

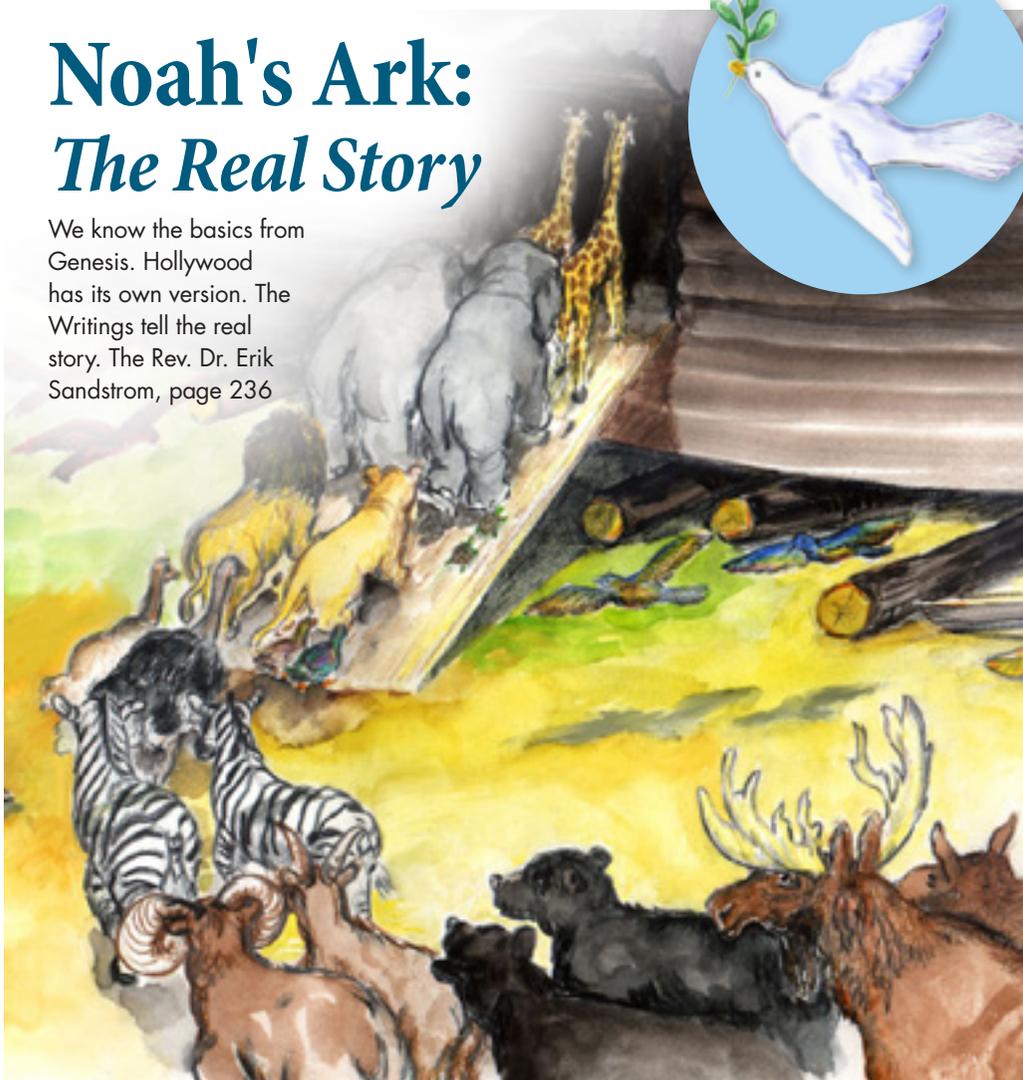
# NEW CHURCH *Life*

A bimonthly magazine devoted to the teachings revealed through Emanuel Swedenborg, as they apply to life.

**MAY/JUNE 2014**

## Noah's Ark: *The Real Story*

We know the basics from Genesis. Hollywood has its own version. The Writings tell the real story. The Rev. Dr. Erik Sandstrom, page 236



*Note: There is no extra cost for the use of color on the front page.*

NEW CHURCH LIFE (USPS 378-180)

PUBLISHED BIMONTHLY BY

THE GENERAL CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

Bruce Henderson, Editor

Rev. Walter Orthwein, Spiritual Editor

SUBSCRIPTION: \$30 TO ANY ADDRESS. To order: 267-502-4990 or [susan.wright@anc-gc.org](mailto:susan.wright@anc-gc.org).

Postmaster: Send address changes to: New Church Life, PO Box 708, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

e-mail: [datacenter@anc-gc.org](mailto:datacenter@anc-gc.org)

# New Church Life

*A bimonthly magazine devoted to the teachings revealed through Emanuel Swedenborg, as they relate to life.*

- 213 In this Issue
- 215 Editorials: *The Birth, and Perpetual Rebirth, of the New Church* • *Unique in the World* • *New Church Virtues: Hope* • *Our New Church Vocabulary*
- 223 Letters to the Editors
- 228 The Date of June 19<sup>th</sup> – *The Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith*
- 231 Celebrating New Church Marriages – *The Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith*
- 232 Woman, Behold Thy Son: A Mother's Day Sermon –  
*The Rev. Dr. Andrew M. T. Dibb*
- 236 Noah's Ark: The Real Story – *The Rev. Dr. Erik E. Sandstrom*
- 245 Remembering the Lord's Life – *The Rev. Coleman S. Glenn*
- 248 Introducing Our Ministers: A Purveyor of Hope –  
*The Rev. Mark D. Pendleton*
- 251 Little By Little: Spiritual Rebirth is a Gradual Process –  
*Sermon by the Rev. Mark D. Pendleton*
- 257 Small Groups in the New Church – *The Rev. John L. Odhner*
- 265 Some Thoughts for the New Church – *Karl Birjukov*
- 271 Church News
- 283 Life Lines
- 294 Announcements

# The New Church Music Scholarship Fund

This fund was created to promote the growth of music and music education in our church schools and societies. With a focus on providing financial assistance to individuals working on their undergraduate programs, the New Church Music Scholarship Fund seeks to equip future generations with the necessary depth of study required to produce music and musicians of the highest quality.

To be eligible for the fund, a person must be a participating member of a New Church community, and have demonstrated an active involvement in music there. The applicant also must show proof of his or her involvement in New Church education, which may include at least one year at an Academy school. Finally, the applicant must already have been accepted into an undergraduate music program, on course to receive a Bachelor of Music Degree.

**Contributions are tax deductible and should be made out to:**

The New Church Music Scholarship Fund  
The Academy of the New Church  
P.O. Box 708, Bryn Athyn, Pa. 19009

**For scholarship applications and further information, contact:**

Nancy Metroka, Chairperson: [nancy.metroka@ancss.org](mailto:nancy.metroka@ancss.org)  
Or Bonny Lundin-Scheer: [bonnys@glenviewnewchurch.org](mailto:bonnys@glenviewnewchurch.org)

## OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

Part of a continuing series developed by the Rev. W. Cairns Henderson, 1961-1966.

### AFFECTION

This term is defined in two ways. Philosophically, affection is said to be a change of the state of the organic substances of the mind – an idea fundamental to the concept of affection and thought as substantial. Doctrinally it is defined as “what is continuous of love.” What that means is simply this: Man does not perceive his love itself because it is present in all that he wills and thinks, does and says; but in every state, and in every situation he meets, he is continually moved by evil and falsity, or by good and truth. He is constantly acted upon by one or the other of these; and his own evil and falsity, or good and truth, become reactive as a result.

That is why the Writings speak of the affection *of* truth, not the affection *for* truth. “Affections,” on the other hand, are derivations from man’s love. The outermost affections, which belong to the body, are called appetites and pleasures; those which are more interior belong to the animus and are called natural affections; while those which are internal are of the rational mind and are called spiritual affections. (See *Divine Love and Wisdom* 209; *Divine Providence* 279; *Arcana Coelestia* 2849 and 3938; *Apocalypse Revealed* 875)

## IN THIS ISSUE

As we prepare to celebrate New Church Day on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June, the Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith explores meaningful dates in the revelation given to Emanuel Swedenborg, and how this one date emerged. It is an important day for reflecting on all that the Lord has given us in establishing His New Church, and what it means in our lives. (Page 228)

Where Mother's Day is celebrated it is often a mix of commercialism with profound appreciation for all that our mothers do and have done for us. The Rev. Dr. Andrew M. T. Dibb offers a Mother's Day sermon that traces back to Mary, as the mother of our Lord. He describes how she models the struggle between holding tight to offspring and the need to let go as they mature that plays out for all mothers. (Page 232)

The allegorical story of Noah in *Genesis* is relatively simple and well known. The new Hollywood version has sparked a lot of criticism for the license it takes with the basic elements, but is attracting a lot of people curious about what it all means. Only in the Writings is the full meaning spelled out, which has enormous relevance for our own world and our own lives. See *Noah's Ark: The Real Story* by the Rev. Dr. Erik E. Sandstrom, page 236.

In the New Church, writes the Rev. Coleman S. Glenn, "We tend to focus more attention on what the Lord does for us now than what He did for us when He walked on earth. And when we are looking to the internal sense of the Word, we tend to focus more on what it says about our own regeneration than what is said about the Lord's process of regeneration. . . . But if we only focus on the here and now, and don't take time to reflect on what the Lord did in the world, then we are really missing out." (Page 245)

In *Introducing Our Ministers*, the Rev. Mark D. Pendleton is making a name and a cause for himself in developing a "Steps of Repentance" program that he offers throughout the Church. He sees one of his main roles as a minister as being "a purveyor of hope." (Page 248.) See also his sermon expressing this theme: *Little by Little: Spiritual Rebirth is a Gradual Process*. (Page 251)

When the Lord was in the world, He sometimes preached to thousands, sometimes one-on-one and sometimes to small groups. The Rev. John L. Odhner discusses ways that the Church can become more effective through small groups because of the way they bring faith into action and relationships. (Page 257)

Karl Birjukov, a man who was raised in the Catholic Church in England but fell away from it in his teens and early 20s, had his life transformed when

he discovered the Writings of Swedenborg. But he has concerns, especially with the power of science overshadowing religion, and offers *Some Thoughts for the New Church*. (Page 265)

Church News includes: an exciting ground-breaking at the Washington New Church, with ambitious five-year goals to go with the new building and renovation project; a special pre-Easter treat with a local public school choir singing one of Bach's Easter *Canatas* as part of a Bryn Athyn Cathedral service; and a fascinating lecture event in Bryn Athyn by Dr. Eben Alexander, author of the best-seller, *Proof of Heaven*, which included several related public sessions sponsored by Bryn Athyn College. (Page 271)

**Cover:** Our appreciation to General Church Education for the illustration of Noah's Ark by the late Marguerite L. Acton.

## Lots for Sale in Caryndale

Are you looking to build a new home in a great New Church community? The Carmel New Church is selling lots in the new phase of development in Caryndale.

Caryndale is a well-established New Church community, with the church and church school at the heart of the community, located on the southern side of Kitchener/Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. Caryndale offers a peaceful setting, convenient to Kitchener and Waterloo's abundant community and cultural offerings, and with easy access to major transit routes to Toronto and Detroit.

Now is your chance to take advantage of this unique opportunity to build your dream home – in a natural setting on large lots – within a vibrant New Church community, and with the church and school just a short walk away.

For further information or pricing details please contact Chalon Estates at [info@chalonestates.ca](mailto:info@chalonestates.ca) or online at: [www.chalonestates.ca](http://www.chalonestates.ca)

# Editorials

## **THE BIRTH, AND PERPETUAL REBIRTH, OF THE NEW CHURCH**

The New Church was born in heaven on the 19th day of June, in the year 1770, when the disciples who had followed the Lord in this world were sent throughout the spiritual world to preach the Gospel that: “THE LORD GOD JESUS CHRIST REIGNS.” (*True Christian Religion* 791, capitals in the original)

A few years later, in 1787, the first New Church organization on earth was formed in London by a group of men who had been reading Swedenborg’s Writings.

And those of us who value the Academy so highly view its founding in 1876 as such a significant event as to amount to a new birth of the Church.

But the Church did not just begin in 1770 or 1787 or 1876 or any other date on the calendar; it begins every moment. Its existence is a perpetual creation.

The creation of the Church follows the same pattern as the creation of the universe: it is not out of nothing, but is a process of giving new form to some prior substance. The “matter,” for instance, out of which earthly forms are made, is itself formed out of energy. The supreme “prior substance” out of which the whole universe was created is Divine love, formed by Divine wisdom.

The old “Watchmaker” idea of God – that He made the universe and then left it to run itself, as a watch continues to run after the watchmaker is finished with it – is erroneous. Creation, and the Lord’s providential governance of it, is a continuous, never-ending process. “Subsistence is a perpetual coming forth, and consequently preservation in connection and form is perpetual creation.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 4322)

It is the same regarding the Church: for it to continue to exist it must be perpetually created, re-formed and renewed. But how is this accomplished, and what is our part in it?

Looking at the word “reform,” we can see that it means “return to form.” As individuals, the form we return to in our regeneration is the *human form* that was impressed upon us in our first innocent state at birth. But when we grow up and come into our own, and are repeatedly led astray by the loves of

self and the world, then that original form, the image and likeness of God in us, needs to be restored.

It is innocence that made our reception of the human form from the Lord possible in the first place, and it is only by a return to innocence – by becoming again as a little child, willing to be led by the Lord – that it can be restored.

Because “every church in process of time declines,” churches also need to return to the form they had at their beginning – not in every detail, of course, but as to the essential loves and first principles that gave form to them. Times change, first principles do not.

History shows us that reform movements are based, not so much on *new* ideas, as on a resolve to return to the truths that inspired the founding of the Church in the first place.

The Lord Himself, in founding the Christian Church, referred back to the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament. Centuries later, the Protestant Reformation insisted upon a return to the authority and teachings of the Bible, and the principle of giving the people direct access to it.

The New Church, also, involved a return to form – the pure form of the Christian Church in its infancy, when charity ruled. The doctrine of the New Church was given to Swedenborg while he read the prior revelations given in the Word of the Old and New Testaments. In fact, the doctrine looks even further back, to the spiritual wisdom of the Ancient Church, the simple goodness of the Most Ancient Church, and to heaven itself.

In the history of the New Church, the greatest advance, the Academy movement, was based on a view of the Writings that had been present in the Church from its very beginning; and even more deeply, the *attitude* behind (or prior to) that view, by which that ostensibly “new” view was formed.

In the letters to the churches in *Revelation* (representing those who are called to the New Church), the church at Ephesus was praised for its perseverance, patience and untiring labor for the Lord – but it was called to account for having “left your first love,” and the people were admonished to remember where they had come from and return to it. (*Revelation 2:2-5*)

Our reformation as individuals begins with turning back to God, since it is God who formed us in the first place. In the Church, every genuine reformation involves a *return* to something; some previous condition that was purer and more vital, but which the organization had drifted away from.

The New Church is *perpetually* new because it worships a visible God, the Lord Jesus Christ. “Behold,” the Lord says in the New Jerusalem chapter at the end of the *Book of Revelation*, “I make all things new.” It is our beholding of *Him* that makes all things new. And that perpetual newness is what distinguishes the New Church and makes it “the crown of all the churches that have hitherto existed on the earth.” (*True Christian Religion 787*)

And where do we find this vision of the Lord that renews the Church? In the Word, of course, but more specifically in the spiritual meaning of it revealed in the Heavenly Doctrine of the New Jerusalem. That doctrine *is* the Lord with us; and it is from it – and it alone – that the New Church is formed. (And *that* statement itself is a retelling of the “prior” truth we find in the first chapter of *John*: “In the beginning was the Word ... and the Word was God ... and without Him nothing was made that was made.”)

In each of us individually, the church begins anew whenever we turn back to the Word and gain a new insight – a new sight of the Lord in His Word, through the lens of doctrine – and respond affirmatively.

The New Church as an organized body in the world is formed by *first principles* derived from doctrines which have themselves been derived from the Word. Because of their derivation from the Word, and thus their connection with the Lord, these first principles have *life* in them – which, like the soul in a body, continually revitalizes, renews, restores and maintains the body’s form.

And what are these first principles? Regarding the *universal* New Church, examples of them are: 1) God is One, and the Lord Jesus Christ is that One. 2) Sacred Scripture or the Word is Divine Truth itself, and has within it a spiritual sense previously unknown. 3) And charity, or a life according to the Word, is what saves us, not faith alone.

All New Church people believe those things, and they form a deep bond between us. But our particular branch of the Church, the General Church of the New Jerusalem, is based upon additional first principles, also derived from the Word, which are the reason for our church body’s existence. These include: 1) The Divine authority of the Writings. 2) The vital importance of New Church education. 3) And the sanctity of marriage (defined as being between one man and one woman, although until very recently this was so obvious that it hardly needed to be spelled out).

It is essential to remember these (and other) first principles, return to them regularly, and renew our commitment to them. We must not take them for granted, but actively study, discuss and apply them.

The life of our church depends upon these things, for “such as life is in its first principles, such it is in the whole and in every part.” (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 366)

(WEO)

### UNIQUE IN THE WORLD

Students all over North America and Europe are graduating at this time of year. These are joyous and significant ceremonies. But none is as unique and meaningful as those in our New Church schools, the Academy Secondary

Schools and Bryn Athyn College.

The General Church sees education as “an essential element in our spiritual development.” The “core purpose” of the Secondary Schools is “to prepare students for principles and useful lives in this world and the next.” Part of the mission of the College is for its religion-based education to “challenge students to develop spiritual purpose” in their lives.

In his iconic book on New Church education – *Education for Use* – Bishop Willard D. Pendleton spoke of “the need for an educational system which recognizes that the ultimate welfare of society is dependent upon the cultivation of a moral and spiritual conscience in the individual.”

New Church education is unique in teaching the spiritual person within each of us, as well as the natural, and in developing that spiritual conscience. It recognizes that our spiritual life needs every bit of nurturing and guidance that we devote to our natural lives.

Every day new crises, tragedies and misfortune erupt in the world, but we don't always perceive the spiritual causes at the root. That is the great challenge of our civilization. We need practical answers for what plagues us – but spiritual context and spiritual solutions.

New Church education is important because it is about wisdom, not just intelligence. The beginning of wisdom is the acknowledgment of the Lord. It is knowing right from wrong, good from evil, and being guided by Divine truth. Without that clear vision, values diffuse into a kaleidoscope of confused opinions, and we live with the fallout.

The erudite Norman Cousins wrote in his book *Human Options* in 1981: “The ultimate test of education is whether it makes people comfortable in the presence of options; which is to say, whether it enables them to pursue their possibilities with confidence. Similarly, a society can be judged according to the number and range of options of consequence it opens to its people.”

That is what traditional education does: prepares students to make good choices in this world. New Church education also prepares students to be comfortable and confident with their spiritual choices – the most critical they will make for their lives and for the world. We like to say that New Church education is preparation for heaven. It really prepares students to make the choices that lead to heaven – and those are spiritual choices.

New Church education doesn't make students better than anyone else; it just increases the opportunities to think from a spiritual perspective and to extend positive influence into the world. There are many good, spiritual people all around us, with both moral and spiritual conscience. We are not alone. There are many candles probing the darkness, but only one true light. It is for all of us who see that light to reflect it throughout our lives. (“Let your light so shine before men that they see your good works, and glorify your

Father which is in heaven.” – *Matthew* 5:16)

Every graduate hopes to make a difference in the world. The hope of New Church education is that our students do this by answering the call to become disciples for the Lord just in the way they live their lives – with wisdom and spiritual purpose.

More than 2,000 years ago Plato said there are only two questions that really matter to civilization. Those questions are as essential now as they were then: “Who is teaching the children? And what are they teaching them?”

