

NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2015



The Chancel at the Re-dedication of the Washington New Church

The Washington New Church and School was completely rebuilt and expanded over the summer. See a full report on page 82 and photographs on page 89.

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

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New Church Life

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

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In This Issue

In a New Year's sermon, *A New Beginning*, the Rev. Dr. Andrew M. T. Dibb shares the perspective: "At Christmas we look back to the events of the Lord's life, and consider its implications on our own lives. At New Year's we look into our own future to see how to make the implications of Christmas change our lives and make us different." (Page 15)

In a sermon, *Building Spiritual Reserves*, the Rev. David H. Lindrooth talks about dealing with spiritual scarcity in our lives and how to build up the reserves we need to deal with the demands of our lives on a spiritual level. He uses the parable of the ten virgins at the wedding feast – five of whom came prepared and five who did not – and what this teaches us about having what we need spiritually when challenging situations arise. (Page 22)

We all know Swedenborg's *Rules of Life*. But did you know that he never wrote them down? They appear nowhere in his papers and manuscripts. So where did they come from? The Rev. Dr. Erik E. Sandstrom, Acting Curator of Swedenborgiana in the Swedenborg Library, explains the mystery and the history. (Page 27)

What is New Church education and why should we care? In the first of a two-part series the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr., who oversees education in the General Church, answers the question in a presentation to New Church educators last fall. We may assume a common definition of New Church education but Bishop Buss offers eight ways that clearly frame the use. (Page 34)

E. Kent Rogers writes about *Love in the Celestial Spheres: Seeing Our Relationships in Earth, Moon and Sun*. He says: "Though the moon seems lifeless and less important than earth, it is the earth-moon system that allows for life to exist. A perfect parallel is the relationship between hearts and lungs, which Swedenborg often uses to describe the relationship between love and wisdom and also wife and husband." (Page 43)

Patrick L. Johnson, a member of Conference in England, offers an interesting address which he gave at Purley Chase last September: *How the Academy/General Church Was First Launched in England in 1874*. We date that beginning to 1876 in the United States, but Mr. Johnson gives a fascinating history of a talk on *The Authority of the Writings* that helped launch the Church and the Academy, which first was delivered at Purley Chase but got a lot more attention and action when it was repeated in America. (Page 49)

Kay R. Alden, chair of Helping Children in Crisis, offers a moving account of the

work being done for orphans in Kenya by the Rev. Samson Abuga, his wife and staff. Kay and several others spent time with Samson and the children last July and tells an inspiring story of what is being done for these children – and how we all can help. (Page 57. Also, see photos on pages 90 and 91.)

The subject for *Introducing Our Ministers* in this issue is the Rev. Erik J. Buss, assistant pastor in Bryn Athyn, who has so many ministerial genes in his family that his choice may have seemed preordained, but the decision and the passion to become a minister were all his own. His zeal for the Church has taken him to Glenview, Seattle and South Africa, and produced two books – so far. “I love the concept,” he says, “of learning to truly trust the Lord enough that His will may be the only thing that matters.” (Page 63) See also a sermon by Erik, *Expanding Your Wisdom and Influence*. (Page 67)

Donnette R. Alfelt, who has been a wise teacher in the Academy Girls School, a loving mentor to widows and widowers, and devoted to the Church throughout her life, talks about her changing view on women in the ministry and what led her to this new perspective. (Page 71)

The Rev. Brian D. Smith in Toronto has created an online resource for more than 36 papers and studies on women in the ministry and other gender issues in the Church. We list all of these papers, most too long for publication in *New Church Life*, so that you can consult them according to your own schedule and inclination. (Page 76)

Roslyn Taylor offers an enthusiastic review of a new book by Joanna Hill, *Spiritual Law: The Essence of Swedenborg’s Divine Providence*. (Page 79).

Church News (page 82) includes:

- An account of the re-dedication of the Washington New Church Building, which was completely transformed and expanded over the summer (photos on page 89)
- The dedication of the new Chara Aurora Cooper Haas Pipe Organ in the Bryn Athyn Cathedral in November
- A report on the Church in Asia, including ground-breaking work in China, which is experiencing a huge surge in Christianity
- Three new books: *A Man of the Field, Volume 3: Spiritual Regeneration Disciplines for Daily Life* by Leon James; *The Lord*, translated by the Rev. Dr. George Dole; and *Spiritual Growth*, published by the Swedenborg Foundation.

