shrunk and turned into a ball, like a black hole at his feet. Then he felt himself coming out of his body. "I was really scared, but too weak for the challenge. I knew I could either fight this and lose, or just let go. So I let go."

So began Blane's near-death experience—an experience that he would remember with great clarity and emotion for the rest of his life. Now, thirty-four years after the fact, the majesty of this experience is evident in his descriptions of this other world: "All your greatest dreams here could fit in a thimble of the world there. Your highest imagination becomes reality. All the things you've kept locked in your heart, they get to expand."

Blane's experience included many of the key elements of many near-death experiences: the tunnel, the light, the life review, the time travel, and unlimited perceptions and abilities. At one point he visited the outskirts of a city where people were doing service work to help people on earth. Everything there was bright and illuminated. He was told that everyone there lived in service to greater humanity. He added that everyone and everything there is made of light, and everyone is beautiful.

Although he felt so far away from his life on earth, Blane felt that he had come home to his true spiritual family. There was a sense of reunion and deep connection with these people. He felt especially at home in the presence of "the Light" - a Being that emanated incredible, unconditional love. This Light seemed to encompass everything, including the women he'd loved, all the children he knew, and all the people that had ever been born. To Blane, the joy of this reunion felt worthy of celebration.

One significant part of Blane's near-death experience involved travelling to the future, the past and the present. He was slowly taken through a timeline of

Western thought and philosophy. He was also shown his family's future, and how things would look if he did not come back. Knowing it was best for his family, he reluctantly chose to come back.

At the end of his experience, Blane was shown a black rose. To Blane, this symbolised a kind of reconciliation of good and evil. It had the darkness of his struggles along with the beautiful experience that followed. In many ways, the darkness and beauty of this image reflect Blane's current internal conflict over how to hold his experience.

At first, Blane felt inspired with new hope and purpose. "When I spoke about my experience to others, I really felt like I had something to contribute." He told others that they didn't need to fear dying, because, in fact, there is no death. Over time, though, disillusionment began to set in. He spoke to others who'd gone through similar experiences and felt disappointed to see those people still struggling with petty arguments, judgments and comparisons. Didn't near-death experience make people better? Many others dismissed it as a hallucination or the function of a brain under trauma. Worst of all, Blane started finding out that some of his closest friends—some of the smartest people he knew—didn't believe it was real. And then he began to doubt himself. Blane is still visibly torn over how to hold his experience.

"There are all these things that batter us and shatter us and make us think that to believe is to be a fool. But then the joy is gone. We want to regain the innocence of our own hearts." Then he adds, "Maybe logic and rationality aren't going to ultimately lead me to the truth."

Although Blane has found ways to stay busy, in the quieter moments he longs to go back to that world he once found. A world where his spirit is free to expand.

People may have different ideas about what really happened to Blane that night in the car, when his body went into cardiac arrest. One thing is certain though: what Blane experienced profoundly affected him.

(New Church Connection 2012 Issue 5)

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Shine Your Light!

Jenny Keal

The Bible says that we should shine in the world: *Let your light so shine before all, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven* (Matthew 5:16). But, if we look around, there are a lot of glum faces, dead pan faces, stressed out people.

There is another saying from the Bible that goes like this: *Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light* (Matthew 11: 29, 30). All our burdens of the cares of the world are blocking out our inner light so that we are not shining in the world as we should. Most of us are carrying around burdens of anger, bitterness, sadness, and guilt and shame for past wrongs that have never been lifted from us. Once in a while it is a good idea to do some self-examination and see what is weighing us down. Our unresolved issues may still be getting in the way of our true light from shining and good relationships with God and other people. These things that are dimming our light need to be brought out in the open so that God can take them from us, forgive us, heal us, and make us free and able to live a happy life.

We are all predestined for heaven, but in order to get there, we must give up our heavy burdens so that our light can shine. All angels shine because God's love and light is able to shine through them. God has lifted their burdens and brought them back into the light. We can be angels here on earth if we allow God to work in us in the here and now. He offers us his own yoke which is easy and his own burden which is light. A light burden is also a shining one and this is what God wants for all of us. So take careful inventory of what is weighing you down and ask your heavenly Parent to take those burdens of negativity from you and forgive any wrong doing, so you can go forward and live a new life of shining your light wherever you go.