The best answers we have are with New Church education.

(BMH)

### **NEW CHURCH VIRTUES: HOPE**

Hope is a gift from God and an essential part of human thought. It serves an important use, and is something we *need*.

Hope is a mental vision of some longed-for future condition, such as the end of conflict and a state of peace, a happy home, renewed health, a satisfying job, a comfortable retirement. Hope’s vision gives us something to strive for.

“It is reason’s essential delight to see from love the effect in the thought ... before the effect is reached, that is, not in the present but in the future. This is the source of what is called Hope.” (*Divine Providence* 178)

Since hope is “reason’s essential delight,” and since one of the keys to forming the New Church in us is the “cultivation of the rational” (*Apocalypse Explained* 732), it follows that cultivating hope is an essential element of our religion.

And note that it is “from love” that reason sees. The quality of our hopes is determined by the quality of the loves from which they spring. The more we regenerate and are inspired by heavenly affections, the higher our hopes will be.

Some hopes are said to be “vain.” And isn’t it interesting that the word “vain” can mean either “conceited” and “egocentric,” or “useless” and “futile.” The self-centered and worldly hopes we set our hearts upon are vain hopes. Even if some are attained, the things of this world (“where moth and rust destroy, and thieves break in and steal”) soon pass away.

Spiritual hopes are more realistic because spiritual things are more real and lasting than earthly ones; and also because the governing force of all creation, Divine providence, is ever striving to make us spiritual. A hope for something the Lord wants us to have – some heavenly virtue or delight – will never be in vain.

Such hopes may not be fulfilled during our lives in this world, but they serve an important purpose nonetheless. The hope for marriage is a prime

example: the dream of those who from love truly conjugal wish to experience its delights *will come true* – if not in this world, then in heaven. And the very hope of it that they nurture in their mind is part of their preparation for the state of marriage when at last they do come fully into it.

The hopes we treasure in our minds are like seeds hidden in the ground that will grow and eventually bear fruit. What nation, for example, would attain freedom without the hope of freedom to encourage the people to seek it? That hope is the spiritual seed from which the tree of liberty will grow.

And is not the hope of heaven a powerful incentive for us to reform and order our lives by the Word? By doing this, we bring heaven more and more into our hearts and minds even in this world – and thus the hope of heaven becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. The truths of the Lord’s Word are seeds of hope, containing the life of heaven within them.

It is a truism that we should live in the present, not stuck in the past or anxious about the future. But when you think about it, the present includes both the past and the future. Our memories of the past, and our hopes for the future influence our thoughts in the present.

Hope directs our thoughts by giving us something to aim for. It inspires, encourages, and gives us energy to strive toward some good end. In fact, the Writings observe, the hope we have of something – the end in view that hope holds up before our mind’s eye – may actually affect us more powerfully than the thing itself does when it is finally achieved. The statement about hope from *Divine Providence* that we quoted above continues: “The delight is made complete in the event, and thereafter fades away with the thought belonging to it.”

Civil liberty comes to mind again as an example: it is often more highly prized by those for whom it is only a vivid future hope than it is by those who already have it but take it for granted. Once something has been achieved, the delight that accompanied the contemplation of it when it was still a distant goal tends to “fade away.”

Consider the *Declaration of Independence* and the *United States Constitution*. These founding documents are visionary works, seminal works, works of HOPE. The clear, simple, noble truths set forth in them gave birth to a new nation, and a whole new form of government. But, as is the usual course of things, the fervor and inspired thought that went into the vision tends to wane once the reality has been achieved. Liberty is routine now, and the laws we continue to grind out lack the nobility and grandeur of our founding documents. But the hope that was present in the beginning remains. It must remain, or the edifice it inspired will crumble.

End. Cause. Effect. This is the perennial cycle of life. Great enterprises begin with a purpose, a vision, a hope. That end in view, and “reason’s delight” in

contemplating it, in turn gives rise to thoughts of how to achieve it; these make up the instrumental “cause” that will bring it about. The result is the “effect,” which in turn becomes a new end, a new vision for further development; and so the cycle begins again.

This is the pattern human thought follows (as that same number about hope, *Divine Providence* 178, explains). The “end” we envision (hope) enters into everything that follows: the “cause” (our thoughts and plans for realizing our dreams) and the “effect,” to whatever degree it is attained.

Every work of life – the Church, the country, the home – is inaugurated, sustained and continually renewed by hope. It is what we have instead of knowledge of the future; for if we had that, the life of the mind “would be diminished and pass away.” (*Ibid.*) There’d be nothing to hope for.

“Hope springs eternal,” as the poet said. Each new goal attained is like a mountain peak from which we see other peaks beckoning in the distance. New hopes, new goals, new challenges, are always presenting themselves. The supreme “end” of all, heaven, is always ahead of us, drawing us onward, and yet, in a sense, we are already there, and see it even now, in our hopes.

(WEO)

#### OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

In 1961 the Rev. W. Cairns Henderson, as editor of *New Church Life*, launched a memorable and significant series, *Our New Church Vocabulary*. This continued through 1966, offering distinctive New Church definitions for 126 familiar words and terms. This alphabetical listing was collected into a pamphlet that still is treasured throughout the Church. In this issue we start reprinting the series, beginning with “Affection,” and will continue through “Worship.”

In launching this series Mr. Henderson wrote:

“The New Church has a vocabulary that is entirely its own. Every subject field has its particular terminology; and as the Writings were given to convey new truth, ideas never before unfolded to the human mind, and as the communication of ideas requires appropriate language, the Writings contain many distinctive terms. These terms were selected by the Lord with the precision of wisdom. Each one has a very exact meaning, or group of related meanings, and was chosen by the Lord because it, and no other, expressed adequately the idea or ideas to be transmitted.

“Evidently, then, it is of great importance that we should understand correctly what is meant by these terms as they are employed in the Writings, and that we should be able to use them accurately in our own thinking, speaking and writing. Some are theological terms which occur frequently, and here a facile familiarity may blind us to their profundity. A few are peculiar to

the Writings, and therefore presuppose a considerable amount of specialized knowledge. Others – and these may present difficulties – are terms which have a different meaning in the Writings from that assigned to them by current usage.

“In this issue we begin an occasional department, under the same title as this editorial, which will offer general definitions of some of the terms that make up our New Church vocabulary. That department will not be rightly understood or properly used, however, if the definitions presented are regarded as all-inclusive and exhaustive, or if it is supposed that no others could be valid. It will fail in its purpose unless it is clearly realized that definitions are not meant to confine man’s thinking to themselves, but to provide it with a well-marked point of departure, in order that the initial idea may be gradually infilled.”

At the conclusion of the series in 1966, Mr. Henderson wrote: “(This brings to a close this series of general definitions, publication of which as an occasional department began in January 1961. It is emphasized again now, as it was then, that the definitions given are not offered as all-inclusive, exhaustive, or the only ones that could be valid. Definitions are not meant to confine our thinking to themselves, but to serve us as a well-marked point of departure from which we may proceed to infill the initial ideas they help us to form. Unless these things are realized, this attempt to explain the terms which make up our New Church vocabulary will not have succeeded.”

The fact that these definitions are as timely and meaningful now as they were 50 years ago – like the editorials collected from his years as editor of *New Church Life* – speaks to both the importance and success of the project. This is a wonderful and enduring example of New Church scholarship that still serves the Church and the Lord.

(BMH)

## **NEW CHURCH HAIKU**

Feel the warmth of love  
 See the light that is wisdom  
 That’s divine essence.

(Divine Love and Wisdom 28-35)

# Letters to the Editors

## *Our Opportunity, Our Challenge*

To The Editors:

In recent months I have been following and influenced by the things written about women in the clergy in *New Church Life* and elsewhere. I do believe it is providential (isn't everything?) that there are no clear statements in the Writings that say indisputably that women should or should not be ministers.

If God gave us all the answers, with no room for doubt or debate, we would not grow. Adversity and conflict are permitted by God so that we have opportunities to make steps forward in our regeneration. Though important, the decision to be made regarding this issue in the Church is much less important to us as individuals than the way we respond.

I do not have the wisdom or power to make a final decision for the Church about this. I do have the ability and responsibility to do my best to presume that those who are compassionate about this are doing what they believe to be best for the Church and to accept the outcome. To decide not to go to church if there is a woman in the pulpit, or decide to leave the Church if there isn't, doesn't make sense to me. When we step into the spiritual world we will not be asked if we attended a church with an all-male clergy, or even if we attended church.

The Lord asks us to have love and compassion for each other, even as we struggle. To love one another as He loves us. To do unto others as we would want them to do to us and to "judge not." Our spiritual life is more important than our natural life.

In *Arcana Coelestia* 5008:6 there is a warning about how we tend to believe whatever conforms with our feelings or what our friends say; that when falsity is confirmed in us it appears to be the truth: "*It appears exactly like truth and even more than truth itself.*"

We are all influenced by both the spiritual and the natural. We are swayed by natural forces and need to pray for guidance and go to the Word for spiritual

insight. It is the nature of mere humans that defensiveness and judgments can stand in the way of being open to another's point of view.

We are taught that when we act from charity or love to our neighbor, we are more able to see what is true. (*"They who are in charity are in light... light is truth ... Charity 112*) We must search our hearts as well as the Word.

I just came across this statement in *Arcana Coelestia* 1408: "The Word teaches nothing else than that everyone should live in charity with his neighbor, and love the Lord above all things."

Donnette Alfelt  
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

## *The 'Old Church' in a New Light*

To The Editors:

I read with great interest the Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs' sermon, *For He is Risen*, in the March/April 2014 *New Church Life*. For the most part, I thought it was a well-prepared sermon about the resurrection and its importance to all humanity. I appreciate and value the New Church explanation of this great miracle. However, some of the things Mr. Heinrichs wrote about traditional Christian theology regarding the resurrection just didn't sound right, and I would be doing my "Old Church" Christian upbringing a disservice if I did not respond.

Mr. Heinrichs draws some comparisons between the New Church understanding of the resurrection and that of "modern Christianity" (read: Old Church). But the things he writes about the Old Church simply don't ring true. Some might be offended at the notion that folks who haven't been enlightened by the Writings about the resurrection can only "grasp...blindly in the dark." I believe enlightenment can be found in both views, but I won't go there specifically. I will suggest, however, that Mr. Heinrichs choose his phrases more carefully when referring, either directly or indirectly, to those of us who were born and raised in the Old Church.

Having been born and raised, and been quite active, in the Methodist Church, and having been exposed to many other "modern, traditional" Christian churches, on many levels, for most of my life, I do not agree with him when he says that the "traditional" vision of redemption, and even of the Lord Himself, is "markedly different" than, or "a far cry from," that of the New Church.

Mr. Heinrichs contends that the "typical Christian" doesn't see the resurrection "as an act which restored the equilibrium between heaven and

hell.” I have *always* seen it that way. The typical Christian also doesn’t see the resurrection as an act “which allowed us once again to have the freedom to choose between good and evil.” But I *was* taught this.

Neither does the “typical Christian” understand that “redemption or salvation is a process, which happens gradually...” That’s how I understood it – or at least I thought I did. No, the “typical Christian” just sees an “*angry God*” and the “*Blood of Jesus*” and “*instant salvation*,” not to mention freedom from “*having to obey the law*.” This one really puzzles me. Furthermore, the concept of worshipping three separate gods is attributed to the typical Christian, which Mr. Heinrichs calls “an even more grievous falsity” arising from their understanding of the resurrection. I’m sorry, but that simply isn’t true. And it isn’t fair.

I’m not sure who Mr. Heinrichs is talking about, but I’m absolutely certain it isn’t me. I’ve heard of people preaching about the “Blood of Jesus” and speaking in tongues and being instantaneously “saved,” but mostly on TV shows or in books, or perhaps in some of the backwoods Pentecostal churches I knew in Southern Indiana and in Oklahoma. But neither I nor any of my friends, family or acquaintances were ever taught to worship three separate gods.

In fact, I well remember a Sunday School class when I was a teenager. We were taught to see the trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, not as three separate beings, but as the “soul, body and activity of the One God” – oddly enough more or less exactly the way the New Church views the trinity, when it allows itself even to utter the word.

I was first introduced to the New Church when I started dating my wife (a lifelong New Church member). I’d always had a close association with “old” churches – Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Disciple of Christ – but I took an immediate liking to the theology of the New Church. I found it refreshing, lucid and bold, open and accepting and extremely well thought out.

The idea that the Second Coming had already occurred was, I thought, brilliant. An intellectual enlightenment is so much better than the “Rapture” and bodies rising up out of graves! The whole concept of correspondences is wonderful. And I get to spend all of eternity with my conjugal partner: how cool is that? There are, of course, some aspects of how the New Church does things that I struggle with, but that’s to be expected with any church or church organization.

I do pull back, though, when I perceive the New Church referring to the Old Church in ways that are unfair and unflattering. We are not a backward, ignorant bunch who “grasp blindly in the dark” because we haven’t been properly educated or enlightened. Or because we see things too simply.

There may indeed be a need to “dispel the darkness and confusion,” as Mr.

Heinrichs says. But that effort might better be applied to the way folks in the New Church are taught to view the Old Church.

Rob Earle  
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

### *Getting it Backwards?*

To The Editors:

When sermons were sent to the isolated, I remember asking the Rev. Karl R. Alden, why did the typist change the format by putting the sermon first, followed by the passages from the Word, and then from the Writings? He said the typist found it easier. This annoyed me as a new member and student of the Academy.

When preached, the Word is quoted first, then the Writings, and the sermon last.

For some 60 years this lapse of judgment has prevailed. I wonder how many other traditions of the Church are followed blindly because someone “found it easier?”

I understand the sermons no longer are mailed out because they are now on the Internet. I wonder, is this “lapse of judgment” followed there, too? If a person who looks to the sermons as a bridge to the Church has to read the end first and then go back to the sermon, it is counter-productive.

I am one of the few who has no computer so I’m “left out in the cold” by the decision to stop sending the sermons. I would, however, like to thank those who sent them all those 50 or so years.

We isolated appreciated the Christmas Crèche sent to isolated families as well – now stopped also, I understand. This was a central point of our childhood at Christmas time, and was carefully packed up for use each year. This program was so special to our isolated children.

Lorraine (Lemky) Noakes  
Orofino, Idaho

## OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

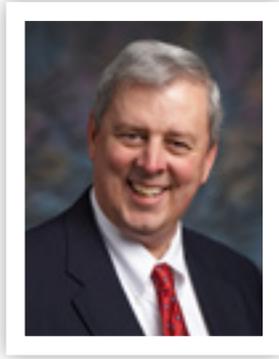
Part of a continuing series developed by the Rev. W. Cairns Henderson, 1961-1966.

### **AFFLUX**

This is a rare term, but one which marks an important distinction. Good and truth cannot flow into those who are in a state of hell, but they do flow to them and thus govern them from without. This flowing to, but not into, is what is meant in the Writings by afflux; and the term is used to distinguish clearly between this operation of good and truth and that other whereby they flow into the mind, which is called “influx.”

The term is therefore used to describe the mode by which the Lord governs the hells; and, under the same general principle, of the flow of evil to the minds of those who are interiorly good but are undergoing vastation. There is another usage which also comes under the same general principle: that which reaches the mind from the natural world is said to do so by an afflux, as distinct from what comes from the spiritual world, which inflows.

A related term, and one which may therefore be noted here, is efflux, which means “to flow out.” It is used in two ways. Good and truth from the Lord enter by influx through the internal man, and should then flow out through the external man into the world in the form of uses or charity. This flowing out is what is meant by efflux, and the universal law is the influx is always according to efflux. The term is used in one passage of what emanates from the hells. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 3646, 5828, 7990, 7955; *Heaven and Hell* 543; *Last Judgment posthumous* 300)



## The Date of June 19<sup>th</sup>

*The Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith*

We like dates. We like to pin events to a specific day of the year and then remember or celebrate them in future years. It is a powerful reminder of an important event in our personal, national or religious lives. And it can lead us to reflect and appreciate the values or meaning we have connected with that date. On a personal level, birthdays are happy occasions for families and friends joining together.<sup>1</sup> Married couples celebrate anniversary dates annually.

On a national level, most countries commemorate the date of their founding, or the beginning or ending of major wars. On a religious level, Christmas is anchored to December 25th. And even though Easter and Palm Sunday move around, they are based on specific dates on a calendar.

Had it not been for the “note” toward the end of the *True Christian Religion* (# 791) about the Lord sending out the twelve disciples throughout the spiritual world, proclaiming “the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns, whose kingdom shall be for ever and ever” on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1770, we might have found it difficult to settle on any day of the year on which to peg the founding of the New Church.

One approach might have been to determine when the Lord appeared to

---

<sup>1</sup> Some cultures do not commemorate the day of one’s birth. We were surprised when members of the Maasai tribe in Kenya started joining the General Church and all listed their birth date as January 1. We have since discovered that even to this day most Maasai only keep track of seasons, not days of the year nor the years themselves. A person might know he or she was born in the year of a great flood or an unusual storm, but nothing else. Thus they have to adapt to our mapping of time, and make their best guess to satisfy our system. So they pick the first day of the approximate year in which they were born.

Swedenborg as his spiritual eyes were opened. But the Lord appeared to him several times, beginning in 1745, yet one appearance was not apparently more significant than another.

We do find the statement “1747, the 7<sup>th</sup> day of August (old calendar): a change of state in me, [introducing me] into the heavenly Kingdom, in figure,” (*Spiritual Experiences* 148e, taken from the Biblical Index which he was then making). This occurs relatively early in the process and apparently is never referred to again. So it has never been a date that New Church people have focused upon.

Also, Swedenborg’s spiritual eyes were opened very gradually, with numerous steps along the way. So even when, in hindsight, Swedenborg gives a year for when his eyes were opened, he gives differing years as the date! This was probably due to it being a long process, with any one of a number of years which could be selected. However, this does make it challenging to have a precise time to locate this essential precursor to the giving of this revelation.

When the Writings were first being revealed to Swedenborg might suggest a date, since they are the means by which the judgment occurred in the spiritual world and are now the foundation for this new dispensation. But there are challenges with this. When did they start?

In the recent translation of *Spiritual Experiences* much material was brought in from the *Word Explained*, which has traditionally been considered a pre-theological work. The reasoning is that Swedenborg was recording spiritual experiences there and thus they are part of the later material. But it makes a starting point fuzzy, to say the least.

Perhaps we could look at when the *Arcana Coelestia*, the first work of the Writings carried through to publication, came out. There is a date on the first page of volume one – 1747. But since the work comprised eight Latin volumes published from 1747-1756, and no specific day of the year is listed in the first volume, that has not provided a clear point in time.

The Last Judgment might be a logical date to focus on. After all, it was a spiritually transforming experience for the entire human race. But it was an event of long duration with no clear cut-off date. One could argue it was the culmination of centuries of growing religious darkness. And even when we focus on the events described in the *Spiritual Experiences* and then in the Last Judgment works, they began in late 1756 and were completed in 1757. Again, not with any specific day nor with any specific cataclysmic event to highlight – either in this world or the next.<sup>2</sup>

---

2 Previous judgments on churches have also been like this. We are given many judgment events relative to the Ancient Church. The Lord’s judgment on the Israelitish Church and establishment of the First Christian Church can be tied to the crucifixion and then rising on the first day of the week, commemorated by Good Friday and Easter. But it was really the Lord’s entire life, teaching and resisting of the hells in temptations that effected that judgment.

Fortunately, we do have June 19<sup>th</sup> – a specific date when the Lord sent out His disciples. Imagine the joy in the heavens as new truths were revealed to all those affirmative minds open to hearing more from the Lord about His nature, providence, and a host of other truths that would enhance their understandings and enable them to be more useful to their neighbors.