Editorials

DILIGENTLY TO READ...

Among all that we celebrate with Emanuel Swedenborg's birthday on January 29th are his iconic *Rules of Life*, which many of us learned as children and strive to live by. An amazing thing about these "Rules" is that Swedenborg apparently never wrote them down. The Rev. Dr. Erik E. Sandstrom offers a fascinating account of how they came into being (page 27), in that there is no record of them anywhere in Swedenborg's papers and manuscripts. Nevertheless, they clearly encapsulate his personal philosophy and the teachings that permeate the Writings.

The first of these *Rules of Life* is: "Diligently to read and meditate on the Word of God." We pride ourselves on being "a reading church," in which we are called upon to read, study and reflect on the Word and the Writings on our own and take what we learn into our lives. Many Church members make time for regular, devotional reading, but it is increasingly challenging in this demanding world. Yet the distractions make it all the more important.

For all that we value New Church education and the guidance we get from sermons, classes and journey groups, the inner strength of the Church depends on regular reading of the Word and the Writings by individuals intent on being taught and led by the Lord.

The December newsletter of the Kempton (Pennsylvania) New Church reported: "The Pastor's Council spent most of its time on how to support families in reading the Word at home with their children. The strength of the Church will always be in the homes. That's where children can best learn to love the Word."

We have countless examples – from within and outside the Church – of how diligent reading and meditation have helped people in their lives.

- Helen Keller wrote: "The Bible gives me a deep, comforting sense that things seen are temporal, and things unseen are eternal."
- Nineteenth century philosopher Soren Kierkegaard said: "When you read God's Word, you must constantly be saying to yourself: It is talking to me and about me."

- Abraham Lincoln once humbly acknowledged: “I am busily engaged in the study of the Bible because it always finds me where I am.”

Reading the Word and the Writings can be daunting for anyone plunging in on his or her own, but the more we can bring a sense that “this is God talking to me,” we cannot help but be enriched and inspired. A good place for anyone to start to cultivate a habit is with the Daily Inspiration sent out by General Church Outreach. (You can sign up to receive it by e-mail the first thing each morning at www.newchurch.org.)

We are told in the Writings how important reading the Word is – not only for our own good but for the connection it makes with the angels in heaven. And it is important not just to read, but to think and reflect humbly about what we are reading, with an affirmative attitude of: what is God saying to me here?

We are blessed in the Church also with the revelation of the internal, spiritual sense of the Word, and at least an inkling of the correspondences with which the angels in heaven delight in reading and studying the Word to all eternity.

This is the Lord’s gift to us – the Word and the revealed spiritual sense of what can often seem obscure and irrelevant in the literal words alone. Our gift back to the Lord is building a relationship with Him by reading His Word, learning from it, being guided by it, and using it to build the Church within our minds and lives.

Consider what the Lord says to us about reading the Word:

“Read the Word and believe in the Lord, and you will see the truths which should constitute your faith and life. Everyone whose soul desires it is capable of seeing the truths of the Word in light.” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 224)

“You cannot be spiritually reborn without some knowledge of the new or spiritual life, of the true things that you ought to believe and the good things that you ought to do. You cannot learn these things on your own, because on your own you can comprehend only things through your physical senses. Your physical senses give you information about the material world and yourself, not about heaven and God. Spiritual knowledge comes only from revelation.” (*New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 177)

“The Lord has given the Word to mankind, and also to angels, so that by means of it they may be with Him. Indeed, the Word is the means by which earth is united to heaven, and heaven to the Lord.” (*Heavenly Secrets* 3476)

Just over 400 years ago the King James Version freed the Bible from church control and brought it into the lives of the people. It was a brave undertaking because anyone then who dared to translate the Bible was often imprisoned or executed. King James changed that – thanks to the encouragement and inspiration of men like Dr. John Rainolds.

Once this Authorized Version was completed and available to the masses

in 1611, Dr. Rainolds wrote a heartfelt letter about the importance of reading the Bible, listening to God's teachings, and living them. A review at the end of a 1979 edition concludes with this excerpt from his letter:

“Divinity, the knowledge of God, is the water of life. God forbid that you should think that divinity consists of words, as a wood doth of trees. True divinity cannot be learned unless we frame our hearts and minds wholly to it. The knowledge of God must be learned of God. We have to use two means, prayers and the reading of the Holy Scriptures – prayers for ourselves to talk with God, and reading to hear God talk with us. We must diligently give ourselves to reading and meditating on the Holy Scriptures. I pray that you may.”