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Walk in the Light Ken Turley

I've noticed a lot of people walking lately. It is a great way to stay healthy. I enjoy walking and try to get out for a good walk myself on a regular basis. In fact, walking, when it is done right, is supposed to be the safest and at the same time most beneficial form of exercise there is. It is good for the body and good for the soul. It exercises both arms and legs and keeps the shoulders and hips loose, it gives a gentle but steady twisting motion to the spine and helps keep the back straight and at the same time loose, and it also exercises the heart and the lungs—what is called “cardiovascular workout.”



Perhaps that is why walking is such an effective metaphor for life—why, in Swedenborg's writings, walking corresponds to living, why he says that the thoughts and feelings and intentions of a person are expressed in the way they walk. Every part of the person is in motion. If the angels can know everything about a person from the gesture of one hand, it is not surprising, then, that walking can reveal so much about a person's inner state. The writings of Swedenborg say that “to walk” is equivalent to “to live,” regarding “the way.” In fact, there is an entire Eastern religion based on the idea of “the way,” called the Tao.

But let's think for a minute about walking as a metaphor for life. It is an unconscious way of expressing our spiritual attitude and can be a conscious way of expressing our approach to life. We can stand tall and walk loose and easy, living up to our full personhood with calm and humour; cover a

lot of ground; and enjoy the trip, finding it healthful and pleasant. Alternatively, we can hunch over and take small, timid steps, limiting ourselves out of fear. This second option is a very stressful way to move through life—it's not productive, and it's also not attractive.

We can also walk while looking down, which may mean we're thoughtful and introspective—a helpful posture when we're moving through unstable or dangerous footing and need to choose our direction carefully, or when we're studying the path of those who have gone before. But a person walking with head bent to the ground is most often depressed and unhappy. Doing so seriously limits our perspective, making us miss the big picture, only seeing our own immediate concerns. We miss opportunities that present themselves and then are gone, miss out on the beauty and variety of life around us.

When you walk in the world, you encounter and experience all kinds of things. You can bring home all kinds of treasures, but there are also times when you pick up ideas or feelings that are best not kept and carried around.

Yesterday, a few of us went for a walk in the woods. We saw some beautiful trees and many tracks of deer, and we flushed a family of grouse. My brother-in-law picked a bunch of bayberry leaves and brought home some

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pretty rocks. But we also brought home a bunch of ticks. Sometimes moving through life, we experience and can bring home to keep and use important information, beautiful thoughts, and useful experiences. But sometimes we come home carrying negative thoughts and feelings that drain us of our energy, and that, left to burrow into our psyche, can affect our entire system and even make us very sick. We must pick and choose what to retain and what to get rid of. This is especially important when it comes to the thoughts and feelings we pick up as we make our way through the world. Those unpleasant thoughts and annoying experiences are just like ticks and, just as we check ourselves over to get rid of those unpleasant ticks that are clinging to us, we need to regularly check over our thoughts or angry feelings that we somehow picked up along the way. We need to remove them from our psyche the way we would remove a tick.

We learned something else on our walk yesterday. There are dangers in the world—things best left alone, places where we shouldn't go sticking our noses. Thankfully, most of us learn to control our impulses, unlike most dogs. Some rustling bushes, and a small furry creature scurrying along, and my brother-in-law's dog could not help but pounce. And sure enough, she came away with a nose full of porcupine quills. We don't have to worry about porcupines so much, but we do have to worry about those impulses that would lead us to respond in kind to someone who is rude or offensive. So often these kinds of situations are far more trouble than they are worth. With some awareness and wisdom we can learn to avoid and just not engage.

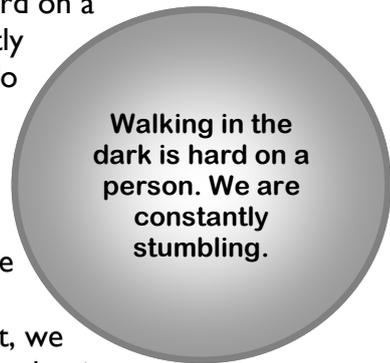
And, finally, when we walk, we need to consider the most important aspect of all: How do we see to get around? John 11:9, 10 says "Those who walk in the dark will stumble, but those who walk in the light will not stumble." The writings of Swedenborg

tell us that walking in the light denotes living in truth, while walking in the dark means living in falsity. Living in the truth means knowing and understanding God's teaching, knowing and understanding what is of value to God, knowing and understanding the qualities of heavenly life, and "walking" in those ways—in other words, living in a way that both establishes inwardly and expresses outwardly those teachings, values, and qualities.