Even if our church celebrations may not occur on the exact date of June 19<sup>th</sup>, due to when it falls during the week, we can always take time on that day to reflect upon what the Lord has given us in establishing His New Church:

- How we have been enriched with a world view that now encompasses the Lord's love being showered over the entire human race throughout the universe.
- How the purpose of creation has been disclosed that we might know His wise and gentle leading for everyone, including ourselves.
- How we have been given the tools to make spiritual progress, to become ever more useful people in this world, and angels in the next.

As we commemorate and celebrate this birthday of the New Church, let us rejoice in it being a birth or renewal within us of all that the Lord hopes to achieve.

# Celebrating New Church Marriages

*The Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith*

The institution of marriage has apparently become more shaky in the Western World in recent years. Statistics indicate an increasing frequency of divorce. This can be very discouraging and painful for those who embrace the ideal of eternal marriage as taught in the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Church.

But there is also good news to celebrate. Recently in researching the longevity of marriages in the General Church Data Base, I discovered an astonishing fact. We have 53 couples who have celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary; 40 couples who have celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary; and two couples who have celebrated their 70th anniversary.

While it is possible we could have errors in the data base, so the numbers may not be completely accurate, it is a remarkable testimony to the duration of marriage in this life and hope for an eternal life together. And it can demonstrate that “the delight of truly conjugal love not only continues to old age in the world, but after death becomes the delight of heaven and is there filled with an interior delight that grows more and more perfect to eternity.” (*Heaven and Hell* 379:2)

Congratulations to these couples! May the Lord continue to bless them and their families. May this give hope to the promise ahead for those who have not realized the fullness of this love in this world. And may this be a beacon to all of us in our own marriages.

## **NEW CHURCH HAIKU**

Heaven's light is truth  
Heaven's warmth is good and love  
United as one.

(*Heaven and Hell* 130-133)

# Woman, Behold Thy Son: A Mother's Day Sermon

*The Rev. Dr. Andrew M. T. Dibb*

When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold your son!' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother.' (John 19:26,27)

**T**he relationships between parents and children, especially between mothers and their children, can be very complex. Not necessarily difficult, but complex. Mothers are the primary caregivers to their children, but also have to let their children go as they grow up and mature. So mothering is a combination of holding tight and letting go at the same time.

In celebration of Mother's Day, I want to focus on one particular mother: Mary, mother of our Lord, who experienced exactly this complex relationship with her Son, the Lord.

When the Lord was born, Mary acted toward Him as any mother would: she wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger, as there was no bed for Him. As mother to the Child Jesus, Mary seems to have been normal to her age and environment. She followed the customary religious practices: waiting eight days until her purification period was finished, and then, with Joseph, taking the child to the Temple in Jerusalem to be dedicated to the Lord.

It was during this time that Mary had a momentary glimpse into the future when the aged Simeon blessed the Lord, but told Mary He would be a "sign which shall be spoken against; yes," Simeon said to Mary, "a sword shall pierce through your own soul also." (Luke 2:35)

That sword seemed to come very quickly when Herod heard about the Lord's birth. After ascertaining that the Lord had been born in Bethlehem, he sent his soldiers to kill all infant boys. Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt to escape his wrath.

Like every mother, Mary would have played a central role in the Lord's early life. Although neither the Bible nor the Heavenly Doctrines for the New Church say much about Mary's role in raising the Lord, her presence is always there under the surface. For example, in the following passage we are told:

It is well known that the Lord was born like anyone else and that when He was a young child He learned to talk like any other young child, after which He grew in knowledge and also in intelligence and wisdom. (*Arcana Coelestia* 6716)

Another passage says: “He was born as any other and received instruction as any other.” (*Ibid.* 1460) Our earliest instruction is received on our mother’s knees, and so it must have been with the Lord Himself. We can imagine that Mary herself was moved by love for Him as an infant and small child. *Conjugal Love* describes how women, particularly, are affected by a sphere flowing from the Lord that inspires them to love their children. This is described as a sphere of “love for little children ... of protecting and maintaining those who cannot protect and maintain themselves.” (*Conjugal Love* 391)

This sphere, flowing directly from the Lord, inspires parents, and particularly mothers, to be willing, as it were, to lay their own lives aside for the sake of their children. Mothers particularly make sacrifices for their children to thrive. (*Ibid.* 393) The Writings talk about a “sympathetic union” between mother and child (*Ibid.* 393:2), which binds them together. Mary must have experienced just such a union with the Lord. We know very little about her relationship with Him, but just enough to show that a bond did exist between them.

However, there is also a tension in this bond. It is not healthy for children to remain constantly attached to their mothers. As children grow up, so they grow in independence. And as this happens, the relationship inevitably changes. So the Writings tell us that “in the measure that innocence in little children recedes, affection and conjunction are also lessened, and this progressively to the point of separation.” (*Ibid.* 398)

In the story of Jesus we see a gradual separation from Mary. The first true instance is the Lord at age 12, after Mary and Joseph had taken Him to the Temple in Jerusalem for the Passover. After the festival, when everyone else was leaving to return home, Jesus remained in the temple, discussing religion with the lawyers. When, after three days, Mary and Joseph found Him, Mary said to Him, “Son, why have you dealt this way with us? Behold, your father and I have looked for you sorrowing.” (*Luke* 2:48)

The Lord’s reply to Mary was very telling: “How is it that you looked for Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” (*Ibid.* 49) Of course the Lord was referring to His heavenly Father, the Divine Love which was His very soul.

Yet this replay to Mary was very telling to the letting go that needed to happen in order for the Lord to fulfill His life’s mission on earth. All things that came from Mary had to be let go. And we see this increasingly in the Gospels. People often wonder why the Lord never refers to Mary as anything other than “woman”. To some people it seems disrespectful.

Yet the answer is very simple. The Lord's true Father, as we know, was God Himself, the Divine Love that formed the Lord's soul, gave Him life and motivation. But in order to live in this world, the Lord took on from Mary all the elements of humanity that made it possible for Him to live in this world. Chief among these were the inclinations toward evils that plague each one of us. To acknowledge Mary as His mother would have meant that He accepted these things as a part of Himself.

And yet the Lord never accepts evil. Evil is a barrier between Himself and people. Think of the nature of evil: it is selfish, cruel and unkind. It is the cause of hurt and pain. The Lord came to bring love, peace and kindness. He came to bind up hurts and heal pain. Evil is the enemy of the Lord.

Now the Lord did not reject Mary as a person in her own right, but rather the heredity that He received through her. And herein lies the complexity of motherhood. On the one hand there is always a bond between mother and child; on the other that bond has to be loosened so that the child can mature into an adult. Motherhood is holding close and letting go at the same time.

In the Word we see this paradox in the relationship of the Lord and Mary. At the wedding at Cana, which Jesus attended with His mother, she says, "They have no wine." The Lord's answer seems problematic: "Woman, what have I to do with you? My hour is not yet come." (*John* 2:3,4) It seems like He is rejecting her. But of course the Lord never rejected anyone in his or her own right.

It is interesting to speculate that if the Lord had called her "Mother" at that point, and so it would seem, if He had embraced the heredity she had passed to Him, then He would not have been able to turn water into wine. The Lord could only perform miracles when in a state of union with the Divine within Himself, and that could only happen as He let go of the human He had received from Mary.

This highlights the paradox of motherhood: to cling tight and let go at the same time. Yet in the literal sense of the Word the Lord does not reject Mary. As He hung on the cross, Mary was one of the women standing at His feet. Was it filial duty that led the Lord to speak to her: "Woman, behold thy Son"? He was, at that moment, in the final act of letting go of all the inheritance from Mary, all the earthbound weaknesses that bedevil us all. In a few moments He would let go completely and be united to His Father, that Divine within Himself.

Yet at that moment He did not forget Mary. Those very weaknesses He received from her formed the basis of His humanity. It had allowed Him to enter this world and live among us. It had made it possible for Him to engage the power of hell itself, and, drawing from His Divine soul, to defeat hell. Without the human from Mary the Lord would not have been able to save the human race from damnation.

And so, in the last moments of His life in this world, the Lord owed Mary a debt of gratitude. At the moment of letting go, He remembered the bond that had tied Him and this woman through all the years of His life. In that moment He looked to her wellbeing. Addressing the beloved disciple, He said, “Behold thy mother.” The inference is that John the disciple would care for Mary in her remaining years, as it says, “at that hour that disciple took her into his own home.” (*John 19:27*)

So we come back to the complexity of motherhood. It is a constant loving and giving of oneself to one’s children. Mary never abandoned the Lord, even though through the course of His life He had to let go of the very things she had given Him.

Much the same is true of us as we examine our own lives. Our mothers bring us into the world, they feed and nurture us until we are self-sustaining, then they stand aside as we mature and come into our own right and reason. Just as the relationship between the Lord and Mary changed over time, so does ours with our own mothers. We grow from dependency, to independence, to taking care of and looking after the very same mother who had taken care of us.

This is a complex relationship. It is not always difficult; often the relationship between a mother and child brings great joy to both. But it is always a changing relationship, one that needs to go through its various forms over the years. Like the Lord, we all owe our mothers a great debt of gratitude for the life they give us, not only the life of the body, but the life of our minds and spirits. The effects of their early nurturing and the skills with which they let go affect us throughout the course of our lives. And as we do this, so we obey the Lord’s commandment:

Honor your Father and your Mother  
That your days may be long upon the earth.

Lessons: *Luke 2: 25-33, John 19: 25-30, Last Judgment (Posthumous) 69*



**The Rev. Dr. Andrew M. T. Dibb** is Dean of the Bryn Athyn College Theological School. He was ordained in 1984 and into the second degree in 1986. He has served as assistant to the pastor of the Carmel New Church in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, as pastor of the Transvaal Society and the New Church Buccleuch in his native South Africa, and as Dean of the South African Theological School. He and his wife, Cara (Glenn), live

in Abington, Pennsylvania. Contact: [Andrew.Dibb@brynathyn.edu](mailto:Andrew.Dibb@brynathyn.edu)

# Noah's Ark: The Real Story

*The Rev. Dr. Erik E. Sandstrom*

**T**he latest and most-fantastic-yet movie depicting the story of Noah and the Ark opened in U.S. theatres in late March. There have been a number of such movies in the past. In 2009 the movie *2012* depicted the final end by flood from melting icecaps, where thousands of people survived by building similar but modern, motorized, self-contained arks – in the Himalayas!

One of the hallmarks of being New Church is knowing that the story of Noah's Ark is not to be taken literally. Searches for the ark in Turkey's Mt. Ararat region are countless, as are the claims of discovery. What actually happened, narrated within the story of Noah, is totally different, but even more exciting.

The people among whom the flood actually took place were not able to record their own story while it was happening. Some type of writing probably did exist, since the first written records involved events leading up to the flood, recorded by a group of people called Cain.

The first thing to get used to in reading the first 11 chapters of *Genesis* – the creation, Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden, Cain and Abel, Noah and the Flood, the Tower of Babel – is that all names were groups of people, or a trend of the most ancient church, or religion, which could be identified by a name. "Cain" meant those who emphasize faith instead of charity. In the process the "mark" put on Cain lest he be slain means that they preserved the wisdom of the first or most ancient church. (*Arcana Coelestia* 609) Their record consisted mainly of a list of correspondences.

This first step taken to an actually written Word of God probably was recorded on animal skins or clay tablets, but has been totally lost – at least to date. Or, we just would never recognize it by looking at it. In any case, as the church declined further, and perception became ever more and more general (*Ibid.* 508, 523), a later group of people systematized these earlier recordings into doctrine. It was a manuscript, being the "internal sense" of the Word, i.e. doctrines formed from correspondences. What everything means in the internal sense, when taken together, forms doctrine. (*Ibid.* 10400.3)

This later group of people are meant by Enoch: "Enoch walked with God. And he was no more, for God took him." (*Genesis* 5.24) Enoch copied down

the doctrines, taken from the “mouth” of those who could still speak about it. (*De Verbo* 7:3.5, 18:7.3) A resulting manuscript incorporating Cain’s and Enoch’s records was the Word of God during the flood, and was preserved to serve the coming church after the flood. (*Apocalypse Explained* 728.2)

It was preserved from the last of the human race from pre-deluge times, *who were seeking to destroy it.* (*Ibid.*) Noah, who had the manuscript, actually had to run away and hide from those who were bent on destroying it. This escape is essentially the story of the ark. Where did they run to? I will come back to this later.

But what would that actual destruction – described in the flood and Noah’s Ark – look like? It must be like an extermination. The only example we know of is the end of the Neanderthal peoples, around 40,000 years ago, down to 19,000 years, when Cro-Magnon man had taken over. There are several cave finds in the Holy Land where both kinds of skulls are preserved – in fact some which seem to be in between. (Tabun cave, Qafzeh cave, the Skhul cemetery<sup>1</sup>) Neanderthal died out, no more of their skulls were found.

But how this destruction took place takes us into a very different story from an ark floating on water. It has to do with how the mind worked with the people inhabiting Eden.

Paradise, or the Garden of Eden, was a tract of land located from the Nile to Euphrates, modeled after heaven. (*Arcana Coelestia* 3686, 4447, 4516, 4517, 5135, 6516) But it could well have included the whole Sahara, a fertile plain 10,000s of years ago but “laid waste” with the end of the Most Ancient Church.

The most ancient people, meant by Adam, had a mentality and physiognomy that we cannot imitate or demonstrate among modern people. Their brain was different, their cerebellum prominent but with less cerebrum, wide noses with very large Eustachian tubes. (*Ibid.* 1118) They were shorter than we are, and breathed by using their diaphragms with different musculature (*Ibid.* 1120), probably to produce low-frequency sounds called “internal or tacit speech” (*Ibid.* 1119), which was “heard” through the *noses* of others, and conveyed to the inner ear through the Eustachian tube. (*Ibid.* 1118)

Thus they heard inside their heads what others were saying. This, plus facial expression which were much more intricate than we can manage today, allowed them to express profound ideas (*Ibid.* 607), which would take much longer to talk through today. Thus they breathed, spoke, heard and perceived differently from us.

Some of this is tantalizingly indicated by the hyoid bone,<sup>2</sup> indicating human speech, found among Neanderthal remains. Their voice box was not as

---

1 New Philosophy, Adam Noah and Stone Age, April 1975 p. 215. Adam, Noah and the Stone-Age, part II 1994, p. 504; Albright *From Stone Age to Christianity* 1975 p. 130, Fischer, *Discover*, 1992, p. 44-51

2 Fischman, *Hard Evidence*, *Discover*, February 1992:44-51

with apes. However this may be, the “flood” itself came through a drowning by self-suffocation. It sounds horrible. But as we all know, thought goes together with breathing, even today. “It is similar with every person: when anything opposes his loves, there is a choking of the breath.” (*Ibid.* 1119) That was the real flood.

During the ‘flood,’ this became lethal. For all their thoughts were accompanied by breathing, so closely parallel that they could not think differently from their breath, nor could they breathe properly if their thought strayed into a false idea. (*Ibid.* 607.2,3, 805.2) Their faces shone with their loves; they could not simulate in the slightest, nor did they wish to. (*Ibid.* 1118)

But the beginning of ‘evil’ was a human invention. In freedom, human beings began to wonder if they could discover truth by verifying empirically what they knew to be true, by experimental input. By saying in effect, “Stop talking, God. I want to see if what you are saying is true, by myself!!”

They turned away from God, and “looked to themselves” (*Charity* 204), and desiring to feel life in oneself (*Arcana Coelestia* 146), thus by “turning away from God they implanted the origin of evil in themselves. (*Ibid.* 444.4) Evil arose from “the opposite side” – and it is evil even though it is nothing of good, “not nothing” (*Ibid.* 444.3), i.e., it has its own malignancy.

With this invention, began the decline we have been tracing, down through Cain and Enoch, and it now came to a culmination: the thought that God exists nowhere but in oneself. (*Ibid.* 1268) This grossest of heresies was more and more confirmed.

Imagine how this affected their breathing, even more so than with us. They literally choked to death on the idea that “God exists only in me.” Thus the Lord let that church “extinguish itself.” (*Ibid.* 586, 5910) “They became extinct of themselves.” (*Ibid.* 607 805) That is how “God destroyed all living things on the face of the ground” in the flood. (*Genesis* 7.23) That was the real flood. Those were the “giants” and the Last Judgment upon them. (*Arcana Coelestia* 4183, 4333)

The Lord who alone IS God was, of course, preventing destruction: that is why He began His Advent at that time! Did you know that? “Lord’s presence with Noah” meant by “God spoke to NOAH” (*Arcana Coelestia* 903-905 added emphasis), was the start of the Advent.

“The Lord would have been obliged to come into the world immediately after the fall of the Most Ancient Church, called Man or Adam, for there was an immediate prophecy of the LORD’S Advent. (*Genesis* 3.15). And what is more, the human race of that time could not otherwise have been saved.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2523)

So the Lord began His Advent, preserving from destruction by simultaneously instructing the remnant of the Most Ancient Church and

fighting against the evil of hell invented by those early human beings. This instruction and temptations are represented by the 40 days and nights of the flood. (*Ibid.* 727, 730) But in order to overcome completely in that combat, the Lord did finally make His advent in Bethlehem, fulfilling the pre-deluge prophesy of “trampling the head of the serpent” (*Genesis* 3:15), and for the identical purpose of the 40 days in the ark: to prevent the destruction of the entire human race.



Thus the Lord *as an infant*, a toddler, combatted the hells in temptations from those very same giants who died in the flood. “The Lord combatted those ‘wicked tribes’ in His earliest childhood, whom He conquered; and unless the Lord had conquered them by His coming into the world, no one man would have been left at this day upon the earth.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1673.2) The Lord finished His combats on Noah’s behalf, after His Advent, *while yet an infant*. The Lord “saved” the celestial heaven, the Most Ancients, by these temptations. (*Ibid.* 6373) Wow!

So who did He conquer? The Nephilim, which is Hebrew for “The Fallen Ones” or “The Giants on the earth in those days.” (*Genesis* 6.4) They were the ones who choked to death on the idea that they were God, and God did not exist outside themselves. They “drowned in the flood.” The reason for their drowning is that the Lord taught them the truth. “God spoke to Noah,” meaning He revealed that He alone Is, and His Name thus is “I Am that I Am” – Jehovah.

This was known to “Shem” during the flood. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1343) Perhaps it was pronounced Yahweh, or even Yahoo. Those who rejected this instruction, choked to death on it, were the Nephilim who drowned, and those who could receive that instruction, were, yes, Noah and his family in the ark.

Thus Noah “remained a remnant” from the Most Ancient Church, “preserving” the truth. (*Ibid.* 64, 468 et. al.) He no longer had perception, but a concept of “perfection,” and so these people formed the nucleus for the Ancient Church, after the death of the Most Ancient. (*Ibid.* 530)

Noah taught this truth to others, meant by Enosh, who also survived the flood, the future gentile base for the Ancient Church. (*Ibid.* 640) All of the people who did not suffocate went through 10,000s of years of physiological changes to their bodies and minds. This was the 40 days!

If we stay with the extinction of Neanderthal and the survival of Cro-Magnon or “modern” man, this evolution of the Ancient Church from the Most Ancient came about through the instruction in “who God was,” preserving the name of Jehovah. This instruction is found in that manuscript, the *Codex of Enoch*. (*Apocalypse Explained* 728) These same doctrines we have in the Writings of the New Church, meant by the “New Jerusalem.” John saw

the “doctrine of the New Church in the form of a City.” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 896) The “City of New Jerusalem” truths were the same ones taught by Enoch’s Word in the mind, the Ark of “Noah.” Of course, *Enoch’s Codex* would have been less than the 30 volumes we now have, perhaps as short as *New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* (London 1758), which has all doctrines in summary form. This preservation is exciting to contemplate: the Code of Enoch.