Let us pray that as a church and as individuals we all may “diligently read and meditate on the Word of God” and to take all of that love and truth into our lives in serving the Lord and our neighbor.
(BMH)

NEW CHURCH VIRTUES: MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY

This editorial will conclude the series on New Church Virtues, though many others might be mentioned. The point has been that all virtues, when viewed in light of the Heavenly Doctrine, become New Church virtues. This is because all the goodness and truth that make us human originate in the Lord's Divine Human, and the Divine Human is the main subject of New Church doctrine. The doctrines also explain very fully what we must do in order to receive the gift of human virtue from the Lord (in a word, regenerate).

“Virtue” has become a somewhat antiquated term; the word “values” is more often used now. But as I said in a previous editorial, “values” are more general and vague than “virtues.” People are happy to speak of “family values,” for example, but many are less comfortable talking about the specific virtues which actually go into making strong families – such as religious faith, obeying the commandments (worshiping the Lord, honoring father and mother, faithfulness in marriage, etc.), and being willing to make the self-sacrifice involved in having children and caring for them.

True values become “virtues” when they are actually lived. And this requires going through the combats of temptation – the inner, spiritual struggles required to overcome the tendencies to evil and falsity in our natural heredity and bring our lives under the rule of a conscience formed by spiritual truth.

This brings us to the topic we want to consider in this editorial: masculinity and femininity, the essential difference between them, and how they complement each other. The biological fact of being male or female is not

a virtue, but masculinity and femininity, as developed spiritual qualities, are.

We'll begin with masculinity, since the very word "virtue" refers to it. As students of the Writings well know, there are two Latin words for "man": *homo*, the collective term referring to humans of both sexes (as in *homo sapiens*); and *vir*, meaning a person of the male sex. The word "virtue" comes from that second Latin word, *vir*. This is because virtues do not come naturally or easily to us; to acquire them we have to fight against our own baser instincts. *The weapons we need for this combat are truths; and the essence of masculinity is a love of truth.*

The truth of this is reflected even in the male body, since the physical attributes of men and women correspond to the inner, spiritual nature of each sex.

Because interiors form exteriors after their own likeness, and the masculine form is the form of the understanding, and the feminine is the form of the love of that understanding, it follows that the male has a face, voice, and body different from the female: a sterner face, a rougher voice, a stronger body, and a bearded chin – in general, a form less beautiful than the female. They differ also in their attitudes and their ways. In a word, nothing whatever in them is alike. And yet, in every single part of them there is a capacity for being joined together into a one.
(*Conjugal Love* 33)

Woman's contribution to their mutual union is, in a word, love – specifically, love of the wisdom that forms the essence of masculinity, which she especially seeks in one man whose particular form of wisdom most perfectly complements the quality of love that forms her soul.

"Masculine love is the love of becoming wise. Feminine love is to love that love of becoming wise in the male." (*Conjugal Love* 382)

Women are so formed that the will or love reigns in them more than the understanding, while with men the understanding or reasoning plays the lead role. In each case, "every one of their fibers runs in that direction, and it is their very nature. Consequently the marriage of the two sexes is like that of the will and the understanding in the individual." (*Arcana Coelestia* 568.2)

Of course, men also have a will; they love and feel affection. And women also have an understanding; they think and reason. The difference between the sexes is in which predominates and is the "default" faculty the person trusts and relies on the most. For men it is reason; for women, the perception love gives them.

Obviously there is infinite variety among people and how their minds work. It is foolish to reduce men and women to caricatures of maleness and femaleness.

The world around us, while deriding the stereotypes of the past, has created new stereotypes of male and female, which are even more unreal and

less benign than the stereotypes of the past. Even the deeply spiritual view of the sexes we get in the Writings can be made into something shallower, more static and less living than the reality described; and in the Church we must take care to remember how complex and various the relationship between the sexes is. It is dynamic and mysterious, not cut and dried; and this is its beauty.

