

A NEW CHRISTIANITY

new
church

connection

www.newchurch.org

3 ways
to participate
in a new
Christianity
p.10

**You Can
Believe!**
p.20

**A Christianity about
how you live.**
p.14

**Is the end of the
world coming?**
p.8



New Church Connection makes the connection between religion and life. Every issue features content that highlights the personal nature of spirituality, providing applicable ideas to support your journey with insights from the New Church (Swedenborgian) faith.

in this issue: **A NEW CHRISTIANITY**

WELCOME

new church | **connection**

Connecting you
with a New Christian
spirituality
for everyday life

What does
New Christianity
mean to you?
Connect with us on
Facebook and share
your response.

In this issue we tackle a big topic... and that's an understatement. What is a New Christianity—the New Church? This question reminds me of the litany of questions I get daily from my three-year-old. These are often simple, profound, and almost always difficult to answer definitively and concisely.

To me, the New Christianity is the Lord's message born anew in my life. It is the living presence of the Lord revealed through the Bible and through my heartfelt efforts to bring the Bible's message to life. New Christianity is where God is one, heaven is possible, and hope is alive.

I like to think New Christianity is not so much new as it is old. It puts aside the dogmas, bureaucracy, and formality that separates individuals from interacting with and embracing the Divine. A New Christianity is a movement, a message, a possibility that transcends any human organization.

Witness the journey of Sylvia Shaw as she contemplates her religious affiliations, finally identifying herself with the New Church with great respect, humility and confidence (p.4). Tired of just talking about new ideas? Explore the Rev. Jonathan Rose's three simple steps to actively participate in the New Christianity (p.10-11). Is this New Christianity universal? The Rev. Jeremy Simons considers this important question on p. 14-17. If you are just beginning to explore this topic or feel you are exploring it with new eyes, I encourage you to get some friends together and check out the Rev. Grant Schnarr's book *You Can Believe* (small group guide on p.20-21).

I hope this issue leaves you inspired, enriched, and perhaps filled with even more questions. May you continue to approach sacred texts familiar and new to you for insights on your journey.

With gratitude for the journey,

Bronwen Henry

Bronwen Henry, General Church Outreach



PRODUCTION TEAM

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
David Lindrooth

MANAGING EDITOR
AND CREATIVE
DIRECTOR
Bronwen Henry

CREATIVE DESIGN
Caroline Kline

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Taryn Frazier

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Chelsea Odhner

COPY EDITORS
Chad Odhner
Bruce Henderson

SUBSCRIPTION
MANAGER
Heather Allais

General Church
Outreach
A department
of the General Church
of the New Jerusalem

1100 Cathedral Road
PO Box 743
Bryn Athyn, PA
19009

1-877-411-HOPE
(4673)
www.newchurch.org
questions@new-
church.org

For general
information
call 267-502-4911.

To contribute an
article or personal
story, or to request
this magazine for
yourself or a friend,
please contact the
production team at
outreach@new-
church.org for more
information.

cover photo by:
CALEB SCHNARR

What's next?
✦ Submit your
ideas for topics
on our facebook
page!

In the spiritual world,
the world everyone
comes into after death,
no one asks what your
faith was or what your
doctrine was, but what
you life was like....

—Divine Providence 101[3]

Changing Lives

4

After three baptisms in three religions, Sylvia discusses the reasons she values the New Church.

Seeking Answers

8

Prophecies of the Apocalypse? The Rev. Ethan McCardell offers his thoughts on some challenging questions.

Three R's

14

The Rev. Jonathan Rose describes three ways to make the beautiful promises of the New Church a reality.

A Church for the World

18

The Rev. Jeremy Simons shares his view of salvation: that people of all religions can go to heaven and that the New Church has something special to offer.

You can Believe

20

Try this small group study based on the Rev. Grant Schnarr's book—an introduction to New Church teachings.



article photos provided by Sylvia Shaw

Dr. Sylvia Montgomery Shaw has been baptized three times. Here, she grapples with the question: if she sees the good in the religions of her childhood, why do the teachings of the New Church mean so much to her?