We return to the question, “Where did Noah run to, escaping destruction?” Could the cave art of the Lascaux and Chauvet caves in France, and most recently in Altamira, Spain, be where and how this knowledge was preserved?<sup>3</sup> This art dates from 46,000 to 19,000 B.C. Prominent among the animals depicted are bears. Bears signify or mean the fallacies or reasoning from the literal sense of the Word. (*Ibid.* 573, *Apocalypse Explained* 782)

Cave art is full of animals, and during the flood, “they knew the meaning of animals.” (*True Christian Religion* 833:2) Those bears could indicate the act of preserving Enoch’s Word. In fact, a skull of a bear was found in one cave, just sitting on a stone pillar, as if left yesterday, but 20,000 years ago, as if to ask, “Get it?” It is like a signature.



And in Australia the aborigines, all Cro-Magnon survivors among us, depict the “rainbow serpent” called Borlung or Ngyalod,<sup>4</sup> <sup>5</sup> commemorating their *Dreamtime* legend surely referring to the flood. They bring the Eden serpent and Noah’s rainbow – the flood’s duration – into one single creature. Their tales of *Dreamtime*, a living mythology, could refer to the mental awareness and revelation their ancestors actually experienced during the flood.

This huge hiatus – from the end of one church or religion until the beginning of a new church or religion – demarcated the duration of the flood. It was a flood of sin, reflected in the Swedish term for Noah’s Flood: “*Syndafloden*.” And a flood of sin it was. During those 10,000s

3 Images from Chauvet Cave art. [http://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images;\\_ylt=A0PDoX8ABeJP5DQABYOJzbkF?p=chauvet%20cave&fr=yfp-t-701&ei=utf-8&n=30&x=wrt&fr2=sg-gac&sado=1](http://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images;_ylt=A0PDoX8ABeJP5DQABYOJzbkF?p=chauvet%20cave&fr=yfp-t-701&ei=utf-8&n=30&x=wrt&fr2=sg-gac&sado=1)

4 *New Philosophy* 1988, *Borlung and the Rainbow Serpent*, p. 665.

5 [http://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images?\\_adv\\_prop=image&fr=yfp-t-701&va=Australian+aboriginal+wall+art](http://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images?_adv_prop=image&fr=yfp-t-701&va=Australian+aboriginal+wall+art)

of years – “forty days” – the physiognomy and mentality of people changed: their breathing changed from inner to outward breathing, their voice became openly vocal, hearing changed with all sounds now entering the outer ear and the tympanum, relegating inner hearing through the Eustachian tube. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1118-1120)

The diaphragm could now control the lungs in a new motion for the lungs to speak out loud; and the forebrain, or cerebrum, expanded, together with their higher Cro-Magnon-looking skulls, to incorporate a “new will” or conscience – the “window” in the ark, (*Ibid.* 652) as well as new facial control.

This growth took place by instruction through the Word of Enoch: a document consisting of “the internal sense itself...the Word.” (*Ibid.* 3432:2) The window in the ark means their resulting conscience and a new mode of perception. All “clean animals and birds” mean how their useful affections and thoughts were formed in an orderly manner. The unclean animals below the tarred deck were all their perished or perverted loves and desires of the old will, now sealed off as it is even with us today – the final death of the former kind of perception. The door opening wide on the side, is external hearing (*Ibid.* 651), through the eardrum.



Although it caused so much change, it was of relatively little use to Noah himself, but was mainly “furnished for the churches yet to come” (*Apocalypse Explained* 728), i.e. when Noah and his family came out of the ark. But during the flood, they fluctuated mightily between falsities of the former state – the raven flying around, and the innocence of their new will, the dove. Finally, the change was complete: the dove found dry ground. (*Arcana Coelestia* 866-870) Success at last. It could have taken from 35,000 B.C. down to 13,000 B.C. to complete the transition. That’s when “Noah came out of the ark” (*Genesis* 8.18) “...and died.” (*Ibid.* 9.29). The remnant of the Most Ancient Church came to an end.

What of Shem, Ham and Japheth? Noah, the remnant, taught the gentiles. Enosh, and those who received it inwardly, were Shem, both inwardly and outwardly. Japheth, and those who just emphasized the outward part, Ham. Again, these names were entire generations of people or church outlooks, lasting for an entire era or epoch of church history. The first actual individual mentioned by name in *Genesis*, was Eber. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1238, 1246) That may have been around 4,000 B.C.

The flood was over. Cro-Magnon, if such is the case, returned from France

and Spain to the Holy Land, turning from nomadic life to settlement, from 19,000 to 11,000 B.C., the dawn of the chalcolithic era. “Noah began to be a farmer.” (*Genesis* 9:20) Perhaps the recently found fantastic megaliths, Gobekli Tepe<sup>6</sup> in Turkey, near Ararat meaning “light” (*Arcana Coelestia* 850), looking a lot like a much more refined Stonehenge (Britain, ca. 2,000 B.C.), but dating all the way back to 13,000 B.C., could signal where Noah finally “came out of the Ark.”



I take this monument to be the First Ancient Church announcing its arrival, commemorating all those animals in the “ark” – the structure and all the contents of the modern mind – by many finely carved animals all over that megalith structure. Cave art had come home to roost.

*The Codex of Enoch*, the Word during the flood, had done its work. Now the next grand Word began to be composed: The Ancient Word.<sup>7</sup> The main

objective was first to recapture everything that had just happened, from creation down to that point in time. The first 11 chapters of *Genesis* constitute that recapture.

The composition of the Ancient Word, dating somewhere from 11,000 to 7,000 B.C., weaves an intricately detailed account of everything that happened since creation: the first humans with a human soul and body, i.e. “heaven and earth in the beginning,” their progress to fully mature spiritual, human beings, day one through six, nay heavenly humans; day seven capped by the “new or second creation” of Adam, and his intelligence, Eden. Then of the decline, turning aside God to each other, a Divine concession – Chaya or Eve. The further turning *away* from God, eating of the forbidden tree. And further down, Cain slaying Abel, down to the flood itself.

Also, post-deluge, they included the first problem encountered after the flood, over the issue of outer worship replacing inner, by reasoning and persuasions: the tower of Babel, and Nimrod who built it. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1283-1299) We still have to watch out for powerful persuasions and idolatry.

A copy of that Ancient Word was perhaps in Moses’ baggage when they

6 [http://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images;\\_ylt=A0PD0rK8BOJPwHcAXvujzbkF?p=gobekli+t&fr=yfp-t-701&ei=utf-8&n=30&x=wrt&y=Search](http://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images;_ylt=A0PD0rK8BOJPwHcAXvujzbkF?p=gobekli+t&fr=yfp-t-701&ei=utf-8&n=30&x=wrt&y=Search)

7 See *New Philosophy, From Enoch’s Codex to the Ancient Word*, 1976, April, p. 385-398.

left Egypt. The overdue fee at Pharaoh's library would have been astronomical, but luckily he escaped payment. The Ancient Word had been in use all the way down to the time of Israel's captivity in Egypt, probably around 1,500 B.C.<sup>8</sup>

Ancient Egypt used that Word, for millennia. How long ago? Scholars now think that the Sphinx began as a lion dating from around 13,000 B.C, facing the zodiac of "Leo" in the vernal equinox,<sup>9</sup> with Pharaoh Cephes later carving his own face on it. The mutation of our earth, its wobble, goes through a 2,150 year cycle, after which a new constellation zodiac heaves into the vernal equinox slot. That was probably why Cephes put his own face there, since Leo had moved on!

Today, 15,000 years later, we are in the Age of Aquarius. In any case, that would place ancient Egypt back to the time of using the Ancient Word – together with several city states which nowadays are nothing but mounds in the desert. Ebla was found that way, Tell Mardikh, (the Mardikh mound) dating from 3,200 B.C., a pre-pyramid era. There they found clay tables mentioning King Ebrum and their God, El and Jah, abbreviation for Elohim and Jehovah. (*Psalm* 68.4, 102.18, 118.5), plus many city states, including Sodom and Gomorrah.<sup>10</sup> They, too, must have used the Ancient Word.



So when Moses received inspiration to start writing a "new Word less remote" than the Ancient Word (*Sacred Scripture* 102), it was by dictation: "Hebrew spirits spoke the exact words" into the ear of Moses and all other Old Testament authors. (*Arcana Coelestia* 7055, cf. 2533, 2520, *Heaven and Hell* 254) But the Lord told Moses to stick the Ancient Word up front – the long-preserved spiritual history of the human race.

Thus made-up history merges into actual history, besides Eber, with Nahor, Terah, and Abram. (*Genesis* 12) And it was in that made-up story, from the Ancient Word, that Noah and the Flood was invented. Back then, they loved to wrap up at great depth doctrinal realities into enigmatic tales with characters conversing and thus personifying, or depicting, doctrinal realities.

8 Abram/Abraham lived ca. 2000 B.C. David ca. 1000 B.C. so everything else, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, the Captivity and Exodus, 40 years of wandering, arrival at Canaan, Joshua, Saul, David, Solomon and the temple, all had to fit in during those 1000 years of history.

9 Image: [http://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images;\\_ylt=A0PD0VxyBOJP4VIA6saJzbf?p=Sphinx+originally+a+lion&fr=yfp-t-701&ei=utf-8&n=30&x=wrt&y=Search](http://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images;_ylt=A0PD0VxyBOJP4VIA6saJzbf?p=Sphinx+originally+a+lion&fr=yfp-t-701&ei=utf-8&n=30&x=wrt&y=Search)

10 Image: <http://www.homsonline.com/EN/Citeis/Ebla.htm>

(*Arcana Coelestia* 605, 920, 4442) They thought up Noah and the Ark, and the “light” to enlighten them meant by Ararat. (cf. *Ibid.* 850)

To conclude the real story of Noah’s Ark, the remnant Noah instructed the gentile Enoshites using the prior Word of Enoch, but some of the Gentiles, mocked the whole process. Ham saw Noah drunk and naked and reacted that way. But the instruction continued with difficulty by concentrating on what was good and true. (*Ibid.* 1175) The other gentiles, Shem and Japheth, walked backwards to cover Noah. When the family, i.e. human race, finally came out of the ark – the return to Canaan? – the Ancient Church began among a few struggling individuals. (*Ibid.* 1126) But then they got the hang of it, and that church grew to be “the” religion, very numerous among all the city states: “Assyria, Mesopotamia, Syria, Ethiopia, Arabia, Libya, Egypt, Philistia as far as Tyre and Sidon, and the whole land of Canaan, on this side and beyond Jordan.” (*Ibid.* 1238)

We might well include all those city states and ancient empires known today from archeology: Troy and Çatalhöyük (Wikii entry) in Turkey, Moenjo Daro, in India, plus Rome and Athens, of course. But first, Gobekli Tepe. They all had the Ancient Word – not just *Genesis* 1 to 11, but the Wars of Jehovah, (*Numbers* 21:14) Jasher, (*Numbers* 21:14, 2 *Samuel* 1:18, *Joshua* 10:13); and Utterances, (*Numbers* 21:27) The “sun and moon standing still” (*Joshua* 10.13), was just a quotation from the Book *Yasher*! Would the Lord really destroy this planet’s rotation just to make a point? The spiritual sun was seen with spiritual eyes opened.

Ever since the Ancient Word was first composed, all readers knew exactly what Noah’s flood was really all about. Nowadays, everyone thinks it was a boat with animals and people, stranded on Mount Ararat. But enjoy the movie anyway – or groan at its false theology. There was, after all, an ice age in there, and boats on water carrying livestock were the imagery selected to recapture the real story, in terms familiar to the contemporary population, revealed “according to man’s comprehension.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2533)



**The Rev. Dr. Erik E. Sandstrom** is retired and serves as Acting Curator of Swedenborgiana in the Swedenborg Library in Bryn Athyn. He was ordained in 1971 and into the second degree in 1972. He has served the Olivet Church in Toronto, Canada; the Michael Church in London, England; the Hurstville Society in New South Wales, Australia; as assistant professor of Religion in Bryn Athyn College and its Theological School; and as editor of *New Church Life*. He and his wife, Lynn-Del (Walter), live in Huntingdon Valley,

Pennsylvania. Contact: [Erik.Sandstrom@brynathyn.edu](mailto:Erik.Sandstrom@brynathyn.edu)

# Remembering the Lord's Life

*The Rev. Coleman S. Glenn*

**I**n the New Church, we tend to focus more attention on what the Lord does for us now than what He did for us when He walked on the earth. And when we are looking to the internal sense of the Word, we tend to focus more on what it says about our own regeneration than on what it says about the Lord's process of glorification.

There are good reasons for these emphases: it is easier to see how they relate directly to our lives. It can be harder to see that practical use in reflecting on what the Lord went through 2,000 years ago.

But if we *only* focus on the here and now, and don't take time to reflect on what the Lord did in the world, then we are really missing out. The Heavenly Doctrine focuses a great deal on what the Lord did in the world. A huge portion of *Arcana Coelestia* focuses on the internal sense of the Word as it related to the Lord's glorification. And the universal faith of the New Church is that "the Lord from eternity, who is Jehovah, came into the world to subjugate the hells and to glorify His humanity; and that without this no mortal could have been saved, and those are saved who believe in Him." (*True Christian Religion* 2)

Notice that that universal faith is almost entirely about what the Lord did for the human race 2,000 years ago – and *because* of that, what He can do for us now.

There are two times a year when we *do* tend to focus our attention on what the Lord did in the world: Christmas and Easter. At Christmas, we focus on the miracle of the incarnation: that God Himself was born in this world. And at Easter, we focus on the incredible things that the Lord completed in His last week on earth: fully subjugating the hells, fully overcoming all temptations, and by doing so, fully making His human Divine.

One key teaching of the New Church, which helps us even more to appreciate how much the Lord did for us, is that it was not His death on the cross that redeemed the human race, but His entire *life* of constantly overcoming in temptation, as well as His crucifixion and resurrection. The cross was just the last and most difficult of these temptations, by which He completely glorified His human, that is, made it Divine. (See *Doctrine of the Lord* 34)

Now, it's true that we can't understand all the details of that. Even the highest angels can't. *Arcana Coelestia* 1676 makes this point, and then goes on to say what we *are* able to comprehend:

Therefore it is enough for men to know, and, because it is so, to believe, that it is an eternal truth that unless the Lord had come into the world and subjugated and conquered the hells by means of temptations admitted into Himself, the human race would have perished; and that otherwise those who have been on this earth even from the time of the Most Ancient Church could not possibly have been saved.

The important thing to note here is that we are not told to stop thinking about it because we cannot understand all the details; instead, we are told to believe and acknowledge as much as we *are* able to grasp.

And even though the angels of heaven cannot understand all the details of how it happened, they still love to reflect and talk about the Lord's glorification – the process by which He united His humanity with His divinity. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 4259) They speak, too, about His kingdom, about the regeneration of man – but they do not lose sight of the fact that this event was the essential thing, and that our regeneration is only an imperfect reflection of it. We need that acknowledgment. We need the Lord's life for our lives.

This perspective opens up the Word. Try reading the *Psalms*, and instead of putting yourself in the place of the psalmist, put the Lord there. Think of His struggle, His temptations – and His faith that because He fought from the infinite Divine Love that He called “Father” He could not fail. For example:

My power is dried up as a potsherd; and my tongue sticks to my jaws; and Thou hast set me on the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded me; the congregation of evildoers have encircled me; they pierced my hands and my feet.... But Thou, be not far, O Jehovah; O Thou my power, hurry to my help. (*Psalms* 22:15,16, 19)

Those words are powerful when we think of them as applying to our own lives – but how much more powerful to know that the Lord Himself experienced those things, and overcame.

Think of what the Lord did: he underwent the worst temptations, worse spiritual pain than we can imagine. He conquered every time. And He did all of that, not at all for His own sake, but for you and me:

In all His combats of temptations the Lord never fought from the love of self, or for Himself, but for all in the universe, consequently, not that He might become the greatest in heaven, for this is contrary to the Divine Love, and scarcely even that He might be the least; but only that all others might become something, and be saved. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1812)

Think of the Lord's life – that life of constant battle, but also that life of constant victory. Every minute, every second, battling back hell and putting it in its place, saying, “No!” to evil so strongly that even at the end, death had no power over Him. And then ask yourself: do you really think that if He was

able to defeat death itself, to conquer every corner of hell, that He is not able to save you from your evil?

If He was willing to say, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," as He was being nailed to the cross – how could He not give you the power to forgive the guy who just cut you off in traffic? When we are fighting against evils, praying to Him for help, let's pray specifically with a remembrance of how He lived, so that we can walk in His footsteps – that we carry our cross as He carried His, with the knowledge that in reality, it is He who is carrying ours, too.

Every day, we can take up our cross again, our selfishness dying, with the joy of knowing that the Lord will raise us up into life, because He has become life itself. Think of His life, think of His battle, think of His victory, and worship Him – who has taken up all power and reigned. Because of what He did for the entire human race 2,000 years ago, He can do the same for each one of us individually now. All of this is beautifully summarized in this passage:

By conflicts and temptations in the world the Lord glorified His Human, that is, made it Divine; in like manner now with man individually, when he is in temptations, the Lord fights for him, conquers the evil spirits who are infesting him, and after temptation glorifies him, that is, renders him spiritual. After His universal redemption the Lord reduced to order all things in heaven and in hell; with man after temptation He does in like manner, that is, He reduces to order all the things of heaven and the world that are in him. After redemption the Lord established a new church; in like manner He also establishes what pertains to the church in man, and makes him to be a church in particular. After redemption the Lord bestowed peace upon those who believed on Him, for He said, 'Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.' (*John 14:27*) Likewise He gives to man after temptation a sense of peace, that is, gladness of mind and consolation. From all this it is clear that the Lord is the Redeemer forever. (*True Christian Religion 599*)



The **Rev. Coleman S. Glenn** is the pastor of the Dawson Creek Church in British Columbia, and visiting pastor to Grande Prairie, Alberta, and to Western Canada. He and his wife, Anne Grace (Hurd), and infant son, Samuel, are moving to South Africa, where he will help to serve the new Church Westville in Durban, beginning July 1. He maintains a blog at [www.patheos.com/blogs/goodandtruth](http://www.patheos.com/blogs/goodandtruth). Contact: [coleman.glenn@gmail.com](mailto:coleman.glenn@gmail.com).



## The Rev. Mark D. Pendleton

### *A Purveyor of Hope*

The Rev. Mark D. Pendleton finds his greatest satisfaction as a minister of the New Church in seeing people touched by the truths of the New Church, in witnessing them making changes in their lives for the better, and in helping to inspire a sense of hope in the Lord. An emphasis on the “fully hopeful” message of the New Church is something he feels is a main part of his job.

Mark was raised in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, as the son of the Rev. Dandridge (Dan) and Anna Pendleton. He was educated in the Church’s school system from pre-kindergarten through two years at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. He received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Physical Therapy from Temple University, and practiced for three years as a licensed physical therapist before entering Theological School.

During his junior and senior years at the Academy of the New Church Boys School, Mark especially enjoyed his courses in religion. This started him thinking about the ministry as a possible life’s work.