Doctrine is the stuff of life, not abstract and rigid theory. Caricatures based on doctrine are still caricatures (although of a higher kind than the grossly sensual and distorted depictions of male and female which are common today).

But the distinction between the ways in which the male and female minds work, although manifested subtly and with great variety, is real, definite and pervasive; “nothing whatever in them is alike.”

This is not something natural science can discern from without, judging by external appearances; but the truth of it, revealed by the Lord in the Writings, can be confirmed and illustrated by observation – including a growing body of scientific studies of the brain and differences in behavior between the two sexes. Recent studies have shown that various maladies, such as ADHD and heart attacks, for example, are manifested differently in females than in males. And the value of different schools for boys and girls is being rediscovered by a growing number of educators in the world around us.

The doctrinal point, though, is not just that men and women are different, but *why* they were created this way. It is in order that a man and a woman may be brought together in a marriage, in which each of them will enter into a degree of human perfection, wholeness, fruitfulness and happiness that neither could achieve alone. *The sexes are not just different, but different in such a way that they complement each other.*

One illustration used in the Writings is how the heart and lungs work together in the body: the heart corresponding to the will, the lungs to the understanding. (*Conjugal Love* 223) Without blood from the heart, the lungs (and the body generally, of course) would not live; but the heart needs the lungs to enrich its blood with oxygen and other nutrients from the air, and to remove impurities from the blood as it circulates through the lungs. In a corresponding way, the affections flowing from a person’s will are purified and nourished by truths in the understanding. (See Part 5 of *Divine Love and Wisdom*). This anatomical fact gives us a clue as to how male and female work together spiritually.

An angel husband from the Most Ancient Church, in which this correspondence was perceived, told Swedenborg:

Her life is in me, and my life is in her. We have two bodies, but one soul. The union between us is like the union of the two tabernacles in the breast which are called the heart and the lungs. She is my heart and I am her lungs. But since when we say heart here we mean love, and when we say lungs we mean wisdom, therefore she

is the love of my wisdom, and I am the wisdom of her love. Her love outwardly clothes my wisdom, and my wisdom is inwardly within her love. Consequently, as you have said, the unity of our souls appears in our faces.” (*Conjugal Love* 75.5)

It is through women, and only women, that the love that unites a man and a woman in a spiritual marriage comes into the world and is able to be received by men. “*There is no conjugal love with the male sex; it is with the female sex alone, and from this sex is transferred into the male.*” (*Conjugal Love* 223)

When a woman’s love is joined to the truth acquired by a man, it is like when warmth is added to the light of the sun falling on the earth in springtime, and the trees leaf out and flower and bring forth fruit. Truth is thus converted into the wisdom of life. In this way, she saves him from the egotism of attributing to himself whatever intelligence he may have acquired – in which case the very truth that constitutes male wisdom would be spoiled by the insanity of self-intelligence. In the words of an angel wife:

We women come by birth into a love for the intelligence of men. If men themselves love their own intelligence, it cannot be united with its proper true love which is found in a wife; and then his intelligence becomes irrational as a result of conceit, and conjugal love in him turns cold. Now what woman can unite her love to a love that is cold? And what man can unite the irrationality of his conceit to a love for intelligence? (*Conjugal Love* 331.2)

The essence of masculinity is a love of truth, and the intelligence and wisdom formed by truth. The essence of femininity is to love the intelligence and wisdom in a man, to embrace it, enwrap it in love, nurture it, and help him bring it forth into the uses of life.

But if there is no love of truth, no real intelligence or wisdom, to be found in men – or if what they really love is just their own cleverness – what is there in them, really, for women to love? “What woman can unite her love to a love that is cold?”

With that in mind, consider how masculinity is viewed in our culture today. Is it defined as loving truth and seeking wisdom? No, that would be “sexist.” Instead, masculine behavior, especially as portrayed in popular entertainment aimed at young men, is associated with vanity, egotism, ruthless ambition, irresponsibility, childishness, lack of respect for women, grossness and violence. What is there in this for women to love? And in so far as men actually conform to this popular caricature of manhood, what is there in them to love women, beyond physical desire?

The popular portrayal of women today is not much better. There seems to be an idea that achieving “equality,” “liberation” and the “empowerment” of women means speaking and acting like men – and not necessarily men at their best. What does womanliness or femininity even mean in an age that

demands that women, to be fulfilled, become like men?