I have been baptized three times in my life: first into the Presbyterian Church when I was a baby wearing the baptismal gown worn by generations of Montgomeries, then into the Eastern Orthodox Church when I was a small child, and lastly, into the New Church when I was almost old enough to vote. The first baptism ushered me into "the faith of my fathers," the second into the one that my father chose for himself as an adult, and the third into the church that I chose for myself when

I was twenty years old. It's been forty-one years since then. I've raised all four of my children in the church that I cherish, and then, like my father before me, I allowed my children the same right once they reached adulthood: to seek a new faith or to stay and probe deeper. I ardently believe that there are many paths to heaven. I love Swedenborg's inclusivity, his assurance that there is a universal church, and that all religions that offer the following principles lead people to heaven. Belief in God allows God to be united to us and we with Him, and denial of God brings about severance. This belief and union depend on

our living good lives: abstaining from evils because they are against our religion and therefore against God. These are the general principles of all religions, through which everyone can be saved, according to *Divine Providence* 325.

Now it is permitted to enter with understanding into the truths of faith.
-True Christianity 508

or so of fellowship with the tiny congregation. I was happily enjoying lunch, when the priest, a sincere convert to the church, asked me point blank: "Why have you left the church?" I smiled nervously, aware that all conversation had stopped. "I will always feel a deep love for the church of my childhood. I feel the Lord's presence here as surely as in my own church." "But why the New Church? What can it possibly offer you that we don't?"



Sylvia with her family.

I was acutely conscious that I was being asked there, in the presence of people who love their church, to pin down what it lacks--something I would never have dreamed of doing. "Name one thing the Swedenborgians can give you that we can't," the priest persisted. He was giving me no out. I thought a moment. "The Bible. It has restored the Old Testament to me."

"We can do that!" "Of course you can . . ." They were all listening. Will I offend them? Should I speak what I believe? Why must you push this? I wanted to ask the priest. I finally said, "The Orthodox church taught me to revere the Bible, but not how to understand the thornier narratives in the Old Testament. Swedenborg's works probe deep below the surface. Take for

I was raised in the Eastern Orthodox Church, and I truly believe it can guide people spiritually. Why the New Church, then? That question was put to me a couple of years ago when I was visiting my parents in Texas. We attended the Sunday liturgy in a tiny Russian Orthodox church. I loved hearing the familiar, oh-so-lovely melodies of the Russian liturgy. After the service, I enjoyed an hour

example the Battle of Ai. How could a merciful God command the Israelites to kill every man, woman, and child—even the animals?"

The priest nodded impatiently, as if to say, what does that matter? Jesus Christ

"So you give the Bible your own interpretation."

"No. I believe that the Lord revealed this hidden depth to Swedenborg."

We were headed for a battle. Mercifully, his wife interrupted us with a smile and another helping of potato salad.



Sylvia at Swedenborg's summer house.

is the fulfillment. What do we care about the old church? But he let me continue.

"Through Swedenborg I discovered that the battles in the Old Testament are spiritual combats—battles that are fought within each of us. In the context of the story of Ai, if we think of men as evil ideas within us, women as the evil things we love, and children as the things that our ideas and loves produce, then it makes perfect sense for the Lord to command that we kill them all. He was not commanding the destruction of actual men, women and children at all, and that's a very different reading from the literal one. That is a God that I can understand and love."

How many baptisms does a person need? As many as it takes to find one's way toward the light.

Back in my parents' home, though, I continued an inner conversation with the priest, as if he were standing alongside me.

I know you meant well, I conceded. You were just trying to save a lost lamb!

I cannot go back to the lovely church of my childhood—not because it isn't rich and true, for it is; not because it wouldn't give me spiritual guidance—for it would. I cannot go back because...

From the window I caught sight of a ribbon of amber and orange: the sky aflame with the colors of an ebbing day. It was thought-stopping. I headed outside. Above me the great Texan sky spread itself into a limitless expanse, and I realized that for me to stay in the church of my childhood would be like watching the sunset through the confines of a win-

dow. With the Writings of Swedenborg, I sense my questing soul standing under the sky in all its vastness and wonder. That's why I cannot go back.