An “Aha!” moment came during an anatomy class in his senior year of high school. “The teacher was describing the alimentary canal (digestive system) as a model for how newly arriving spirits in the other world are assimilated into the life of heaven. He described *saliva* as reflecting a certain

kind of spirit who helps teach simple, basic truths to eager newcomers. As the teacher was giving this description, I had a moment of recognition, and I thought, ‘That’s me!’ In other words, ‘That’s what I was created to do.’” Teaching simple truths to eager (or wrestling) minds is a use that Mark loves serving in this world, and it’s one that he can see himself serving in the life to come.

Mark graduated from Theological School and was ordained in 1991. He served as Assistant to the Executive Vice President of the General Church in Canada for three years; associate pastor of the Oak Arbor New Church in Rochester, Michigan, for four years; and pastor of the New Church of Phoenix, Arizona, for four years. He is in his 12<sup>th</sup> year as associate pastor of the Glenview New Church in Glenview, Illinois.

The one thing Mark appreciates most about his forebears is that “they gave me the option to believe that the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg are divine revelation.” He also feels blessed at having been “100% intellectually and emotionally satisfied” by his faith for all of his life.

In 2012 he married Ellen In, and enjoys serving the Church with her. He says proudly, “Ellen is an accomplished musician and vocal performer, a terrifically willing volunteer, and though she was once a newcomer to our church, I think she loves the New Church faith even more than I do!”

Mark and Ellen look forward to serving the Church and traveling



Ellen and Mark Pendleton on their wedding day

together in distant retirement. They love spending time with their friends. They also devote time every day to reading the Scriptures and the Writings of Swedenborg. They currently lead a group of people who are reading daily and systematically through Swedenborg's theological writings in chronological order – a project that began on June 19, 2008, and will take 11 years and two months to accomplish.

One of Mark's hobby interests has been fashioning the New Church's "steps of repentance" into a spiritual program and set of worksheets. The program and sheets are designed to help any person of any faith or culture access the steps of repentance and utilize them as a disciplined spiritual practice. The title of the project is, *Begin a New Life: Four Universal Steps of Life Change and Spiritual Transformation*. It is available on its own website at [www.BeginaNewLife.info](http://www.BeginaNewLife.info).

Mark has also developed a one-day seminar/workshop around the program which he delivers to congregations and other groups around the world. (He does this free of charge, beyond the cost of his travel.) And though all of this has been a hobby interest for Mark, he believes that the completed project is one of the main reasons the Lord put him on earth.

Mark grew up as an athlete, has been devoted to physical fitness since age 14, appreciates demanding outdoor physical labor and landscaping, and (as one might guess), he enjoys sweating profusely. During his Theological School training he drove bulldozers and other heavy equipment for summer work – a childhood dream come true. If given the option of anything he could do on a Saturday morning, Mark says, "I would choose a brand new John Deere bulldozer with a six-way blade, clearing land or sculpting it for some useful purpose."

Mark has a playful side as well, and he's known among friends for his comical impersonations of Arnold "The Terminator" Schwarzenegger under the alias, "Uncle Arnold."

One of Mark's favorite quotations from the Writings of Swedenborg – which speaks to his love of life change and hope in the Lord – is: "The smallest amount of divine power is enough, every time it is called upon, to tame instantly the entire devil's crew, even if it consisted of millions." (*Secrets of Heaven* 8626)

Contact: [markp@glenviewnewchurch.org](mailto:markp@glenviewnewchurch.org)

# Little By Little: Spiritual Rebirth is a Gradual Process

*A Sermon by the Rev. Mark D. Pendleton*

Lessons: *John* 1: 1-4, 10-13; *Exodus* 23: 20-30; *Revelation* 21: 1-7, 22: 16,20; *Secrets of Heaven* 9246, 9336: 1-3, 9334:2

**W**e live in a world in which we are increasingly able to get from point A to point B quickly:

- In Chicago (where I'm from) we get in a car and drive from the downtown Loop to Half Day Road in the northern suburbs in 20 minutes to half an hour; that used to take half a day.
- We could celebrate New Years in England, then hop on a Concorde jet (before it was discontinued), fly to New York City and celebrate there again.
- We get a message from Pennsylvania to California (or anywhere else in our world) in an instant via e-mail – something that used to take days or weeks to accomplish.

Now compare these things to what we witness in nature:

- The movement of the tectonic plates
- The growth and then erosion of mountains
- The change of the seasons
- The turning of a tide
- The growth of a tree
- Or the physical growth of an infant to an adult

Isn't it true that so many of the most beautiful things in life and in nature don't move or grow or develop with great speed? Instead, their movements are slow and gradual. Their growth is an organic process. Part of the wonder of nature, in fact, is getting to see the different pieces of it gradually unfolding

according to an order and time frame established from creation by the Lord – like a bud that opens into a flower.

And how do things happen when it comes to spiritual growth, rebirth, or regeneration – that is, shifts in the things that we love and care about most:

- Like the maturing of thoughts and feelings and attitudes
- Changes in patterns and habits of life
- The strengthening of friendships, commitment and love

Do these things move and develop quickly – with the speed of a Concorde

jet, or e-mails zipping around the globe? Or is spiritual growth more like the growth of a human body, or the growth of a tree – slow and gradual, seasonal and majestic?

The Lord's Word seems to answer this question both in its overall story line and in the direct teachings it gives to us. Think of the

What the Lord is telling us in Exodus 23 is that spiritual growth and rebirth, and also the growth of human relationships, are slow... and gradual ... and seasonal ... and majestic.

Lord's Word as the story of our spiritual life from start to finish, then think of the number of years the Word spans. Think of the number of stories it contains – each one picturing a different piece of human growth and development. Think of the infinite number of thoughts and feelings and shifts in human states of mind that are represented in the people of the Word, each one of them descriptive of part of *your* life experience.

And here's a question: Do you ever wish that your own spiritual rebirth could happen faster than it does?

So easily we read or learn something new from the Lord's Word. We learn, for example, of the peace and happiness and integrity of angels in heaven. We learn about the way that relationships truly can be. We love these things that we learn about, and at times might wish that we could "be" all of those things all at once.

But the Lord tells us very carefully what the reality is, and what we can expect in terms of human growth and development. In *Exodus 23* He forecasts to the Children of Israel what it will be like for them to enter into the land of Canaan and to receive it as an inheritance from Him. Their entrance into this land and their inheritance of it symbolically pictures our entrance into heavenly states of heart, mind and life.

Well, if this is true, then what do you think it means when the Lord said

to the Children of Israel:

Behold, I send an angel before you to keep you safe on the way, and to bring you to the place which I have prepared; and I will drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you.

I will not drive them out from you in one year, lest perhaps the land become desolate and the wild animal of the field multiplies against you. Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you become fruitful and inherit the land.  
(*Exodus 23: 20, 29-30*)

What the Lord is telling us in His Word:

- Right from the opening chapters of *Genesis*
- On through the story of *Exodus*
- By the wanderings of the Children of Israel in the wilderness
- In the many battles that they had to fight in the land of Canaan
- On through the time of the prophets
- And finally by way of the Lord's own 33 years of life on earth and the many mighty works and healings that He accomplished.

What the Lord is telling us by all of these things in their chronological order, and explicitly in *Exodus 23*, is that spiritual growth and rebirth, and also the growth of human relationships, are slow... and gradual ... and seasonal ... and majestic.

- Like the change of the seasons
- And the turning of a tide
- And the growth of a tree
- And the opening of a flower

He is telling us that we can't expect to break out of unhealthy ways of thinking, or hurtful attitudes, or destructive habits of life – which in the New Church we call “falsities” and “evils” – all at once. In short, He is telling us that we can't hope or expect to be catapulted from any experience of hell in our lives into heavenly bliss *immediately*. “Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you be fruitful and inherit the land.” (*Exodus 23: 30*)

But human nature, and maybe a bit of human longing, would have us believe differently. There really is a tendency that many of us may feel – especially in our younger years – to believe that somehow any experience of hell within us can be changed into an experience of heaven in an instant.

For example, we learn about destructive forms of anger and opposite forms of love, and we don't want to be angry people; we want to be loving people instead. And so we may begin to act like we aren't angry – and that's a good start! We might even tell ourselves and other people we aren't angry at times when really we are. But does acting like we aren't angry, and pretending

that we're not, really take it away – quiet it down and move it to the periphery of our experience in an instant? Often it doesn't, and we end up just kidding ourselves, and the feeling of anger continues to smolder – like fire in wood under ashes.

Here's another example: Think of young people who learn about chastity (or devotion to one partner) in relationships or marriage. They believe and love the mental pictures of what is being shown to them. And so they begin to act in more chaste and pure ways – and *that's* a good start! They may even think that they themselves are now suddenly chaste and pure because of their outward behavior. But once again, does the outward behavior actually and in an instant remove deeper issues of unhealthy pride, arrogance, manipulation, control or other such things that stand in the way of their hopes becoming reality? Often it doesn't.

The truth is that human nature can't be changed in a moment, but only gradually as we daily learn the truth of healthy, heavenly living from the Lord, and then, with the Lord's help and power, put that truth to work in both the outer and inner parts of our lives – in our actions, and in our habits of thinking and intending.

We refuse to do what is hurtful or “evil” to other people because it's not what the Lord wants. Then we act on the goodness that presents itself to us as an option for our lives. He or she “who has My commandments and lives them,” the Lord says – on the outside *and* the inside – “he it is who loves me; and I will come to him and make My home with him.”

“Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you become fruitful and inherit the land.” It is in keeping with this Scripture that the theology of the New Church suggests that spiritual growth is not hurried. Instead, it is slow and gradual. The reason we're given for this is that everything that we have ever thought; everything that we've ever intended in our hearts; every word that we've ever spoken; and every action that we've ever taken – from our earliest childhood right through to the present moment – becomes part of the composition of our lives. It helps form the tapestry of who we are.

In addition, we know that each one of us has certain destructive tendencies and unhealthy ways of thinking that we inherit through our “spiritual DNA,” also through the example of other people around us. And we add more of these things to ourselves through our own unguided thinking and free choices in life.

And finally, each one of these things – these destructive elements – is something that we become used to. It's something that we become attached to and develop a kind of fondness and even affection for. Each one of them holds a place in our lives and provides its own kind of payoff or feeling of delight.

We are told that all of these elements are interconnected within us. They

form an intricate lattice or network in our lives – such that any one of them cannot be moved or shifted without all of them being shifted at the same time.

An illustration of this is a hanging mobile. If you snip one of the strings and let one of the suspended objects fall to the ground (symbolizing the sudden and complete removal of just one hurtful element of our character) what happens? The rest of the mobile collapses.

The teaching of the New Church continues that if the removal of any of these pieces of who we are were to happen suddenly, our lives would be thrown into chaos, and we would be sapped of spiritual life, energy and vitality. We are told that this is what is meant when it says, “I will not drive them out from before you in one year *lest the land become desolate.*”

An example of this line of reasoning might be a teenage boy who is being careful in how he interacts socially with peers, and he’s doing this (perhaps unbeknownst to himself) mainly for the sake of how it will boost his ego or reputation, how it will reflect back to him from others around him, or how it will help him get what he wants out of relationships. Mixed in with his developing social skills are streaks of self-regard that he doesn’t yet see. In fact, this is such a significant part of his life that if the Lord were to yank it completely out of him all at once, a significant part of who he is and what he accomplishes in life would be torn out of him as well.

So what does the Lord do? Well, think of what any wise and loving parents do with a teenager like this who they are hoping to influence for the better. Instead of trying to take this form of selfishness completely away from this boy in an instant, the Lord works *with* him – within his very weakness. He helps him gradually to see and acknowledge the more self-focused parts of what he’s doing, to resist the hurtful parts of that thing in his life, and then injecting new and healthier motivations into the social skills that are developing within him. “Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you become fruitful and inherit the land.”

The truth is that human nature can’t be changed in a moment, but only gradually as we daily learn the truth of healthy, heavenly living from the Lord, and then, with the Lord’s help and power, put that truth to work in both the outer and inner parts of our lives – in our actions, and in our habits of thinking and intending.

Notice, too, that the Lord says, “I will not drive them out before you in one year *lest perhaps the wild animal of the field multiplies against you.*” What does that mean?

Well, think of how defensive and self-justifying we can become if something that we love or care about, or a way of life that we’ve become used to or fond of, feels challenged or threatened. Think again of the teenage boy who’s working on his social skills (in part) to selfish ends. He is enjoying what he’s doing; it’s delightful to him; it’s fun; it feels vital and alive. There’s nothing that he sees wrong with it.

If that boy’s parents were to challenge him too strongly, or too directly, and try suddenly to take away from him the self-focused part of what he loves, his passion – the “wild animal” of his field – might become aroused in such a way as to start multiplying reasons and rationalizations that support the damaging side of what he’s up to. In that way, he would actually be strengthened in certain parts of what he was doing – the unhealthy parts – rather than being gently turned away from them and re-directed.

We know that a similar kind of reaction can happen any time we try to take something away from an infant that he or she wants to play with – even if it’s a sharp knife or a hammer.

What’s the point? The point is that the growth and development and rebirth of a human spirit, also the growth and development of human relationships, aren’t something that happens all at once. Instead, the Lord’s mercy is constantly at work with us – every moment, throughout the entire course of our lifetimes – guiding us and gently moving us with all of the love, wisdom, beauty and majesty that we see in nature:

- In the change of the seasons
- In the turning of a tide
- In the growth of a tree
- And in the opening of a flower

Behold, I send an angel before you, to keep you safe on the way, and to bring you to the place which I have prepared. And I will drive out the Hivite and the Canaanite and the Hittite from before you. I will not drive them out from you in one year, lest perhaps the land becomes desolate and the wild animal of the field multiplies against you. Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you become fruitful and inherit the land.

Amen.

Contact: [markp@glenviewnewchurch.org](mailto:markp@glenviewnewchurch.org)

# Small Groups in the New Church

*The Rev. John L. Odhner*

**I**n the New Church today there is increasing interest in using small groups as a key part of our congregational care for one another. Recently seven congregations from our denomination gathered to develop strategies for improving church health through small groups. For me this is a welcome development as I have long seen teachings in the Word that direct us to using small groups to accomplish the work of the Church. Here I want to consider some of those teachings.

## **The Lord Used Small Groups**

The essentials of the New Church are to acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as the one God of heaven and earth, and to keep His commandments. All of our efforts to build the Church in people's hearts, minds and lives begin from that starting point. Since it is not we ourselves but the Lord who builds the Church, He is our pattern and guide.

When the Lord was in the world, He sometimes preached to thousands, He sometimes ministered one-on-one, and very often He worked with small groups. He called twelve disciples, sometimes meeting with all twelve (as at the Last Supper), and sometimes just with Peter, James and John (as in the Garden of Gethsemane). Often He would eat at someone's home, ministering to the family and friends who had gathered. When He healed the 12-year-old daughter of Jairus, He wanted privacy and allowed only seven people in the room.

When the Lord sent out his twelve disciples, He told them to focus their ministry on a particular house in each city. "Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart." (*Luke 9:4, Mark 6:10*) Although some of their preaching was more public, much of it focused on small groups in homes and families.

One reason to structure our church around small groups is that they provide a context for loving relationships.

## The Early Christian Church

After the Lord's resurrection, the new church He established through His disciples had two contexts for their gatherings: individual houses, and larger public meetings.

So continuing daily with one accord in the **temple**, and breaking bread from **house to house**, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart. (*Acts 2:46*)

And daily in the **temple**, and in **every house**, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. (*Acts 5:42*)

I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you **publicly** and from **house to house**. (*Acts 20:20*) (Emphasis added)

This double approach (publicly and house-to-house) is used in many congregations today that have weekend gatherings of the whole congregation, along with small group meetings in people's homes. Virtually every congregation has some small groups, such as a board, a choir, or Sunday school classes, but some congregations go further in encouraging every member to be a part of a small group, and encouraging every small group to provide balanced care for its members.

## The Church is Love

One reason to structure our church around small groups is that they provide a context for loving relationships. In the New Church we know that the whole church focuses on love for the Lord and love for the neighbor. In small groups we have an opportunity to get to know people on a deeper level, to understand their struggles, to help them in a way that is truly beneficial, and to love them for their best qualities. This is hard to do if our only interaction with others in the Church is a brief comment about the weather after the Sunday service.

Love for the Lord and caring for the neighbor make the church. (*Arcana Coelestia* 4723, Heavenly Doctrine 60)

Intellectual things, or those which are of faith, do not make up the church, but the voluntary things which are of love. (*Arcana Coelestia* 709)

An internal church is one for which charity is the chief thing and is the source of its thought and activity. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1228, 8152)

Charity is like the warmth in springtime or summer that causes grass, plants, and trees to grow. Without charity, or spiritual warmth, nothing grows. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1016)

The understanding cannot be enlightened unless it is believed that love for the

Lord and caring for the neighbor are the principal and essential things of the church. (*Arcana Coelestia* 7233)

Small groups provide a context for getting to know people on a deeper level, and for serving them in a more personal way, appropriate to their specific needs.

### **Every Larger Group Is Composed of Smaller Groups**

One reason for using small groups is that this is the structure of creation and human society, both in the spiritual world and the natural world. Every group is made up of smaller groups.

In most ancient times... people lived distinguished into nations, families, and houses, in order that the church on earth might represent the Lord's Kingdom, where all are distinguished into communities; and these communities into greater ones; and these again into still greater ones. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1259)

The universal heaven is one community, which is ruled by the Lord as one person; the general communities there are as many as are the members, the viscera, and the organs in a person; but the specific communities are as many as are the little viscera contained within each viscus, member and organ; and the particular communities are as many as in these little viscera there are lesser parts constituting a greater one. (*Arcana Coelestia* 7836)

Absolutely everything in the whole of nature has a structure that consists of common bundles of fascicles of fibers. Every tree, shrub, bush, and vegetable – in fact, every type of grass and herb – has this characteristic in whole and in part. The overall cause of this is that divine truths are shaped this way. (True Christianity 351. See also *Divine Love and Wisdom* 190, 207)

Heaven as a whole is like a single individual, having all the organs and members that every human body has. Each community within heaven is also in the human form, being composed of smaller communities, each with its own function. This aspect of the human form is also reflected in families. Ancient Israel was organized by families, with many houses in a family, many families in a clan and many clans in a tribe. This was a reflection of the way heaven is organized. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1259)

In heaven people are grouped into similar houses, families, clans and tribes, with the difference that the groupings are based not on natural blood relationships, but on spiritual values and functions. (*Heaven and Hell* 46, *True Christianity* 15, *Arcana Coelestia* 685, 3815, 4121) An example of small groups in the next life is an assembly that divided up into six circles, face to face, to discuss ideas they had had about the happiness in heaven. (*Married Love* 2,

Small groups provide a context for getting to know people on a deeper level, and for serving them in a more personal way, appropriate to their specific needs.

Most families simply cannot provide the kind of support and social connection that families used to, and many people have difficulty putting down roots in a community where they can stay for a long time. Consequently there is a greater need than previously for the Church to provide support for community and connection through small groups.

*True Christianity* 731)

Other examples are seven women who met in rose gardens (*Married Love* 293-4), three couples who shared one home (*Ibid.* 208), and a school for young men where they broke up into small groups to discuss matters of wisdom. (*Ibid.* 326)

This heavenly structure is also reflected in Jethro's advice to Moses, that he not try to do everything himself, but divide the congregation into larger and smaller groups:

And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people: rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. (Exodus 18:25)

In cities today, there has been decreasing dependence on families. A few generations ago most people lived with their extended families, but today most people are more mobile, families have fewer or no children, many couples divorce, and people frequently move to take jobs. Most families simply cannot provide the kind of support and social connection that families used to, and many people have difficulty putting down roots in a community where they can stay for a long time. Consequently there is a greater need than previously for the Church to provide support for community and connection through small groups.