Women need men to be men; not brutish caricatures of men, but lovers of truth, possessors of wisdom. In fact, women need men to be men in order that they may be *women* – since the essence of womanhood is conjugal love, which inspires a longing for marriage with a man.

And men need women to be women, in order that the truth men love may not be just dry theory, or lapse into the irrationality of self-intelligence, but be joined with good, and thus made warm, living, perceptive and fruitful.

Physically, people appear to be at their most masculine or feminine in their early adulthood; but the spiritual qualities of masculinity and femininity represented in the strength and beauty of youth can continue to grow throughout life in this world and even to eternity in heaven.

The two essential qualities that make us human, love and wisdom – which we receive from our Creator, in whom they are perfectly united in a Divine marriage – are received in a distinctly different way by men and women. This is why there are two sexes, and only two. This is why they can be so wonderfully conjoined. And it is why there is no end to that conjunction.

To be human is to be male or female. “Male and female created He them.” And the supreme expression of each sex is when it is joined with its complement. “For this reason a man shall leave father and mother and be joined to his wife: and the two shall become one flesh.” (*Matthew 19:5*) A man in full is a *husband*, a woman in full is a *wife*.

The beauty of this is that everyone can become ever more fully and distinctly masculine or feminine to eternity; more a husband or more a wife. And thus more and more united into one angel; an ever more perfect *image and likeness* of God, in whom Love and Wisdom make One. The potential for this is present from our birth, in the way our minds and even our very souls are formed – that is, as male or female.

In a marriage of truly conjugal love, each partner becomes more and more deeply human, for that love opens the deeper aspects of their minds, and as these are opened, a person becomes more and more human. To become more human is, on the part of a wife, to become more a wife; and on the part of a husband, to become more a husband.

A wife becomes more and more a wife as her husband becomes more and more a husband; however, not so much the reverse. The reason, they said, is that a chaste wife rarely if ever fails to love her husband, but what fails is her being loved by her husband in return. They also said that this failure is attributable to a lack of elevation in his wisdom, which alone receives the love of a wife.

(*Conjugal Love 200*)

Note those last three sentences. Conjugal love will continue to flow into the hearts of wives, but it needs to be able to find what that love desires in husbands who value and seek spiritual, rational and moral wisdom. Young

men, therefore, need to be taught and shown the true meaning of masculinity, not just external, natural representations of it. Their happiness depends on this, because when women are not happy, neither are men.

The Lord wants everyone to be happy, which is why He created us male and female. The endeavor in our time to blur the distinction between men and women, and reduce masculinity and femininity to merely biological categories, or artificial, socially imposed classifications, cannot but result in frustration and sorrow for both sexes. And, in fact, studies have shown that women are *less* happy today than they were before the years of presumed “progress” to which they have been subjected. (Google “women less happy” to see these reports.)

I realize how contrary to the prevailing dogma of the day these ideas about the sexes are. To men, “love of truth” may sound like an unrealistically “intellectual” definition of masculinity. To women, “loving the wisdom of men” may sound like a formula for oppressive patriarchy. But I think both those objections should be allayed by this unusual definition of male intelligence from *Conjugal Love* 331:

“Intelligence is to love his wife only.”

(WEO)

Letters to the Editors

Cause for Alarm

To The Editors:

I would like to commend Michelle Chapin and Kristin Coffin Daum for their articulate passion in opposing the General Church policy of having a male-only clergy. (*New Church Life*, November-December, 2014) They show a commendable desire to sound an alarm. I think they are seeing the organization they love to be in self-destruct! But I plead with them and others of a similar mind: please beware of your passion having the possible effect of blinding you!

The General Church, as an organization, will be healthy to the degree it follows what the Word says. Now what does it say about the priesthood? All concerned have probably read carefully the passages that have been presented to show that the clergy is a masculine only use. (Start with *Conjugal Love* 125 and 163.) Yet some do not agree with this conclusion.

Similarly, there are those who have not accepted the implicit warning that the Lord gives us about marrying someone who is baptized into a different religion, or what He says about allowable divorce and remarriage, or what we are told are domestic/female and forensic/male uses.

The fact that these and other doctrines are the subject of contention is cause for alarm. Should the priesthood, therefore, be doing anything differently? If the General Church does self-destruct, it will be the result of the priesthood failing to uphold what the Word says. In that case it will have fallen short in its charge from the Lord to feed His sheep.

