



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society May 2016

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Spiritual Growth Through Hypnosis

By Rev Todd Beiswenger

So, we're a third of the way through the year now, and I'm wondering how those New Year's resolutions are going? When I go to the gym right after January 1st, the place is absolutely packed. But by this time of year all the resolve that existed a few months ago to create a better, fitter, healthier body has vanished for most people. When Jesus is undergoing temptations just before being arrested, He commands His disciples to stay awake, keep watch and pray. About an hour later He comes back and this is what is written:

Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Matt 26:41, 42)"

Yes, whether it be our resolve to go to the gym and get physically fit, or with our spiritual resolve to be strong when tempted, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Now, I'm grateful that there are fewer people at the gym as it means the equipment is available, but spiritually this isn't good. We need to be stronger. Ministers all around the world will tell you that in order to get strength you should read the Word, and pray to the Lord. Simple, right?

Except that there are times when it feels like that's not enough. I know that some people experience miracles when reading the Word, but for others they experience something different. Something like the spiritual equivalent of eating vegetables. Reading more and more increases their spiritual immune system, but if somebody sticks a pitchfork through their heart eating a carrot isn't going to be all that helpful. Why people experience it differently is a topic for another day, but it does leave me thinking that sometimes we need some extra help to become the person we want to become. Or at least we can use some help to get there a bit sooner, and maybe a bit easier.

Recently I was listening to the radio and heard the story of a Hollywood actress who decided to get some extra help. Her problem was pretty simple: she's an actress, so she needs to stay in shape and look good, but the fact was that she did not like going to the gym. Her flesh was weak! Get it? Haha Pun intended! Anyway, in order to gain the necessary motivation to get herself to the gym she decided to get hypnotised. Perhaps more interesting is that she claims it has totally worked for her. It took 3 sessions, but after the third one she was getting up early and grabbing her gym bag on her way out the door heading to work. It happened in just THREE sessions! That's amazing.

I started digging around figuring that I needed to know more about this. For starters, it's not what I had seen on TV my whole life where somebody gets put in a trance and you can make them cluck like a chicken every time you clap your hands. I also didn't know all the success stories about people who have been hypnotised to deal with addictions issues. Smoking, drugs, alcohol, porn, chocolate... the list goes on and on. And it seems to be

really effective. What I like about it is that it doesn't reinforce a negative opinion of oneself. You don't have to wake up every day and say, "My name is Bill and I'm an alcoholic and I'm one drink away from falling off the wagon." Instead you reinforce a positive image of who you want to be.

The actress on the radio also described hypnosis more like a meditation, where she visualized her future self wanting to go to the gym and what that felt like. No snapping of fingers, no "you're getting very sleepy," none of the stuff that I've thought hypnosis was about.

All this left me wondering what is actually going on with hypnosis, and is there anything in the realm of New Church teachings that have any bearing on it? Well, you won't find the word "hypnosis" in the Bible or any of Swedenborg's works because the word wasn't invented when those books were written. So I asked around to some of my minister colleagues as what they thought of all this, and here are a few paragraphs I want to share:

Visualizing the results you want is a powerful way to encourage spiritual progress. *Divine Providence 178* says, "Reason's essential delight is to **envision** from love the effect in thought - not at the time of the effect, but prior to it, or not at the present time, but in a time to come. It is this that gives a person what we call hope, which grows or dwindles in his reason as it **envisions or anticipates** the outcome."

So visualizing the desired outcome increases our hope, and increased hope activates the mind and engages it in bringing about the hope-for result. There are many passages that speak of **looking** towards or **seeing** an end, or keeping the end in **view**. There are also many passages that speak of hope, especially as an antidote to despair in times of trial. For example:

...those who are of the Lord's spiritual kingdom were infested by falsities, and at last because of these infestations were near despair. Now they are encouraged with hope, and with the promise that they are certainly to be liberated. (Secrets of Heaven 7183)

This passage is in the context of the Lord promising to liberate Israel from the Egyptians and bring them to the promised land. It was important for the children of Israel to visualize the land "flowing with milk and honey" so that they would have hope and could escape their slavery.

Now, I have been taught for years that visualising success is important to actually achieving success. Yet, to me, simply visualising success doesn't mean I'll actually be successful. If visualising success was so effective, my cricket batting scores would be much better! So what else is going on here? Fortunately I'm not the only New Church person who has asked this question. I found a book titled, "*Proving God*" by Edward Sylvia (you can borrow or buy it from the Swedenborg Centre) that has a chapter on hypnotism. Here's a little bit of what he writes:

...the cerebellum is fashioned under the Divine order of the soul and gets its active information immediately from heaven. It is instinctive. Its involuntary function heals injuries in the body and as the body's master chemist, it cannot be matched by any human chemist...