Perhaps it's a matter of scale. All Christian churches offer Biblical exegesis, but none on the scale of New Church teachings. All profess a belief in heaven, yet none offer the degree of detail found in Heaven and Hell or Secrets of Heaven. Through Swedenborg's works I continue to see dark passages of the Bible illuminated with startling clarity. How could I go back to casting dark sayings into the abyss of holy mystery, now that I've heeded Swedenborg's call to enter with understanding into those mysteries of faith? Nunc licet: "now it is permitted." How can I go back to waiting for an apocalyptic Second Coming when I believe it is accomplished—not a physical event, but a spiritual one; a spiritualization of Christianity. In the words of Helen Keller, "I acknowledge my profound indebtedness to Emanuel Swedenborg for a richer interpretation of the Bible, a deeper understanding of the meaning of Christianity, and a precious sense of the divine presence in the world."

"I acknowledge my profound indebtedness to Emanuel Swedenborg for a richer interpretation of the Bible, a deeper understanding of the meaning of Christianity, and a precious sense of the divine presence in the world."
- Helen Keller

The perspective that colors my worldview, whether we call it New Church or Swedenborgian, has come to color everything for me—the very fiber of my being. It guides my research as a literary scholar and teacher. I can mourn the death of a loved one like anyone else and suffer that loss deeply, yet I am bolstered by the conviction of that person's continued life, a life of use and beauty that far surpasses this one—not some sequestered life of piety without charity, but a vibrant heaven where love is a life force, work a joy, and marriage its ultimate expression.

How many baptisms does a person need? As many as it takes to find one's way toward the light. ○

What Is Your Story?
How has your life been impacted by living New Christian spirituality?
Send us your story.
newchurchconnection
@newchurch.org

Life is full of QUESTIONS

Is the end of the world coming? Does God only save 144,000, as the book of Revelation seems to imply? The Rev. Ethan McCardell tackles some tough questions about the literal meaning of the Word.

Q HOW DOES THE NEW CHURCH VIEW THE "END TIMES" BIBLE PROPHECIES?

a In the New Church the Bible is seen as a Divine allegory. Just like Jesus taught in parables the Bible itself is one continuous parable. This doesn't mean it's not true! Rather, it has layers of meaning. The outer layer is more literal or historical. A deeper layer reflects our own inner spiritual journey. It describes our struggles and our ability to overcome with God's help. Just like the stories Jesus told, every story in the Word is, at its core, concerned with how to love God and how to treat our neighbor. When this becomes the anchor for our study of the Word, the question changes. Instead of asking, "What are the words?" consider "What does this mean for my life?"

We can start to see the Bible as a love story, written by God for His children. Prophecies that seemed at first to talk only about the end of the world (the appearance) start to look more like they're speaking to us when we're at the end of

our rope spiritually (the reality). Many of us have felt at one point like "it's the end of the world!" We think of times when we have little or no love or faith in our hearts. The Lord can reach even into the darkest places in our souls and open our eyes to see His presence with us.

This is when our perspective on the Bible starts to be transformed, as we grow spiritually and our awareness develops. When you study the Bible, try asking the Lord to open your eyes and heart to what He's trying to tell you about your life today.

Then He can show us that "in itself the Word is nothing but teachings about love to the Lord, and of charity toward the neighbor." (*Secrets of Heaven* 7262)

Q WHO ARE THE 144,000 IN REVELATION?

a "And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand" (Revelation 7:4).

Some have taken this statement literally, meaning that only 144,000 people will make it to heaven. Thinking from the principle that the Bible is a Divine Allegory, this wouldn't make sense, would it? If God is love, then love by definition has to share itself. Only 144,000 people doesn't seem like all the love our Creator is capable of, does it? If we run on the assumption that everything we read in the Word is at some level about how to love God and treat our neighbor, we need to think about how that would be possible. What if the numbers in the Word are also allegorical?

The 144,000 symbolize all people who acknowledge the Lord God of heaven and earth and are governed by teachings about the goodness of love, received from God through the Word.