The combination of larger and smaller groups is an effective way of teaching and leading people. Imagine a school in which all classes were taught by lectures to the whole student body, instead of breaking the school up into classes of 15 or 25 students. Individual discussion, questions or participation would be practically impossible. Even teaching a class of 15 students, I find it is often helpful to divide into groups of 3-5 students.

Most schools have many small classrooms, yet still find it useful to gather the whole school for certain events, such as performances or celebrations. It is the same with a congregation. Celebrations and worship services can bring the whole congregation together, while smaller groups provide for better

instruction and care for one another.

### Every Group Has a Use

In the Lord's Kingdom, everyone has a use. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1097.2)

Heaven is a kingdom of uses. (*Married Love* 7.3)

The Lord's love is to do uses to the community. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 353)

Angels have all their happiness in use, from use and according to use. (*Heaven and Hell* 403)

In the other life everyone without exception must perform some use, because a person is born for no other purpose than that he may perform use to the community in which he is and to the neighbor, while he lives in the world, and in the other life. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1103.2)

If in an earthly kingdom everyone is valued and honored according to his use, what must it be in the heavenly kingdom? (*Arcana Coelestia* 5395)

In heaven not only does every individual have a use, but also every community has its own special use that it serves within the greater body. There are communities who care for:

- Little children
  - Older children
  - The simple good
  - The gentile nations
  - Newcomers
  - Spirits in the lower earth
  - Spirits in hell
  - People being raised from the dead
  - People on earth
- (*Heaven and Hell* 391)

We can see that groups of people in heaven are organized according to uses, and even more significantly, those uses could not be performed without them gathering into groups. Imagine looking for some item in a store. You ask the storekeeper, "Where can I find nails? And do you have salsa?" The storekeeper replies, "We have nails and salsa, but we don't keep them in groups. They are just scattered around the store."

The human body is organized the same way. A muscle fiber could not

One of the advantages of small groups in the Church is that they provide greater variety. Heaven as a whole becomes more perfect as more people enter.

I think our goal for helping new members of the Church should be not simply to bring them into the body, but to help them find the specific place, the particular small group and specific church use that is right for each person.

move a limb, or even a little finger, if it were not bundled together with thousands of other fibers pulling alongside of it. Bone cells could not give any structure to the body without being locked to other similar cells to form a bone. And neither bones nor muscle could function without bundles of nerve fibers carrying message to and from the sensory and motor parts of the brain dedicated to each particular limb. Likewise, small groups create synergy among individuals to help them accomplish more.

### **Small Groups Provide Variety**

One of the advantages of small groups in the Church is that they provide greater variety.

Heaven as a whole becomes more perfect as more people enter.

Every perfection in the heavens increases with increase of number. (Heaven and Hell 418)

If bigger is better, does that mean that large groups are better than small groups? No, it is not a case of “either/or,” because large groups can be formed of smaller groups, and the increase in perfection results from an increase in variety. The human form is not made up of many cells that are all identical, nor of a variety of cells randomly mixed together. Rather the wide variety of cells are all grouped with other cells that serve a common function. Likewise, every community on earth is a reflection of the human form and is made of a variety of people formed into smaller groups with others who have similar functions and qualities.

Every unity has its existence from diversity, for a unity that is not the result of diversity is not anything; it has no form and therefore no quality. When, on the other hand, a unity comes into existence from various parts, and these various parts are in a perfect form in which each attaches itself in series, like a congenial friend to another, then the quality is perfect. (Heaven and Hell 56)

Small groups make it possible to have variety within a congregation. A congregation may have groups:

- for people who are needy
- for people who have a lot to give
- for people who want to learn

- for people who want to serve
- that are open and flexible
- that are structured and require commitment
- for young, old, married, single

### **Small Groups Provide Spiritual Growth Opportunities**

In small groups individuals can grow in their spiritual life. A small group book study, for example, can provide individuals with time for questions, discussion, sharing doubts, or taking a turn leading.

As another example, small groups can provide a supportive context for outreach and evangelization. The Lord commands everyone to go and make disciples, yet few of us are able to influence our friends and neighbors to the point that they actually come to accept the Lord in His second coming.

The process of reaching out to others and welcoming people into the Church is easier to accomplish when we work together to care for the newcomers. It may be easier to invite someone to join a small group than to join the congregation, and it may be easier in a small group to answer questions, talk about one's spiritual journey, provide for connection with others, or learn the steps of repentance.

As another example, small groups can make service to others easier and more effective. Many tasks cannot be done by one person alone, requiring a number to coordinate their efforts. When all one's teachers, ushers, servers, etc., are organized into small groups, they can share their expertise, and can love and support each other more effectively.

### **The Lord's Inmost Goal**

In *Divine Providence* we learn that the goal of the Lord's providence is a heaven from the human race. In all that He does He is trying to bring each one of us into heaven.

Now because heaven arises from the human race, and heaven is a dwelling with the Lord to eternity, it follows that the Lord had this as the end in creation; and because it was the end in creation, it is the end in His Divine providence.

The Lord did not create the universe for His own sake, but for the sake of those with whom He would be in heaven. For spiritual love is such that it wishes to give what it has to another, and to the extent this is possible it is in the enjoyment of its being, its peace, and its bliss. (*Divine Providence* 27)

Since the Lord's goal is for everyone to experience the love, wisdom, usefulness and the happiness of being connected with Him in heaven, He also wants everyone to be on the path to heaven by being a part of His heaven on earth, which is the Church. (*Ibid.* 30) To cooperate with this goal we can try to

provide everyone we can with that connection with the Lord.

A more central goal of the Lord's provide is to find a particular place for each person:

It is a continual object of Divine providence that a person may become a heaven in form and so an image of the Lord.... But its inmost object is that a person may be in this or that place in heaven, or in this or that place in the Divine human in heaven, for thus is he in the Lord. (Divine Providence 67)

I think that in a parallel way our goal for helping new members of the Church should be not simply to bring them into the body, but to help them find the specific place, the particular small group and specific church use that is right for each person. I hope that with an increasing focus on small groups we can allow the Church to become more an image of the Lord and heaven.



**The Rev. John L. Odhner** was ordained in 1980 and into the second degree in 1981. He has served as a pastor in Florida and California, and was one of the key people in revising the General Church *Liturgy*. He is assistant to the pastor of the Bryn Athyn Church, teaches in the Bryn Athyn Church School, and works on the Office of Outreach Internet Project. He lives in Bryn Athyn with his wife, Lori (Soneson), and their family. Contact: [John.Odhner@newchurch.org](mailto:John.Odhner@newchurch.org).

#### OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

Part of a continuing series developed by the Rev. W. Cairns Henderson, 1961-1966.

#### APPEARANCE

This is a term which has in the Writings a meaning different from that which is generally given to it. In common speech, appearance is frequently used to describe an illusion, or that which is other than reality, but the Writings employ two different usages.

The Divine as it is in itself cannot be comprehended by any finite mind. Pure truth never exists with angel or man. Therefore Divine truth is presented in the Word, not as it is itself, but as it seems to angels and men to be from their different but finite viewpoints; in the case of man, according to his state and even to the fallacies of the senses, and thus in forms from a sensuous and human origin which induce the idea that Divine things are the same as human ones. These accommodated presentations of Divine truth are what are called "appearances" and they are so called, not because they are illusions, but because they cause genuine truths to appear. In other words, they are appearings of the truth.

In the other world spirits sometimes seem to change their situation and to traverse distances when they do not. These seeming changes are called appearances because they are not real.

Related terms are "real appearances" and "appearances not real." The phenomena of heaven are real appearances because they actually exist, correspond to the states of the angels, and are as constant as those states are; are, in fact, appearings of the real. But the phenomena of hell are "appearances not real" because they are seen to be entirely different when the light of heaven enters. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 1376, 3207, 4623)

# Some Thoughts for the New Church

*Karl Birjukov*

(This is slightly condensed from an article written for *Things Seen and Heard* for the Swedenborg Society in London, England. Reprinted with permission of the author.)

As someone who came into the New Church in my early 50s nine years ago, not knowing anything about Swedenborg or the Church's theology, I thought it might be useful to try to explain its appeal and why its continuation is vital.

My initial encounter with *Arcana Coelestia* was much like that of a child reading an exciting adventure story. It really was a page-turner. However, judging from the less enthusiastic reaction of others, questions began to arise in my mind why it was that I took so easily to the Writings.

I subsequently began to read the Bible in a similar vein, a book that I had barely glanced at since my teens, and that was also puzzling. Consequently I began reading other New Church materials, as well as Swedenborg's less well-known works which stemmed from his pre-visionary stage.

Perhaps I should explain that I was raised Roman Catholic, attended Catholic schools, and like many others, fell away from it in my late teens to early 20s. This was a gradual stepping away, coinciding with the development of other interests. In fact, between my teens and early 50s, apart from being preoccupied with earning a living, the subject of the nature of reality in all its many guises had been something I had immersed myself in, whether in science, poetry, philosophy, art or wherever ideas led. Religion did not figure prominently in that exploration, though it always lurked in the background.

It may seem strange, therefore, why the New Church had an appeal, and I say this as a person puzzled by the attraction. Clearly its theology was miles in front of the scapegoat theology I had been raised in, but even though the theology was a distinctive feature of Swedenborg's thinking, still this was not

There is a growing army of people under the radar of public perception who live in a silent awareness indicated by expressions like, “there must be more to reality than this.”

the full explanation for me.

Then a few years ago – probably 2009 – Dr. Erland Brock from the Swedenborg Scientific Association sent me a section from *Words for the New Church*, a series of articles written in 1879 and subsequently published as a book in the United States. The sub-heading is, *A Serial Controlled by the Academy of the New Church*. It read very much like a manifesto in which the New Church clearly outlined much of its distinctive function and character. Very near the beginning is this statement of purpose: “To preach the Doctrines of the New Church simply from the letter of the

Word is not sufficient; for in this case we should be able to reach only those who have already a belief in the Divinity of Sacred Scripture.”

The fact that Christianity is declining is evidenced by falling attendance figures, particularly in countries where the belief in science and its influential progress has overshadowed religion, and perhaps not without reason. This is arguable, of course, but the point is that here was a church that had a vision that reached beyond the preaching-to-the-converted philosophy. Who, then, was the target audience?

I have to say that I was more than surprised and actually jumped out of my chair as I read the next line in this passage: “But the Doctrines of the New Church are also for those who have intellectually separated themselves from the foundations of Christianity, and whose minds are absorbed in the study of the natural sciences.”

Reading this, I realized why the New Church was significant to me. The questions that had arisen in my mind about the appeal of the Writings were answered. I was that person described as “separated from Christianity” and immersed in the “study of the natural sciences.”

That is not to say that the New Church came into existence exclusively for me. The world today is full of people much like myself. Secular education promotes its own advantages, but it is common for a person’s actual experience of it to reveal how narrow a view it presents of reality. “What’s in it for me?” is the kind of question that shapes that view of reality, and one soon discovers how limited that vision is. (By “soon,” I mean a period of years that can extend, as in my case, from the age of 18 up to 50 or 60.)

Just to emphasize, this is a conclusion discovered by experience rather than study, a conclusion many feel dawning over them gradually as they

discover the limits of the kind of mind that is “absorbed in the study of the natural sciences.” In a modern context, that phrase covers just about all levels of experience. It almost goes without saying that the promotion of such study goes hand in hand with a simultaneous demotion of religion that reduces it to metaphor at best, a kind of poetic expression viewed as typical of a pre-scientific age.

What I am suggesting is that, for many people at least, the surfeit of “things” provided by the modern world no longer have the ability to hold us in their thrall, and this has given rise to a sense of lack, of something missing. There is a growing army of people under the radar of public perception who live in a silent awareness indicated by expressions like, “there must be more to reality than this.”

This kind of loss of confidence over time is described by Swedenborg as a process of “vastation,” something easily grasped by newcomers like myself aware of a need for a kind of reality more radical and substantial than modern culture can provide. This is because the solution to human yearnings is mostly cosmetic, providing the same things in a new format that ultimately fails to satisfy our deepest human cravings.

In short, one could view Swedenborg’s thought in commercial terms as identifying a substantial niche in the market that is currently going begging. It is clearly a market that is identified in *Words for the New Church*.

With this in mind, try to imagine what it must be like for people coming upon New Church thinking for the first time. Keep in mind that they will have some memory of a past in which they learned and absorbed Bible stories, and that some key figures will be etched in their memory. For who has not heard of Adam and Eve, the serpent in the garden, events like the flood, and much else?

Though rarely discussed, they are part of the reason why they have intellectually separated themselves from religion. For instance, the story of the serpent in the garden will bring up all the old, negative associations that story has for them. (Couldn’t be true, a harsh and unfair judgment, and so on.)

Here in concrete terms, previously difficult to articulate, is the source of the real problem facing the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Science creates an appearance of the complete picture when in reality it has only ever been a partial view, made possible by the eradication of all things spiritual, as though the whole universe were its subject matter.

The Bible contains hidden layers of meaning within its words, which relates in a very precise way to our world today. The Lord in His Providence foresaw the state of things as they are today, and embedded in the Word a very specific message for our world today.

Early religious instruction had done a good job of forging these kinds of links. And it is these that were at heart the cause of rejection as one quietly removes oneself from the scene, as they lack words to express the sense of dissatisfaction they feel, or to put the story in a more favorable light.

But in reading this passage of the serpent in the garden again, as presented in *Arcana Coelestia*, we find another way for engaging with its meaning. Swedenborg says nothing at all about the devil, but something

else entirely: “The serpent is here used to mean man’s sensory perception in which he trusts. ... Man’s sensory powers they [the most ancient people] called serpents, for just as serpents are next to the ground so do the sensory powers come next to the body. Consequently, reasonings based on sensory evidence concerning mysteries of faith they called serpent-poisons.”

The text continues in this vein, and while it is well known in the New Church that this is a far more meaningful exegesis than that which is traditionally associated with it, it is hardly possible to describe the impact this has on someone like myself who has come into the Church immersed in the study of the natural sciences.

Is it possible that science, or at least the kind of thinking it represents, which is so heavily dependent on the senses, is actually being described here in an ancient text? And if so, why had this never been taught? Indeed, the truth of it had been obscured by layers of miasmal spirituality that I had been raised in and that had no real connection with the reality of my experience.

Here in concrete terms, previously difficult to articulate, is the source of the real problem facing the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Science creates an appearance of the complete picture when in reality it has only ever been a partial view, made possible by the eradication of all things spiritual, as though the whole universe were its subject matter. In reality, the appearance of that scale of things, far from placing man in the center of the picture, turns him into a minor player in a reality that is cold and “accidental.” It is a picture in which the appearance of humanity is virtually irrelevant. This is meaning hidden within the coils of the story of the serpent.

Needless to say, the task of the serpent is to seduce the mind, to create an impression of wholeness which is really incomplete and leads to self-service and principles of gain, and ultimately, expulsions from the Garden of Eden. Can it be that *Genesis* is actually describing the modern world?

But here is the point: this is exactly the picture that emerges from Swedenborg's exegesis. More than that, he always shows how the spiritual is rooted in the natural, that is, at the level of reality we are most familiar with.

The Bible contains hidden layers of meaning within its words, which relates in a very precise way to our world today. The Lord in His Providence foresaw the state of things as they are today, and embedded in the Word a very specific message for our world today.

Ours is a world thoroughly absorbed in external concerns; and since we are told that the Israelite nation was selected because of how external they were, we might conclude that there is a message for us in their long-ago history because our condition is the same as theirs was. The natural mind is represented by Egypt, referred to more than 600 times in the Bible. Is it just coincidence that the modern mind corresponds perfectly with everything that is said about Egypt?

Egypt, we note, was the focus of the old New Church serial, *Words for the New Church*:

The truths of the spiritual world rest upon the truths of the natural world; and consequently, the truths of the church rest upon the truths of natural science. The New Church will be able to convince all those who are willing to be convinced, just in proportion as it brings its spiritual doctrines within the radius of vision of men in this world, by preaching them in the first place immediately out of the letter of the Word, and in the second place by bringing down the doctrines into the knowledges of the natural world, and thus within the sphere of natural light, and hence of natural science.

The modern Egyptians also use their knowledge of natural things in declaring the independence of matter from spirit, and in denying man's immortality. Yet the fact that the modern scientists make such a perverted use of the natural sciences, is no reason why the church should turn its back

By showing how everything in the natural world has a correspondence with something in the spiritual realm, the Writings show us how important the natural world and our experience of it is in preparing us for spiritual life.

on science and why it should declare the cultivation of the natural sciences unnecessary and injurious. The church ought not to reject and condemn natural science, but it ought to despoil the modern ‘Egyptians’ and thus make the vessels of natural science, vessels of truth, instead of falsity.

What one reads here is a supremely confident statement of intent, and it is clear that the New Church saw itself as a power in the world by showing how the spiritual grows out of the natural, in the face of a natural that, like the Egypt of *Exodus*, is intent to keep reality religion-free.

In the opening pages of *Exodus*, Pharaoh doubles the work load upon the Hebrew nation in order to purge them of their desire to practice their religion. One can easily see how this relates to our world today, in which religion is being marginalized.

But it is true that spirituality must be grounded in the physical. The kind of religion that shines through the Bible and which is taught in Swedenborg’s Writings is firmly rooted in the natural. Here is the novel idea: spirituality must rest upon physical reality, which is illustrated by the Lord’s incarnation.

On the surface, many of the ideas proposed and investigated by Swedenborg may seem difficult to grasp, yet experience makes them quite easy to understand. For instance, we can see how influx works by considering advertising. It is all around us, and yet for the most part we are hardly aware it is going on.

By showing how everything in the natural world has a correspondence with something in the spiritual realm, the Writings show us how important the natural world and our experience of it is in preparing us for spiritual life. Swedenborg’s Writings refer to this often, and it gives us a sense that the Bible always contained a vital message for a future age, which is now here, for which its message is vital.

To what extent has the current New Church forgotten its basic teachings? Does the important message of *Words for the New Church* no longer apply? Is the New Church losing its distinctive character?



**Karl Birjukov** is a freelance writer and poet who has had a number of reviews and articles published in various philosophical magazines, including *The New Philosophy* of the Swedenborg Scientific Association. In recent years he has published short booklets expounding the ideas of time-base as integral thought structures in the art of John Latham, which accompanied his installations and art works at the Museum of Modern Art in

Oxford, the Tate Britain in London, and the Isaac Newton Institute in Cambridge. He lives in London, England. Contact: [samnico@hotmail.com](mailto:samnico@hotmail.com)

# Church News

*Compiled by Bruce Henderson*

## **GENERAL CHURCH BOARD**

The Nominating Committee for the General Church Board of Directors has nominated four incumbents for re-election, as well as seven new nominees for three-year terms.

The incumbents eligible and willing to be re-elected are:

**Hugh R. Brown**, Kempton, Pennsylvania

**Mark O. Elder**, Rochester, Michigan

**Charlotte Gyllenhaal**, Glenview, Illinois

**Ronald K. Nelson**, Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania

The seven new nominees are:

**Kay R. Alden**, Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

**Jake C. Brown**, Simsbury, Connecticut

**Ian B. Carswell**, Chicago, Illinois

**Gustav Fornander**, Stockholm, Sweden

**Mary Jane Junge**, Cleveland, Ohio

**Patrick Mayer**, Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania

**Patrick Sweeney**, Bowie, Maryland

Thanked for their service are: **Fay S. Lindrooth**, Bryn Athyn, and **Timothy V. O'Connor**, Bridgeport, Connecticut, who have completed three years on the Board; and for completing two terms: **Shaun N. Buss**, Bryn Athyn, **Jason V. Reuter**, Longmont, Colorado, and **Matthew A. Smith**, Mitchellville, Maryland. There are two vacancies also to be filled on the Board.