Walking in the dark is hard on a person. We are constantly stumbling on things we do not see. It can be painful, and it can leave us walking around in circles without making any progress in spite of all the effort we put out. But when we walk in the light, we can see and comprehend what is around us. We can avoid dangers and even use what might be obstacles to our benefit. In the light we have a sense, not only of what is around us—our own immediate concerns—but also of what is ahead of us. We can establish long-range goals as well.

The light of God, which makes life so much safer, so much more beautiful, is not something that we find by going someplace else. It is more a matter of turning that light on inside of us. It can be learned by reading the Word of God, it can be learned by reading the writings of Swedenborg and any number of other books about the human condition, but it can also be discovered in the warmth and light of God's love, in that fire we kindle in our own hearts and minds. It is the warmth of that love and the light of that wisdom that makes our walk through life an enjoyable experience. It is what keeps us safe and healthy and on the right path. And it is what makes us enjoyable and useful companions for others who are walking that same path.

*(From Our Daily Bread,
Swedenborgian Church of North America)*



A Gem

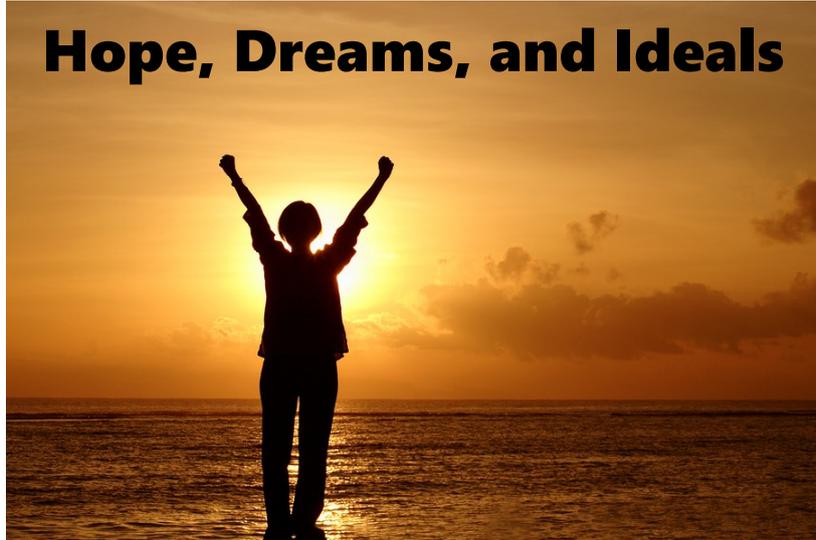
*A gem's beauty is revealed through
continual interaction with others.
The rough and tumble of everyday life
polishes it to great brilliance.
It emerges from the group unique
and more valuable than ever.*

*For as many people who see it,
there are as many ways to view it.
It is always different.
It sparkles in a way no other does.
It reflects the light that comes from others
and transforms it into a unique
expression of itself.
Others admire its beauty.
It is valued.*

Anon



Hope, Dreams, and Ideals



You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before all, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16).

For each of us our spiritual life begins in our inner self—in our hopes, dreams and intentions. The inner self has to be reborn before the outer self can be transformed. That is, we have an inward vision of becoming a good person before we can make that a reality in our outward life.

When we look at ourselves, many of us are painfully aware of our shortcomings. We may beat ourselves up when we fall short of our ideals. We might notice resentments or impatience towards our family members or co-workers, and feel regret or shame about what we have felt or done. Today, we invite you to reflect on the blessing the Lord has given you of your ideals. For example, if you have noticed yourself doing something unhealthy or wrong, it is because you have a conscience, ideals and values at your core that urge you to strive for something better.

Our ideals are like the light of a distant star that gives hope and direction to life, even if you feel far from achieving them. In the end, it is not whether we achieve our ideals, but whether we continue to strive towards them that determines our character and eternal happiness. What about considering your ideals and thanking God that you have a vision for something better in your life.

(From Building Healthy Relationships, by John and Lori Odhner and David Lindrooth)

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A New Spirituality

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