"These are symbolized by the number 144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel because the twelve tribes of Israel symbolize a church made up of people who possess all love and truth from God.... " (*Apocalypse Revealed* 348)

As you start reading the Word through this lens of spiritual meaning, the stories come alive with application to your life.

Some people cherish the notion that God turns his face away from people, spurns them, and casts them into hell, and is angry against them because of their evil. ... They support this notion from the literal meaning of the Word where things like this are said, not realizing that the spiritual meaning of the Word, which makes sense of the letter, is wholly different. ... It teaches that the Lord never turns his face away from anyone or spurns anyone, never casts anyone into hell or is angry. ... [T]he Lord is goodness itself, love itself, and mercy itself. Good itself cannot do harm to anyone. Love itself and mercy itself cannot spurn anyone, because this is contrary to mercy and love and is therefore contrary to the divine nature itself.

-Heaven and Hell 545

SHARE YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT LIFE.
Email questions@newchurch.org.
Mention "New Church Connection".



The Rev. Ethan McCardell is the pastor of Light For Life Church in Seattle, WA. For more information, visit lightforlifeword.org.

Participate in a New Christianity

Illustrations by CAROLINE KLINE



by Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose,
transcribed by Chelsea Rose Odhner

At a colloquium on the future of the New Church, the Rev. Jonathan Rose offered his thoughts on the three ways a person can make the New Church a reality today. A portion of his address is provided here.



Only the Lord can build the Church and fight hell, but he has placed the fundamental controls on our side. We're the ones who need to change to bring this whole thing about.

To do this, there are three 'R's that we need to follow: repentance, reading the Word, and reaching out to serve others outside of ourselves.

REPENT

First and foremost, we need to repent. We need to lay aside evils and sins. We need to cooperate in filling every valley, bringing every mountain and hill low, making the crooked places straight and the rough ways smooth in ourselves before we'll be in a condition to see the salvation of the Lord. As we read in Matthew, the first words of John the Baptist's ministry were, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And the first words of the Lord's



ministry were, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." We have to deepen our repentance to prepare for the coming of the Lord.

READ

We also need to read and study the Lord's Revelation. We need to read the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg in order to get a true lens through which to read scripture. And then we need to read and study the Old and New Testaments for ourselves and for the sake of this work. The Lord says again and again that we will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory when the Second Coming happens. The "Son of Man" means the Lord as to the Word. The "clouds of heaven" mean the Word's literal meaning. And "the power and great glory" mean the Word's inner meaning. It's all about the Word and our ability to see the Lord in it. The Writings make it perfectly clear that the Lord is coming in the pages of Scripture—and presumably not just in those particular words in it that Swedenborg had time to explain. The Lord is the Word, and He is coming in the entirety of it; it behooves us to study it all.

REACH OUT

And we need to reach out and serve others outside of ourselves. If we increase our repentance and our study of the Word, the Lord will give us more compassion for others and more concern about their spiritual wellbeing. We

need to get to know others and figure out how to love and serve them as best we possibly can. And these three 'R's are not arbitrary; they are what Jesus did and how He became the one God of heaven and earth. He is the way. ○



The Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose is the series editor and a translator for the New Century Edition of the Theological Works of Emanuel Swedenborg. For more information: jsrose@digitalwave.com.

The Power of AND

The most common first word in a sentence in the Bible (or at least the Old Testament) is 'and.' In the Hebrew it is actually just a single letter, pronounced 'w.' *Secrets of Heaven* 5578 says that this is an imitation of heavenly speech, which is 'continuous,' rather than broken up by hard stops. It seems logical to me that this is a natural illustration of the idea that the Word contains within it a 'continuous' internal sense that speaks of the Lord.

-Rev. Mac Frazier, Pastor, New Way Church

What is the New Church?

New Church teachings paint a beautiful picture of the Lord's presence on earth with all people. Here is a selection of passages that explain this vision:

A Universal Church

Those outside the church who acknowledge one God and who in accordance with their religion live in some sort of charity towards the neighbor are in communion with those who belong to the church. For no one is damned who believes in God and lives a good life. From this it is plain that the Lord's Church exists throughout the whole world, although it is especially located where the Lord is acknowledged and the Word is known.