The election will take place at the annual meeting of the General Church Corporation, June 28, in Bryn Athyn.

The Nominating Committee consisted of: **Amy Buick**, chair, **Annette Baltz**, **Charles Ebert**, **Karen Heinrichs** and **Doris McDonald**.

### NEWS ABOUT MINISTERS

**The Rev. Alan Cowley** has been unanimously affirmed as the pastor of the Michael Church in London, England. Alan has been serving the congregation since last year under an episcopal appointment.

**The Rev. Pearse Frazier** has been called to be the pastor in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, beginning July 1. He has been serving as assistant pastor in Kempton, Pennsylvania. **The Rev. Lou Synnestvedt** will become assistant to the pastor in Kempton on July 1.

**The Rev. Derrick Lumsden** has been called to be the pastor of the Sower's Chapel in Freeport, Pennsylvania, beginning July 1. He has been pastor of the New Church Westville in Durban, South Africa.

### GROUND-BREAKING IN WASHINGTON

The Washington New Church and School in Mitchellville, Maryland, has been dreaming, planning and fund raising for a major building and renovation project since 1999. Ground was broken in March and the project is underway. (See photos on page opposite page)

Among the five-year goals are:

- Increase church attendance by at least 15% with a “renewed” worship experience for all ages
- Grow the society by welcoming and baptizing at least 15 new members
- Grow the school enrollment from 50 to 75, from junior kindergarten through grade 10

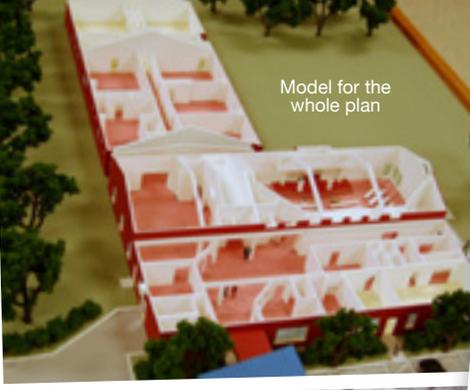
Following is an account of the ground-breaking written for the April issue of the Washington New Church newsletter, *The Echo*, by **Bonnie Cowley**:

Other than the school children and many congregation members, our invited guests consisted of architects Mark and Eric Beck, along with colleague Dave Budd; Dave Sunday – project manager from Gardiner and Gardiner Construction Co.; site engineer Jeff Felker from Landesign; plus Sasha Desrouleaux from the office of Prince George County Councilman Derrick Davis.

Looking out over the gathering of young and old, **Pastor Michael Gladish** noted: “We are honored to be able to build on the foundations laid by two generations of dedicated members whose vision gave us the freedom to continue to grow in an organic and orderly way.” Many of the speakers alluded to the many years spent in planning, dreaming and preparation for this day.

“At some point, in providence, our endeavors are manifested in physical structure, where they become most tangible,” remarked **Stewart Smith**. “Fifteen years ago we began with the first seeds of an architectural process that might

Model for the whole plan



# GROUND-BREAKING FOR THE WASHINGTON NEW CHURCH

Ninth-grade students Astri Hernandez, left, and Oscar Simons, with Dave Sunday and Pastor Mike Gladish



Back row, left to right: Brent Hyatt, David Radcliffe, Dave Sunday (General Contractor), Stewart Smith, Dave Budd (Architect), Sasha Desrouleaux (County Council Representative), the Rev. Michael Gladish, Mark Beck (Senior Architect). Front: Kathy Johns, Bonnie Cowley, Erin Stillman, Eric Beck (Architect), Jeff FELKER (Site Engineer)

Pastor Mike Gladish digs in



PHOTOS: GROUP SHOT BY BRAD JOHNS. ALL OTHER PHOTOS BY BONNIE COWLEY



Dr. Eben Alexander



Dr. Michael Lemole

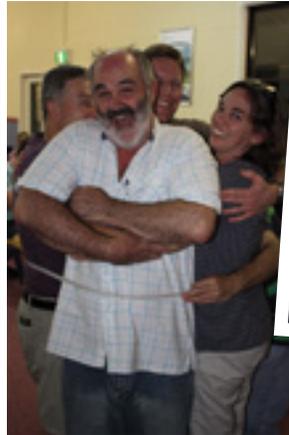




Bonny Hills ministers and wives – Back row, left to right: Jenn and Todd Beiswenger, Peter and Teresa Buss, David and Pam Moffat, Darren and Renee Brunne. Front, Martin Pennington, Julian Duckworth, Mary and Glenn Alden.



Norman Heldon (95), leads the group on a miniature train ride. Two behind him is Graham Horner, three children, then Margaret and Owen Heldon.



Trivia Fun Night, left to right: Michael Chester, Martin Pennington, Pete and Teresa Buss



Melinda Robinson and Bec Moore



Kristen Johnson with children



Children at the camp



Children at the camp

CENTRAL BUCKS EAST HIGH SCHOOL CHOIR SINGS IN THE CATHEDRAL



Singing one of Bach's Easter Cantatas before the service

ORDINATIONS INTO THE SECOND DEGREE



Teresa and Bishop Peter M. Buss Jr., the Rev. Todd and Jenn Beiswenger



The Rev. Solomon J. Keal and his wife, Tirah

accommodate, and thereby embody the aspirations of this congregation. With the passage of time, our concepts – or rather our understanding – changed. We have widened our circle of friends as we seek the talent and expertise to design and build that which has (as) yet occupied our minds and hearts. But it is today we have worked for, because it is now that our striving fully meets the tips of our hands – and the soil of the earth. So, we begin.”

As a member of the Facilities Committee for the past 15 years, I know that we have had many ups and downs. But we were blessed early on with a dedicated committee and continued support from the congregation. We were then further blessed by a partnership with the architectural firm Beck, Powel and Parson (BPP), who quickly sized up our hopes and worked with us to help us achieve these concepts.

Mark Beck, senior architect and “comprehensive idea man” said at the ground-breaking, “I love designing schools and churches.” He also said “(the) forthcoming construction symbolized to me, a renewal, and a rebirth of these supporting facilities to help you continue to grow this spiritual and caring community.” This clearly illustrates how much Mark was in tune with the committee.

Teamwork and trust were also themes echoed in many of the remarks. Eric Beck of BPP thanked the congregation for their support, with special thanks to the committee. He also thanked the contractor, Dave Sunday, “for his solid efforts thus far in the project,” and said, “BPP really looks forward to working with Dave for the rest of the project.”

Dave Sunday concurred that since the church selected Gardiner and Gardiner as our contractor, “In those six months we (the committee, BPP & G &G) have worked hard to gain additional value for the project,” which has resulted in being able to air-condition the whole facility. And, he said, “We established a working relationship and trust throughout this time.”

Another theme was community. **David Radcliffe**, Board Chairman, noted when speaking of the soil being symbolically turned over, “Seeds grow and produce fruit, just as our building project will bear fruit for our school, our church, our community, and for the generations to come. So, with this new beginning, we (continue to) build a church and school that will contribute to the community and bear fruit for ourselves and our neighbors.”

Sasha Desrouleaux commented that the presence and health of our church and school contributes to the community, our district and the county as a whole, and pledged the county’s support to see the project through.

Pastor Gladish also referenced “the concept we call ‘the doctrine of use,’ which teaches us that we are not born for ourselves but for the happiness and blessing we can offer each other. This construction is all about that service – not just for our own members but for all in the community who will benefit

from what is done here.”

Most inspiring, of course was the ground-breaking itself. Hard hats and shovels were distributed, not to the adult leaders but to the school students, beginning with the two oldest students, **Astri Hernandez** and **Oskar Simons**, then the two youngest, **Umah Kazeem** and **Shaunti Smith**. Cameras flashed and cheers filled the air as the shovels cut through sod to signal the beginning of this long-awaited project.

It was a momentous occasion and **Kathy Johns** left the students with these final thoughts: “I’d like you to think about three things as you begin to see the new building being built. 1) Be proud of your church and school. 2) It has taken a team to get to this point and you are all on this team. 3) Dreams do come true – don’t give up.”

We all need to keep these things in mind as we work through the next six months of building disruptions!

## EASTER GLORY

People filling the Bryn Athyn Cathedral on March 30<sup>th</sup>, as well as those watching online, got a special treat along with the service: a performance of one of Bach’s *Easter Cantatas* by the Central Bucks East High School Choir.

CB East is a large public school about 15 miles north of Bryn Athyn. Chris Villante, the director of the choir, had contacted the cathedral through its website address to ask if his students might be able to sing there. This was before **Graham Bier**, the new Director of Music at the Cathedral, had arrived last summer. Once in place he says he responded positively “and with the support of the pastoral and cathedral staff, we began to talk about how it might work.”

The Cathedral gets frequent requests for concerts in the nave, which is not permitted, so Graham was pleased when Villante was open to the idea of singing at one of the services.

One of the CB East parents told Graham that the students had been working on this long Bach piece all year and it had been a challenge to “get” what it was all about. But having the opportunity to sing for a service in the Cathedral – the kind of space and context that Bach intended – brought the piece to life.

He notes: “The area where the high school sang is called the ‘quire.’ In medieval cathedral floor plans like ours, this is where the choir would have stood, facing each other and singing across. In fact, a lot of music is marked *cantoris* and *decani* to show which side of the choir would sing each part when echoing each other. (*Cantoris* is on the north, where the *cantor* would sit, and *decani* on the side of the *deacon*.) So this is a huge part of the heritage of the

building and of Christianity, and provided part of the context that the Central Bucks East singers were excited to experience.”

The choir also had the experience of singing in the Old North Church in Boston a week previously as part of a performance tour.

It may have seemed unusual for a public school choir to be singing sacred music, since it seems that anything religious is discouraged, if not outright banned, in public schools these days. But, Graham says, “Sacred music is a huge part of music history and there are certain composers, approaches and music forms that don’t even have secular counterparts. So a study of music without studying sacred music is like taking a history course about Pennsylvania without mentioning the Quakers, or studying medieval history without mentioning the Catholic Church. It would be a blatant omission, leaving the story incomplete and incorrect.”

He notes that, “There isn’t anything expressly forbidding sacred music in public schools, though from school to school it can vary in terms of how restricted it is. It seems that Central Bucks east is open to the value of studying sacred music in its context – a powerful way to understand its motivation and function. For that, they should be commended.”

Graham says he is hoping to invite groups from our schools – Bryn Athyn College, Secondary Schools and Elementary School – to sing each year in the Cathedral. “I think we at the Cathedral could offer the students a valuable experience,” he says, “and I know that they would enrich our worship.”

The CB East choir sang for 20 minutes prior to the service, plus the interlude and postlude. They were acknowledged in the Choir Hall after the service to prolonged applause. Many people thanked them individually. The students obviously loved the experience. One beaming mother said the choir is like a sport to these students; they practice every day. And she added that she liked the service itself so much that “We’ll be back!”

### **BONNY HILLS CAMP IN AUSTRALIA**

While we are gearing up for church and school summer camps in North America, they’ve already had their mid-summer camp in Australia – in early January.

**The Rev. Todd Beiswenger**, pastor in Hurstville, just outside of Sydney, reports that the Bonny Hills Camp in Port Macquarie was a great success. It attracted more than a hundred people from all over Australia – New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory – plus a few international visitors.

Todd says there were a wide variety of offerings, including seven ministers leading worship and offering presentations. “Others kindly volunteered their

time offering optional Zumba, yoga, martial arts, choir, bell ringing, knitting and even free chiropractic sessions.”

Next year’s camp is already scheduled for Phillip Island, near Melbourne, December 29 to January 4.

(See photos on page 275.)

### THE AWAKENING OF EBEN ALEXANDER

Dr. Eben Alexander, the neurosurgeon who wrote the runaway best-seller, *Proof of Heaven*, after a unique near death experience, is convinced that everything that happened to him was “for a reason.”

Part of that reason, obviously, is to tell people how his experience transformed him from scientific denier into a man of faith – and to have a positive spiritual influence in their lives. His near death experience really was “proof of heaven” to him because the part of his brain that could give rise to illusions was completely shut down during a seven-day coma. Now his account of that “proof” is opening hearts and minds all over the world. (His book has been translated into 40 languages.)

The fame he now enjoys also brought him to Bryn Athyn April 6 for a presentation before 1,100 – including many visitors – in the Asplundh Field House. His lecture, *Religion and Spirituality in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – How They Complement Modern Science* – was sponsored by Bryn Athyn College, the Academy Secondary Schools and New Church LIVE. The New Church LIVE service that morning featured several people talking about their near death experiences.

The event also included a series of related sessions in the College, a special dinner at Glencairn Museum, a book signing and many discussion groups – before and after the evening lecture.

Four public sessions were offered in the Doering Center at Bryn Athyn College that afternoon, which attracted more than 100 people and which were continued – due to demand – the following Sunday. Each session had a mix of people familiar with and new to New Church teachings. The sessions included:

Are near death experiences anything more than brain malfunctions? (**The Rev. Stephen Cole** and **Dr. Soni Werner**)

Body, Mind and Meaning: medical, psychological and philosophical reflections on *Proof of Heaven* (**Dr. Dan Synnestvedt**, **Dr. Edward Higgins** and **Dr. Erica Hyatt**)

Swedenborg’s testimony regarding the afterlife and its astounding similarities to modern reports of the near death experience (**The Rev. Grant Odhner** and **the Rev. Grant Schnarr**)

Supportive listening circle for people who have had a spiritual or near

death experience (This was also offered immediately after Dr. Alexander's lecture)

At the evening event, Dr. Alexander was introduced by fellow neurosurgeon Dr. Michael Lemole, Chief of the Division of Neurosurgery at the University of Arizona Medical Center. Dr. Lemole told of being raised in Bryn Athyn and how his New Church faith helps to sustain him in his practice. He said he always prays before surgery and often feels that his hands are guided by Divine providence.

As a neurosurgeon Dr. Alexander had felt that what people called the soul was just a product of brain chemistry and that near death experiences were simple fantasies produced by brains under extreme stress. He could not reconcile his world of science with any belief in God, the soul or life after death.

Then he had that near death experience that could not be explained by his non-functioning brain. With this "proof" he completely revised everything he had learned and believed about the brain creating consciousness, and became convinced that we really live in the soul and spirit freed from the brain.

Now, he says, he is a doctor who believes that true health can be achieved only when we realize that God and the soul are the true reality, and that death is not the end of life but a transition into eternal life.

Dr. Alexander said he thoroughly enjoyed meeting and interacting with so many Swedenborgians. He went home with many new things to think about – and lots of literature.

For more information see his personal website, [www.ebenalexander.com](http://www.ebenalexander.com), and another devoted to his work with meditation, [www.sacredacoustics.com](http://www.sacredacoustics.com).

(See photos from the event on page 274 and Life Line observations on page 284.)

## JACOB'S CREEK FAMILY CAMP

The popular New Church Family Camp at Jacob's Creek in western Pennsylvania is scheduled for July 27 – 30.

This year's theme is *Life After Death* and the camp pastor is the **Rev. Matthew Genzlinger**, pastor of the Concord New Church in Massachusetts. Joining him on the instructional staff will be the **Rev. Brad Heinrichs**, pastor of the Carmel New Church in Caryndale, Ontario, Canada; the **Rev. Pearse Frazier**, who by then will be the pastor of the Pittsburgh New Church; and **Brett Buick**, who will have just completed his second year in Theological School.

Camp directors are **Blake and Paul Messman**, and **Jamie and Julie Uber**. For information about costs, registration and anything else please contact the

Ubers at 412-782-2710 or [julie.uber@gmail.com](mailto:julie.uber@gmail.com).

#### NEW PRINCIPAL IN BRYN ATHYN

**Greg Henderson** has been named the new Principal of the Bryn Athyn Church School and Preschool, effective July 1.

Bryn Athyn Pastor **Eric Carswell** said: “Greg was chosen from a group of young candidates. He brings extensive knowledge and experience of the Bryn Athyn Church School. He has taught the eighth-grade boys starting in the 1997-98 school year. His teaching ability is recognized and respected. He has the strong support of the faculty. His leadership as the head teacher of the upper grades and of the Program Committee has been well appreciated.”

#### A NEW INDEPENDENT PUBLISHER

**Joanna Hill**, former Editor and Director of the Swedenborg Foundation, has formed a new independent publishing house, Rock Point Press, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, with co-owner Marcy Heller.

Joanna says they will publish creative nonfiction and historically based children’s books, as well as books about Southwest history, spirituality and general trade, including memoirs and cookbooks. “We want to publish books,” she says, “that make a difference, ones that make the world a better place because we know more about our history and our place in the world.”

In September they will publish *Spiritual Law: The Essence of Swedenborg’s Divine Providence* – the first in a series of “Swedenborg simplified” readers for the contemporary spiritual seeker.

For information contact Joanna at 267-304-8521 or [joannavhill@gmail.com](mailto:joannavhill@gmail.com).

#### DO YOU HAIKU?

Among the “fillers” scattered throughout the pages of this issue of *New Church Life* – and others to come – are Haiku offered by **Gerald Hurst** of Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania. These come to him, he says, “as the spirit moves me.” We are grateful for them and hope you enjoy them.

#### NEW CHURCH HAIKU

The Lord is in me  
His Word is a living thing  
Now I am awake!

# Life Lines

## **SIX WORDS FOR JUNE 19TH**

“The Lord God Jesus Christ reigns.” In these six words, with which the New Church began in the spiritual world on June 19th, 1770, the teaching of the whole New Testament is condensed into one short sentence – which then became the seed from which that whole crystalline system of doctrine represented by the New Jerusalem grew.

In that one simple shining sentence we have the Alpha and the Omega of all truth, the beginning and the end of everything we need to know. “THE LORD GOD JESUS CHRIST REIGNS!”

(WEO)

## **RELIGION IS THE ANSWER**

We often despair over the decline of our culture and the depths to which the younger generation is taking it. Witness the rites of debauchery reenacted in college spring breaks each year, from Florida beaches to Cancun. But this has been with us since ancient times. Way back in in the fourth century A.D., Emperor Julian lamented:

“A youth approached me. He was bearded; his clothes were dirty; he wore a student’s cloak and he looked a typical New Cynic of the sort I deplore. Where the original Cynics despised wealth, sought virtue, questioned all things in order to find what was true, these imitators mock all things, including the true, using the mask of philosophy to disguise license and irresponsibility. Nowadays, any young man who does not choose to study or to work grows a beard, insults the gods, and calls himself Cynic.”

So the ancient Cynic is yesterday’s Hippie and today’s Occupy Wall Street demonstrator. But all is not lost. Among the young people of the world there is still hope. And we need them speaking out, like this male college student in a recent letter to the *Washington Post*:

“I appreciated Ruth Marcus’s March 12 op-ed column, ‘Going to X-tremes,’ on how degraded our culture has become, especially in the debased sex of modern adolescence. Unfortunately, she doesn’t offer the solution, which is God and religion.

“Ms. Marcus wrote the ‘bygone’ rules such as not allowing members of the opposite sex in students’ dorm rooms are relics. Respectfully, they are not. I’m a freshman at Brigham Young University, and these relics are our rules, which I enjoy. These rules protect the dignity of each sex and also respect the powerful attraction between the genders. This attraction is perfectly acceptable and wholesome, except when it is misused. Intimacy is sacred, and I believe it should be reserved until marriage.

“Does Ms. Marcus also consider this belief a relic? It is one of the most freeing truths I know. I respect her for recognizing the degradation of society, especially in sexual mores, but a secular culture provides no framework for sexual chastity. If physical immorality is not a sin, why should our physical passions be bridled?