The cerebrum responds to external influences. Since the cerebellum accommodates the organs to the qualities of the affections in the cerebrum, its super-physical powers can be manipulated by external influences. A hypnotist acts as that external influence and manipulates (unknowingly) the cerebellum's ability to modify the organic structures to be in agreement and correspondence with the interior state of the mind and its affections... A hypnotist renders a person's false consciousness passive and gains direct access to the subconscious mind. The hypnotist then makes the cerebrum's subconscious mind believe that healing taking place in a diseased part of the body. The cerebellum detects this new state, and its para-physical powers comply. The subconscious mind, free of the habitual mind, blend with the involuntary wisdom of the body. The power of the subconscious mind to visualise the cure "as accomplished" ushers in the action of the soul.

In essence, he's saying we are letting our true self come forward and take the place of the corrupted self. Perhaps "corrupted" is too strong a word, but there is clearly a reordering of which "self" is in control of us. And it is that idea that makes so much sense to me from a New Church perspective. The job of our life is to re-order and re-prioritise our loves. Love the Lord most of all, our neighbour second and ourselves last. That isn't to say that we aren't to love ourselves, we need to love ourselves, but just make sure the Lord and others have priority.

It's the same thing with our mind. We need to have our inner mind, our higher mind in control. We do need the external mind, the one that navigates us through this world. Higher principles are great and all, but sometimes we've just got to get from your house to the grocery store, and it is our external mind that is most capable of that. But if you're struggling with getting that inner mind to take control over some of your external actions, if your spirit is willing and your flesh is weak, then perhaps you want to take a look into hypnosis in order to accomplish that New Year's resolution.

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Last Call for Camp Wanawong

At this writing we have 18 people signed up for Camp Wanawong, and we'd love to have a few more join us. This is just a weekend get-away that runs from Friday afternoon June 17 and we leave Sunday morning June 19th. Undoubtedly it will be a good time for all who come! It's inexpensive, and in a lovely setting in Loftus.

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Clergy Meetings, Pastor Holiday

The General Church has yearly clergy meetings that are normally held in Bryn Athyn. However, every three years instead of bringing everybody to Bryn Athyn, we have regional meetings instead. As the only General Church minister in Australia, I get absorbed into the Asia region and have my regional meetings with them. Three years ago I went to Korea, and this year I'm heading of to Japan as the meetings are in Tokyo. I'll leave here on May 2 to attend meetings that run May 3-7. Much of the meetings will be focused on professional development, including how to preach better, how to get the most out of research tools, and of course engage in some networking opportunities.

In addition, because the Beiswengers have never been to Japan before, Jenn and Zach are going to come along and we're going to stay in Japan for some extra holiday time. We're looking forward to exploring a completely different culture, and are a bit nervous about the language barrier. We've got a red-eye flight coming back that arrives in Sydney early on the 18th. In our absence I'll be arranging for lay services for the two Sundays.

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Abridged Version Secrets of Heaven/Arcana Caelestia

Are you among the vast majority of New Church people who finds the idea of reading 12 volumes of Arcana completely overwhelming? Well, a New Churchman from South Africa has spent the last several years creating an abridged version of it.

This version takes the internal sense of each clause of the literal story and joins the clauses together by means of a few “linking words” and so have been able to produce a picture of the continuous internal sense. Where appropriate more modern language has also been used. The result is a document that is reasonably “readable.” Hopefully this will encourage those who find the original difficult to later read it. Of course, much has been left out... the stories, the experiences, and most of the important references that are used to support and confirm the doctrinal presentation.

At this point a first printing of this abridged set is being planned, so if you are interested in having a printed set, please let me know. It is available electronically for free by contacting Willard Mansfield at willardmansfield@inds.cybertek.co.za

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Swedenborg Biography Movie

There is an excellent film ‘*Splendours of the Spirit*’ about the life and legacy of Emanuel Swedenborg that was released in 2006. It was produced and directed by Penny Price. This is a short description of the film –

Emmy Award-winning producer Penny Price portrays the fascinating life and thought of the Swedish Enlightenment scientist and spiritual

visionary Emanuel Swedenborg, whom Zen scholar D.T. Suzuki revered as the "great king of the mystical realm." Interweaving breathtaking nature photography, expert interviews, computer animation, and rare, archival stills with dramatic re-enactment featuring acclaimed actor Lillian Gish and contemporary documentary footage, this program conveys the essential and ever-relevant insights brought back by Swedenborg from his unprecedented explorations of the spiritual worlds.

It goes for 60 minutes and there is a lot of wonderful information packed into this film. Marianne Williamson, author, *Enchanted Love* and *The Healing of America* said it was "An engrossing exploration of our immortality through the eyes of a genuine seer."

Michael Chester from the Swedenborg Centre says "I only recently discovered [it is now freely available on the internet](#). For those who haven't seen the film, it's highly recommended. If watching it from the internet is not for you, you can always borrow or buy the DVD from the Swedenborg Centre. And if the opportunity arises for you to recommend the film, sharing the link is an easy way to do it." The link is - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RdzeFKh9_D4

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Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **Hugh O'Brien** (5th), **John Sandow** (18th), **Naomi Heldon** (20th), **Matthew Cooper** (25th), **Daniel Walsh** (27th), **Brian Walsh** (31st)

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