–New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine 244

A United Church

The Lord's Church is not in this particular location or in that, but it resides wherever people lead lives in keeping with the commandments of charity, both within the kingdoms in which the Church exists and outside them. So it is that the Lord's Church is spread throughout the whole world, and yet is one; for when life constitutes the Church, and not doctrine separated from life, there is one Church. But when doctrine constitutes the Church there are many.

–Secrets of Heaven 8152



photo by CAROLINE KLINE

A Global Church

The church in specific is where the Word is and where the Lord is known because of it, so it is where divine truths from it have been revealed from heaven. The Lord's Church exists throughout the whole world with all people who live in good according to their religions. All people who live in good according to their religions and acknowledge something divine are accepted by the Lord, wherever they are.

–Heaven and Hell 308

An Essential Church

In the Christian world it is their doctrines that cause Churches to be distinct and separate, and because of these they call themselves Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists or the Reformed, and Evangelicals, among other names. It is solely by reason of their doctrines that they are called by these names. This situation would never exist if they were to make love to the Lord and charity towards the neighbor the chief thing of faith. In this case their doctrinal differences would be no more than shades of opinion concerning the mysteries of faith which truly Christian people would leave to individual conscience, and in their hearts would say that a person is truly a Christian when he lives as a Christian, that is, as the Lord teaches. If this were so all the different Churches would become one, and all the disagreements which stem from doctrine alone would disappear. Indeed the hatred one man holds against another would be dispelled in an instant, and the Lord's kingdom on earth would come.

–Secrets of Heaven 1799:4

A Church for the World

Is the New Church a universal religion, accepting all faiths?

The Rev. Jeremy Simons suggests that all people can be saved if they live according to the laws of heaven *and* that the New Church has something special to offer the world.

PROGRESSING FROM IDENTITY TO BEHAVIOR

From the Old Testament to the New Testament there is a progression from an emphasis on identity to an emphasis on what following the Lord is all about. Deuteronomy 7:6 describes the Children of Israel as a chosen people, apart from all others: “[T]he LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the

peoples on the face of the earth.” Everyone is a special treasure to the Lord who loves Him, obeys Him, and loves other people, but the Children of Israel took these words literally.

In Luke, by contrast, the Lord expresses love even for people who don’t believe in Him, saying, “The Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them” (9:56). The teachings for the New Church point out that identity and precise beliefs are not the point. The Lord’s people are all those who love Him and love their neighbor, regardless of their religious identity. (see p.12-13 for more on this topic.) The Children of Israel were no better or worse than other nations; they simply represented everyone who follows the Lord.

Despite this fact, the followers of religion have tended to follow the Children of Israel’s example. The message has often been, “We are the elect. You are not.” Even the relativistic thinking of our postmodern era can fall into this mindset sometimes, scorning as close-minded everyone who fails to embrace its mindset.

PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH

Consider the parallels between the spiritual health of the world’s population and its physical health. The Bible often compares evil to disease. In *True Christianity* we read, “The sins which are retained in an unrepentant person may be compared with the various illnesses one suffers, and unless cures are applied... one may die of them” (524). Bad habits can be just as bad for our spiritual lives as illness is for our physical bodies.

Sadly, poor health and diseases are common world-wide. Western scientists believe they have knowledge and technology that would improve millions of lives if they could be spread world-wide. However, there are already plenty of healthy people, whether they have been exposed to Western knowledge or not. Nor are scientists necessarily any healthier than anyone else, despite the information they have.

If we think of medical knowledge as a religion, we can see the parallels. First



photo by MARIAN VANGENNE

of all, there is truth and falsity involved. It is important to insist on the truth and to get rid of mistaken ideas. People believe that a medical group with which they are affiliated has the right answers, but they would probably not assert, “We’re healthy, and you’re sick.” All people can be healthy, regardless of what they know or what group they are affiliated with, provided that they live a life consistent with the universal laws of healthy living known to everyone on earth: people need to eat, drink, sleep, rest, exercise, and so on.