“Our culture is degraded, but sex wasn’t the start; it is only a symptom.”

This young man may not speak for the majority of his generation. But because he dares to speak out for his beliefs, he gives us all hope.

(BMH)

### ‘PROOF’ OF HEAVEN

Dr. Eben Alexander, the neurosurgeon whose life and faith were dramatically transformed by a near death experience, was in Bryn Athyn on April 6 to talk to a crowd of 1,100 about his acclaimed best-seller, *Proof of Heaven*. His specific topic was: *Religion and Spirituality in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – How They Complement Modern Science*.

Here was a man who had been a confirmed scientist and confirmed skeptic about faith and spirituality – a lapsed churchgoer who did not believe in life after death. His science told him that matter – what we see and experience – is the core of reality; our thought and consciousness are just products of it. He considered himself the least likely candidate to be converted to profound belief in the soul and God and heaven.

Several years ago he was stricken with a rare form of meningitis and fell into a seven-day coma that all but killed him. He revived with powerful memories of visiting the spiritual world and of an indescribable awareness there of unconditional love. He knew the part of his brain that could produce such images and memory had completely shut down, so these were not illusions. It had to be real.

Much of it was beyond his ability to put into words – what Swedenborg calls “ineffable.” But he was profoundly affected by an “angel guide” who assured him that he was deeply loved and had nothing to fear. That was the central message of his book and his talk – that God’s love for us is constant and unconditional, and is a model for our own lives.

Many people have had similar near death experiences. Common to them is a bright, enveloping light and overwhelming love, which makes these stories all the more compelling in a world hungry for insight and assurance. It's promising too that they resonate as well with Swedenborg's revelation. Because of Dr. Alexander's prominence and the dramatic way his life and beliefs were transformed, he has a larger megaphone than most. He is using it – and people are listening.

He never thought he would be saying and believing what he now so unabashedly proclaims: that God is present with each of us in every moment; that we need to get in touch with the spiritual life within us, that is so much more real than our natural life; and that God's unconditional love is there to help us heal – and help the world heal. We would say it is there to help us regenerate and be reborn, but that really is our healing.

We know about the power of that unconditional love but need to reflect on it ourselves as a model for our lives.

In the Word, the Lord gives us the Two Great Commandments – to love the Lord and love the neighbor as ourselves – and says that on these “hang all the law and the prophets.” (*Matthew 22: 40*) This is the very essence of the Word.

In *Secrets of Heaven* 1799 we read that “if we considered love for the Lord and charity for our neighbor the chief concern of faith,” all the doctrinal distinctions that separate churches would dissolve. This is the faith of heaven.

Unconditional love is an inspiring ideal but not always easy to practice. Must we really “love (our) enemies”? But God does, and that is the lesson. His love is unconditional, even with those who turn their backs on Him, fight Him and oppose Him. He is always there to raise even the sinner – if he will be lifted up. And that is the example: we don't have to agree with people or excuse bad behavior to love them unconditionally and wish the best for them. That is the healing power that Dr. Alexander sees in unconditional love – for ourselves and for the world.

I think he would embrace *True Christian Religion* 739: “All who become angels carry their own heaven deep within themselves, because their love is the love that constitutes their heaven.”

When we can mirror the healing of God's unconditional love in our own lives, that is the “proof of heaven” within us.

(BMH)

**ONE MORE LESSON TO LEARN**

One discordant note for New Church listeners in Dr. Alexander’s presentation came at the end – a deflating and disappointing conviction that reincarnation is the process of personal perfection.

This may be a default to his scientific instincts that all such development occurs within the human brain – not the soul and spirit.

He has yet to discover that spiritual perfection is eternal and never ending – within that spiritual life he has glimpsed but not fully grasped.

He told his appreciative audience – and many individually – that he loved coming to Bryn Athyn and learning about the revelation that informs our faith. But he only had a seven-day introduction to the spiritual world. Swedenborg had 27 years of conscious experience, and from that we have a whole new revelation from the Lord to guide us. So much as Dr. Alexander has been enlightened, he still has a lot to learn: that our spiritual growth continues to eternity, that it doesn’t require a near death experience – and that it certainly doesn’t involve reincarnation.

(BMH)

**PROOF OF HEAVEN**

I enjoyed Dr. Eben Alexander’s recent talk in Bryn Athyn, and his book, *Proof of Heaven*. And whose opinion could be more valuable than a brain surgeon’s on whether or not near death experiences are only the result of brain activity?

I can see, though, why Swedenborg, in making his case for heaven, didn’t make too much of his spiritual experiences (which lasted for almost 30 years!), although he spoke freely of them. The testimony of someone else based on *his* experience – as interesting and powerful as it may be – can never be as convincing as the internal proofs we find in our own minds and life experience. The *truth* so clearly presented in the Writings is the most important thing, not Swedenborg’s experiences of the spiritual world that illustrate it (useful as those are).

“If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” (*Luke 16:31*) If we hear Moses and the prophets – in other words, pay attention to the teaching of the Word – other evidence only serves to confirm what we already know.

For me, the *logic* (based on the truths of revelation) that supports belief in heaven is very convincing. I look around and see that the whole world of nature is a kingdom of uses, which illustrates and confirms what the Writings say. It makes sense, then, that there is some overarching general use to which all creation looks – which again is what the Writings say: the world was created for the use of forming a heaven from the human race. And this follows from

the truth that God, the Creator, is a God of love. It all hangs together perfectly.

And does not the whole course of each human life – the growth in wisdom and other heavenly attributes that we hope for and expect, and see people actually achieve – point to the truth that life continues after we leave this world? Since human beings are so obviously spiritual creatures, with the potential to grow more heavenly throughout their lives on earth, the whole world would simply make no sense if there were no heaven.

(WEO)

### “A NEW BIRTH OF FREEDOM”

Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address is another example of the idea in my editorial on the birth of the Church – that continuing success and progress requires a perpetual return to first principles.

In that famous speech, Lincoln spoke of the United States as having been “conceived in liberty,” and he resolved “that these dead shall not have died in vain,” but that “this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom.”

The “first principle” from which the American form of government came, invoked by Lincoln in his speech, was Liberty. The nation was “conceived in liberty,” and by hewing to that principle it would, in Lincoln’s immortal words, “have a new birth of freedom.”

Lincoln’s hope for the future was based on a continuation of “the unfinished work” which those who fought and died at Gettysburg “so nobly advanced” – that is, “a new birth” of the very freedom that was “conceived” at the nation’s founding.

(WEO)

### FREEDOM IS NOT FREE

The saying, “freedom is not free,” is meant to remind us of the soldiers who have given their lives, and are risking their lives today, in the service of their country. Theirs is the supreme sacrifice, but the battle to preserve and advance human liberty is one that engages us all.

Liberty is a gift from God that we must be worthy of receiving. It begins with love. “All freedom is of love,” the Writings say, repeatedly. *Real* freedom – not the kind of license the hells crave – is the exercise of good loves by enlightened reason.

And what is it that good loves love? They love use; and therefore truth, by means of which they are able to bring forth uses. And use implies order. (If the vending machine is “out of order,” that means it is unable to perform its use). Freedom and order, therefore, go hand in hand; and both depend upon truth.

Human nature, though, before it has been reformed and regenerated by

the Lord, is contrary to the order of heaven. The whole history of the world attests to the truth that heaven does not come naturally to us, and neither does freedom. As the famous saying from the old Pogo comic strip says: “We have met the enemy, and he is us.”

The battle to preserve the nation’s civil freedom, therefore, begins with our own individual repentance, and willingness to lay down the life of our natural *proprium* (the love of self and the world) in the service of our “country” in heaven. The agency that promotes this transformation of individuals that the civil order (and thus freedom) of the country depends upon is the Church. Other agencies may help, but it is the Church – the church militant – that trains the front-line soldiers in this spiritual battle.

(WEO)

### REAL PROGRESS

C. S. Lewis observed that if a group of hikers have taken a wrong turn and gotten on the wrong path, the true “progressives” are those who recognize that fact and want to *go back* and get on the right path.

(WEO)

### HOW LONG ‘TIL CLOSING TIME?

In a recent editorial I quoted the late John Wooten, noted basketball coach and sage, who famously observed: “All progress is change, but not all change is progress.”

We witness the difference every day, with our world awash in technological “progress” as much of our culture is in decline.

My parents were born just after the Wright brothers’ flight at Kitty Hawk and lived to see men land on the moon. They witnessed the advent of automobiles, television and computers. Now smart phones have a short shelf life before the next new thing. We can tinker with genes, operate on embryos, and produce babies from test tubes, and will not be surprised by whatever comes next. No one is dazzled anymore. But we worry about where we are headed.

With every new technical marvel and medical miracle comes the question: not just, “What can we do, but what should we do – and not do?”

Albert Einstein warned: “The concern for man and his destiny must always be the chief interest for all technical effort. Never forget it among your diagrams and equations.”

Now more than ever, amid this wondrous spectacle of science and technology, we need a sure sense of where the stepping stones are leading us, and whether we want to go down every road opened to us.

A recent *Saturday Essay* in *The Wall Street Journal* carried this provocative heading: “The Future of Brain Implants: How soon can we expect to see brain implants for perfect memory, enhanced vision, hypernormal focus or an expert golf swing?”

The article asks: “Science fiction? Perhaps not for very much longer. Brain implants today are where laser eye surgery was several decades ago. They are not risk-free and make sense only for a narrowly defined set of patients – but they are a sign of things to come.”

Amid the realm of possibilities are medical and technological advances that are both exciting and daunting – life enhancing and life threatening. We teeter a dangerous cusp between miracle worker and Frankenstein.

For perspective, consider what French brothers, writers and philosophers Edmond and Jules de Goncourt wrote in their *Journals* in 1869: “At Magny’s dinner: They said that Bethelot had predicted that in a hundred years of physical and chemical science man would learn to know the atom and that with this knowledge he would be able, at his will, to dim, extinguish or relight the sun like a Carcel lamp.

“Claude Bernard, for his part, is said to have announced that with a hundred years more of physiological knowledge we would be able to make organic law ourselves – to manufacture human life, in competition with the Creator.

“For our part, we did not raise any objection to this talk, but we do believe that at that particular stage of scientific development, the good Lord, with a flowing white beard, will arrive on earth with his chain of keys and will say to humanity, just as they do at the Art Gallery at five o’clock, ‘Gentlemen, it’s closing time.’”

(BMH)

### **CAN AN ATHEIST GO TO HEAVEN?**

Many religious people would say flatly, “no.” But I think most New Church people would take a more nuanced stance: namely, that atheists can go to heaven – just not as atheists.

It is the presence of the Lord there that makes it heaven, so it wouldn’t *be* heaven to someone who rejects the Lord. It isn’t that the Lord shuts atheists out, but that they shut Him out. To the atheist, the whole idea of heaven is a fantasy; it’s not that they can’t go there, but that for them “there” doesn’t exist.

But very few of us (except little children) go straight from this world to heaven when we die. We’ll *all* have a lot of things to learn, and unlearn, with varying degrees of difficulty. Those who have embraced atheism will have to unlearn that, and learn to love God. How difficult this will be depends upon

how hardened their position is.

Two teachings from the New Church especially come to mind. One is that it is not “belief,” but how we actually live, that determines where we go after death. No “ism” alone – neither theism nor atheism – sends anyone to heaven or hell.

Another thing is that there is a middle ground between heaven and hell, the “world of spirits,” into which people first go when they leave this world. This is where we finally sort everything out (or rather, *we* are sorted out), and our true, inner, “ruling love” emerges.

Those who are basically good will undergo a process of “vastation” there, whereby the unheavenly aspects of their character (bad affections and false ideas) are removed; and they will learn new truths in preparation for life in heaven.

Those who are firmly set against God and the life of heaven, and are *determined* not to go there, will forget whatever knowledge of good and true things they have acquired (which would only be a burden and even a torment to them now), and find their own way to the spiritual habitat that will be most in keeping with their character and comfortable to them.

A proud, self-righteous, mean-spirited person will not waltz into heaven simply because he believes in God. In fact, the obstacles to heaven that person has to get over may be more difficult than those faced by one who has adopted atheism intellectually, but who has lived a life of kindness and respect for others.

(WEO)

### **A FOOT IN THE DOOR**

When communicating with Karl Birjukov about his article on page 265, *Some Thoughts for the New Church*, I mentioned to him that his discovery of the Writings reminded me of John Bigelow’s similar process in the mid-1800s, documented in his wonderful book, *The Bible That Was Lost and Is Found*.

Bigelow began reading Swedenborg with a mix of fascination and determination to poke holes in the theology – but the more he read, the more he became convinced that this has to be revelation from God.

Mr. Birjukov says: “I did much the same as John Bigelow, since as a philosopher, one develops a critical awareness that accepts nothing on authority. I might add that of all the thinkers I have studied in science and philosophy, no one actually comes through such scrutiny with flying colors except Swedenborg. Unfortunately, the kind of thinking that Bigelow applied is sadly lacking today, witnessing how impoverished we have become. Hopefully, that might change if Swedenborg can once again get his foot in the door.”

(BMH)

**THE POWER OF THE LITERAL SENSE**

The Word in its literal sense is full of dramatic stories that stick in our memory and have great power to affect us. They are memorable *because* they affect us. If we were not affected by them, they would quickly go out of our minds, like “a feather on a wall, which is blown away by the slightest breath of wind,” to borrow a memorable image from the Writings. (*Arcana Coelestia* 4018)

These stories touch our hearts because they illustrate the conflict between good and evil – the very conflict that goes on *in us*, in our hearts and minds, all the time; as well as the infinite love and mercy of the Lord, and His power to save us.

The Writings explain the spiritual significance of the Bible stories – how they represent the inner states the Lord went through during His life in the world, and our own corresponding spiritual development, and the spiritual states of the church on earth. But in a way these stories are self-explanatory; the way they affect us *is* the “meaning” of them.

Take “The Lord is my Shepherd,” for example. A world of meaning is wrapped up in that beautiful little expression. It can be spelled out in a doctrinal explanation of it, but that explanation affects us more deeply, and *means* so much more to us, because of the beautiful imagery in which it is contained.

(WEO)

**HOLLYWOOD’S NOT DEAD?**

One of the surprise movies this year has been an unheralded independent film, *God’s Not Dead*. Although it stunned the industry with strong box office appeal in its opening weeks, it had not been reviewed by any major newspaper or website. Nevertheless, young people especially seem drawn to it and respond positively to its message.

With the success of the television series *Duck Dynasty* and the unabashed faith of its Robertson family, plus the heavily promoted movie version of *Noah*, religion is making a comeback in the entertainment industry. That’s a good sign.

The story line of *God’s Not Dead* seems a bit heavy-handed – but that’s nothing new for Hollywood. It portrays a college freshman and devout Christian confronted in his first philosophy class by a dogmatic atheist professor who informs the students that they must disavow the existence of God, in writing, or risk failing the course.

Critics say that could never happen – at least not that blatantly. Russell Wolfe, who produced the film for Pure Fix Entertainment, says the inspiration came from more than 40 First Amendment cases in which “university students, campus ministries and clubs have been attacked for their religious faith.”

The student in the movie nervously balks at the assignment and the smug professor challenges him: prove God's existence with well-researched, intellectual arguments and evidence or he will fail the course.

A promotion for the movie sums it up: "With almost no one in his corner, Josh wonders if he can really fight for what he believes. Can he actually prove the existence of God? Wouldn't it be easier just to write 'God is dead' and put the whole incident behind him? *God's Not Dead* weaves together multiple stories of faith, doubt and disbelief, culminating in a dramatic call to action. The film will educate, entertain and inspire moviegoers to explore what they really believe about God, igniting important conversations and life-changing decisions."

Wolfe concedes that the movie may be "preaching to the choir," but hopes to connect with nonbelievers too. "What the movie does," he says, "is it silences and quiets people down in a dark room – and it takes them to a place that they won't even let their best friend take them. They're asked that question, 'Is there or isn't there a God?' and then they need to answer that for themselves."

In a recent *Peanuts* comic strip, Charlie Brown tells Lucy he's going to a church picnic with his family. Lucy says, "I didn't know you belonged to a church." Charlie Brown answers, "Of course we do. Don't you?" To which Lucy answers: "We used to, but now we belong to a coffee house."

This is a movie for the coffee house generation.

(BMH)

#### NO COMMENT

Every now and then something so good comes along that no comment in praise of it could add a thing. See for yourself. My wife just sent me this YouTube link: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHV6BjuQOZQ&feature=em-subts\\_digest](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHV6BjuQOZQ&feature=em-subts_digest)

For those who may not have access to YouTube, it is a short video (just under four minutes) of two men playing "*The Mission*" and "*How Great Thou Art*" on the piano and cello in front of a waterfall, with a rainbow and the statue of Christ the Redeemer that overlooks Rio De Janeiro.

(WEO)

#### SING ON, LITTLE BIRD!

A drab little sparrow sat on a twig a few feet off the ground singing his heart out. He was quite pleased with his song, which he thought was especially fine, although, to be perfectly frank, it was pretty ordinary.

"How beautifully I sing," he thought. "It's my gift to the world. The silent butterflies, the squawking jays – how happy they must be to hear me! How much brighter the sun shines, how much sweeter the flowers smell, how much

more wonderful the world is, thanks to me!”

He was so preoccupied belting out his *magnum opus*, and his chest was so puffed out he couldn't see past it to the ground anyway, that he failed to notice a cat prowling around the base of the tree. The cat had his eye on our little maestro, and it would be an easy jump to catch him.

But the cat saw something that gave him pause. Perched on a branch a few feet above the bird, hidden from the bird's view by the leaves, was an eagle. And the eagle had his eye on the cat. And there was a look in the eagle's eye that caused the cat to forget all about his luncheon plan and slink away into the bushes.

So the little bird sang on, and the beautiful spring day was indeed much better than it might have been – especially (although he didn't realize it) for him.

(WEO)

#### **WHAT WOULD SWEDENBORG TWEET?**

Confining Swedenborg to 140 characters of the Twitter-sphere might sound appealing to someone slogging through a convoluted explanation of the internal of the external.

But what if Swedenborg could tweet? We can be sure he would not be telling us what he had for lunch.

In a sense, though, Swedenborg does “tweet.” The Writings are filled with nuggets of divine wisdom, and one of the best ways to access them is through the Daily Inspiration provided each morning by General Church Outreach through e-mail. If you don't get it already, you can subscribe free at [www.newchurch.org](http://www.newchurch.org).

Imagine that the first thing you see when you turn on your computer in the morning is not a pitch to refinance your mortgage or the latest weight-loss guarantee but a brief inspiration from the Writings.

Here are some recent examples of Daily Inspirations:

“All things are blessings when a person is in the order of heaven.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 9184)

“Charity is like warmth in springtime or summer that causes grass, plants and trees to grow. Without charity, or spiritual warmth, nothing grows.” (*Ibid.* 1016:2)

“The Ten Commandments contain, in brief summary, all things of religion. Through them, the conjunction of God with man and man with God takes place. There is nothing more holy.” (*True Christian Religion* 283)

Every one a gem. Every one worthy of a tweet.

(BMH)



OFFICES Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

PUBLISHED BY General Church of the New Jerusalem

EDITORS **Bruce Henderson**, Editor  
Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009  
[Bruce.Henderson@newchurch.org](mailto:Bruce.Henderson@newchurch.org)

**Rev. Walter Orthwein**, Spiritual Editor  
[Walter.Orthwein@verizon.net](mailto:Walter.Orthwein@verizon.net)

SUBSCRIPTIONS New Church Life, Box 708, Bryn Athyn, PA  
\$30 for any address, \$5.00 a single copy

TELEPHONE 267-502-4990