The comparison here with people’s spiritual lives is not perfect, but the similarities illustrate an important point. No one would claim, “I’m healthy, and you’re sick” on the basis of being a reader of a medical journal. But people do make these kinds of claims with respect to the religion they belong to. Yet the principle is the same. No one is saved or condemned on the basis of being a member of any particular religious organization, but rather on the basis of their harmony with universal spiritual laws, which are about love of the Lord and love of the neighbor.



photo by MARIAN VANGENNE



photo by MALCOLM SMITH

SALVATION IS ABOUT FAITH AND CHARITY

In *True Christianity* 391, we read the story of a conversation between an angel and someone who had recently died.



photo by MARIAN WANGENNE

The angel asked, "Friend, what are you?"
'I am a Christian of the Reformed Church,' he replied.
The angel asked 'What is your doctrine and so your religion?'
'Faith and charity,' he replied.
'These,' said the angel, 'are two.'
'They cannot be separated,' the man replied.
'What is faith?' he asked.
'Believing what the Word teaches,' he replied.
'What is charity?'
'Doing what the Word teaches.'

The New Church teaches that ancient truths contained in the Bible have been lost and that they need to be found anew and spread worldwide.

'Have you only believed these things or have you also done them?'

'I have also done them,' he replied.

The angel from heaven looked at him and said, 'My friend, come with me and live with us.'

On the basis of that brief conversation, the angel knows that the person belongs in heaven. The angel's interest is not in the man's denomination but that he believes and practices what the Lord teaches. The same is true of every person of every religion.

This is not to say that all people who live by what they believe will be saved. If what they believe is truly harmful it will lead them into unhappiness, not heaven. Rather, people who live good lives according to their religion and acknowledge something divine are saved. No one is free of misconceptions and false ideas, but people who are in harmony with heaven are able to see the truth when exposed to it.

IS THE NEW CHURCH A UNIVERSAL RELIGION?

No one would claim good health on the basis of reading a medical journal. Still,



photo by KAY ALDEN

a reader of that journal may have confidence that what the journal asserts is true. Its editors, while not claiming to have a corner on the health market, will not accept ideas they see as invalid.

The same could be said of the New Church. The Lord loves all people equally, and people from every denomination are saved. This does not mean that a group has no opinion about what is true and what is not. The teachings of the New Church are in fact highly critical of the direction that some versions of Christian doctrine and the behavior of some people in the Christian world have taken over the past millennium. The New Church teaches that ancient truths contained in the Bible have been lost and that they need to be found anew and spread worldwide. Just as modern health practices can improve millions of lives, the teachings of the New Church hold that these truths will someday bring spiritual peace.

RELIGION IS ABOUT LOVING OTHERS

This does not mean that a congregation is an exclusive community. There is no thought that people in this church are saved and others are

not. But this is often hard to distinguish from the very real belief, shared by all people who are enthusiastic about any cause: that it is enormously valuable, that it holds answers to the world's problems, that it holds the key to eternal happiness for anyone who wants it.

Whenever people believe that something is right, there is the potential for

No one is saved or condemned on the basis of being a member of any particular religious organization, but rather on the basis of their harmony with universal spiritual laws, which are about love of the Lord and love of the neighbor.

the addition, "and you are wrong." The only way to overcome this unhealthy attitude is to remember what religion is actually about: the love for others, looking down on no one. Life is about how you live, not what you believe. The purpose of belief is to teach you how to live. A life of kindness, usefulness, and integrity unites you to everyone around you and excludes no one. ●



The Rev. Jeremy Simons is pastor of the Bryn Athyn church. For more information, visit www.brynathynchurch.org or email him at jeremy.simons@bacs.org.

What's New About the New Church?

What new perspectives are present in the New Church?

The Purpose of Life

The purpose of creation is a heaven from the human race. All people on earth—not just the “elect”—have the opportunity to choose and prepare for life in heaven. Good acts by themselves or confessions of faith by themselves cannot save a person. A person is not saved in an instant, but gradually readies himself or herself for heaven by a sincere effort to live a good life and shun evils as sins against God.

The Identity of God

The trinity is not a mysterious collection of three persons but rather a trinity of attributes: soul, body, and proceeding spirit. The Father is the invisible, infinite divine soul; the Son is the embodiment of that soul; the Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth which flows from God to all people. Humans are created in God's image, and like Him, we have an invisible soul, a body which clothes and expresses that soul, and a spirit—an influence that radiates from us.

Life after Death

Our bodies don't wait on earth for a physical resurrection. Rather, our spirits pass into the spiritual world after we die. Our spirits are not ghosts or wisps of air; we are still people, with gender, personality, memory, and senses. Angels are not separate creations; every angel lived first as a person in this world. Heaven is not a cloud. It is a world much like this one, with homes, cities, animals, sports, plants, topography, and governments. Similarly, hell is not a pit of fire, but a world where people live who deliberately deny God and hate their neighbors. In heaven, people serve others out of love and their happiness comes not from eternal praise or leisure, but from that useful service.

A Key to the Word

“I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.” (John 16:12)

The Bible is not simply a collection of stories, histories, and dark prophecies. It contains Divine truth, conveyed in symbols. The Lord made use of a man named Emanuel Swedenborg whose unique talents suited him to the task of revealing the hidden truths in the Word. His theological writings hold a key to an internal meaning of Sacred Scripture. The truths they reveal are consistent with the Old and New Testaments and appeal to the rationality of the human mind.

The Second Coming

The Second Coming is not a repetition of the first coming, nor is it the violent upheaval described in Revelation. The story of Revelation and other prophecies concerning the Second Coming are symbolic, not to be interpreted literally. The Second Coming is instead a coming in spirit: the spirit of truth which will lead people into all truth (John 14:17, 16:13). The Lord comes to each person in his or her mind, making it possible to approach the Word with a new understanding. He comes through the revelation of the Old and New Testament in the light of Swedenborg's theological writings. ○

“But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”

—Matthew 24:13-14

What is the significance of the “end of the ages” described in the Bible?

“The ‘end of the age’ is about each of us as we come to the end of our self-absorption and begin to focus more on serving others. It is about each of us as we come to the end of our pride, arrogance, and conceit. And as we come to the end of this age, we begin to take on the qualities that Jesus came to teach: love, humility, and, especially selfless service.”

—Rev. Ray Silverman, Bryn Athyn College Chaplain

You Can Believe!

Book and Small Group Study by Rev. Grant Schnarr

Grant Schnarr's *You Can Believe!* shines light on the beauty of the New Christianity, introducing you to a Christianity that you can believe in.

You don't have to check your intellect at the door. You don't have to condemn other religions.

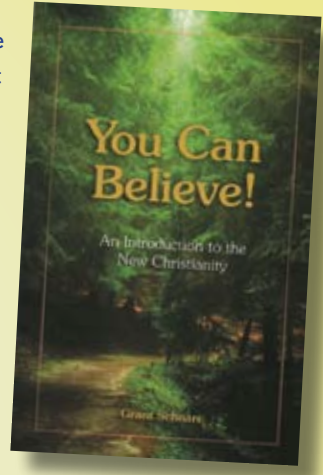
Download complete leader's guide online at www.newchurchconnection.org

Together with a friend or a small group, check out this book and the small group guide provided (full content available online at www.newchurchconnection.org).

An Excerpt

"Many people have made a jumble of religion, and it repels us; yet somehow we know that something has been taken away from us, something precious has been lost without the guide of spiritual teachings. Our Connection to the Source, to one another, to the magic and the moment, to the core of life itself has been left behind somewhere. Still we long for belief, for hope, for the supernatural above or beyond ourselves that we can reach out to and feel, draw to ourselves and wrap ourselves in. We know that spirituality is more than religion or the blind allegiance to ignorant dogma."

—FROM THE INTRODUCTION, p.IX



	WEEK ONE	WEEK TWO	WEEK THREE	WEEK FOUR	WEEK FIVE	WEEK SIX	WEEK SEVEN	WEEK EIGHT	WEEK NINE
Focus	Getting Started	Who is God?	What am I Doing Here?	How Can I Grow?	Am I Being Cared For?	What is the Bible Telling Us?	Does Love Last Forever?	Is There an Afterlife?	Are We Living in End Times?
Week's Task	Open yourself up to the possibilities of spirituality and belief.	Consider your desired relationship with God.	Ask five people what they think are your unique qualities or abilities you have exhibited.	In prayer, ask the Lord to help you see areas which need growth in your life. Reflect and meditate on the answer.	Bring to mind and note times when the Lord has shown up in your life.	Set a time to read the Bible everyday this week. While reading simply ask the Lord what you need to know this day.	Ask the Lord in a prayer each day for the gift of married love, and the power to live by what He shows you.	Reflect. Ask, "If I were taken to the other world today, what would I regret not having done?" What goals are you neglecting?	Explore how your view of end times impacts your approach to the present.

Photo by CAROLINE KLINE



Grant Schnarr is the pastor of the Creekside New Church in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania, and religion teacher at Bryn Athyn College. He is the author of several books on spiritual growth and recovery. You can hear recordings of Grant's Sunday talks at www.inewchurch.org.

Congregations around the world



The New Church is a new Christianity that provides a clear path to eternal happiness and addresses many questions about God, love, and life after death. The teachings are immediately practical and deeply spiritual. The New Church is based on the teachings of the Bible as illuminated in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

The New Church (General Church of the New Jerusalem) has congregations around the world. All people are welcome to join in worship and participate in the life and community of the church.



FOCUS ON THE NEW CHURCH IN London, England

Michael Church is a warm and welcoming congregation located in an historic building in London. Hosting weekly church services, Sunday School, and discussion groups as well as participating in yearly summer camps and family weekends, this group has many things to offer. If you want something spiritually new and exciting which encourages you to think for yourself, come visit us or find us online at www.newchurchuk.org



Find a New Church Near You...



Please look online or call for more information
www.newchurch.org/contact/locations
 tel.1(877)411-HOPE or (267)502-4911

...and Get Connected!

photo by Dave Keith

About Swedenborg and Works Cited

Emanuel Swedenborg was an 18th-century scientist and philosopher who continually studied the Word. Late in Swedenborg's life, the Lord called him to receive revelation for a new church. The New Church teaches that these Writings are divinely inspired revelation for the modern age: heavenly doctrines touching on many aspects of religion with a rational and merciful approach.

In this issue the following works of Swedenborg are referenced: *Divine Providence*, *Secrets of Heaven (Arcana Coelestia)*, *True Christianity*.

New Church TEACHINGS

The perspectives in this magazine are based on the teachings of the New Church found in the Old and New Testaments and the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

Core teachings of the New Church:

- There is one loving, personal God, and He is the Lord Jesus Christ. His providence is powerful and unending. God guides each person's spiritual path, from the smallest things up to the biggest things, and His angels are with us every moment.
- The Old and New Testaments have a deeper meaning, revealed in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, which help people lead happy and useful lives to eternity.
- Spiritual growth is a process. Through recognizing our sins, praying, shunning evils, and living a new life, we are transformed and united more closely with God.
- All religions have goodness in them. People of every faith are saved if they live sincerely according to their religion.
- Each of us continues life as a complete person immediately after the death of the body.
- While people are free to choose to live in hell, God wants everyone to live with Him in heaven to eternity.
- Marriage can last forever, for God blesses people with a special love in marriage that goes on after death, even to eternity.



NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT No. 182
Southampton, PA

new church
connection
A Publication of General Church Outreach
PO BOX 743
Bryn Athyn, PA 19009 USA
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Acknowledging God and
not doing evil because it
is contrary to God
are the two ingredients
which make a religion
a religion.

—Divine Providence 326[9]

This
publication is
made available to
readers at **no cost**,
thanks to the generous
donations of people
around the world.

If you would like to support *New Church Connection's* continued development, printing, and distribution, make a gift by sending a check made out to New Church Connection, PO BOX 708 Bryn Athyn, PA 19009 or go online to www.new-churchconnection.org, click on "donate" and mention this magazine.