But what if the priesthood, in doing its duty to uphold the Word, is faced with passionate opposition from members of the laity? What if some people simply don't agree with what the priesthood sees to be clearly taught? Despite the grief a priest feels over this upset in the Church, his duty is to keep preaching the truth as he sees it!

The Rev. Christopher R. J. Smith
Kempton, Pennsylvania

Our Doctrinal Environment

To The Editors:

My heart goes out to Michelle Chapin and Kristin Coffin Daum. I empathize with their feelings and agree fully with their extremely well-written, rational and well-reasoned responses. It is all very well to say that we must abide by what the Word teaches. Of course we must. However, the Word does not teach that women should be excluded from the priesthood. This is a man-made doctrine, from their understanding.

I would ask why it is that some of our priests, from *their* understanding of the Word, agree that women should not be excluded from the priesthood? Why do they see things differently from those who wish to maintain the status quo? Are these priests acting from a false doctrine? I think not. I would suggest that *their* understanding has been freed from the constraints of the past.

I would suggest that the reason the majority of our priests would preclude women is due to their personal understanding of the Word, an understanding which rests on the “indoctrination” they have received all their lives in the General Church.

Doctrine is according to our understanding and our understanding is shaped by what we wish to believe and is often heavily influenced by our environment. The environment of the General Church, in the home, in society at large, in our education system, in our Theological School and in our church services is that women may not be priests.

Given that there is nothing in the Word precluding women and that the policy to do so rests on man-made and limited understanding, it is hard to understand the Bishop’s decision, which will only alienate many more people.

It is most disappointing that the Bishop’s decision in his statement in the November-December 2014 issue of *New Church Life* is not supported by conclusive doctrinal arguments. Where are the doctrinal statements supporting such a decision? We get a decision, said to be based on the true doctrine, but we are not given that doctrine. Nor are we told why the doctrine of those priests who support women in the priesthood is false.

Name withheld online by request
Canberra, Australia

A Sense of Balance

To The Editors:

When I received the November-December 2014 issue of *New Church Life* for some reason I was a bit turned off by the “poster children” on the cover. It all seemed a little too preppy for me.

I’ve been born and raised in the Church and always resisted a sense of exclusiveness and/or superior behavior. I know this was **not** your intention, but it was what I read into it with my background.

It is interesting that the two genders were shown – male and female: good and truth, love and faith. Our challenge today is to keep these two qualities in balance. The intellectual or faith should not be superior to love. The offering of Cain was not acceptable; it had to be combined with love – things from the heart.

It’s really pretty simple but important – love of the Lord and love of the neighbor. “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

Reading the two letters about women in the ministry gave me pause – especially when it was said that if you want to grow and attract young people you should be cautious about exclusiveness.

The last thing I noted was the resignation of Anna Woofenden. Is it possible that this resignation of a gifted teacher with an impeccable lineage could be the “canary in the coal mine”? I hope not.

Kenneth Blair
Sarver, Pennsylvania

The Gift of Our Freedom

To The Editors:

We talk about the Writings being a rational religion, which it is. But there are many things that are hard to understand. I think we avoid these things in fear of hurting beliefs. But I think if we talk about these things and try to figure them out, we learn and understand them better.

Here are some examples: The Writings tell us that we are nothing but evil. If this is so how do we choose to be good and follow the Lord?

On the other hand, the Writings say we are not to appropriate either good or evil. The good is from the Lord and the evil is from hell.

The Writings say that even babies are in some evil but how can this be? The Lord made them. But it is not the baby who has evils, but the hereditary evils attached to him or her. Babies are in good from the Lord.

So why do we have hereditary evils? This is in order that we can be free. The Lord is on one side and hereditary evil is on the other. We choose. If we had no evils and were just good by nature, without giving it much thought or striving to be good, we would be like puppets. We make ourselves what we are, but with God's help and by our choices.

But why do we have so many of these evils and why do they multiply one generation after another? Why are they so hard to get rid of? And why do the Writings say that our "as of self" is evil? The Lord gave us this "as of self" so we could be something – so that we can act as if of ourselves. Again, otherwise we would be like puppets, or animals that follow their affection and have no power to choose.

So if this is important, why do babies who die young and the people of the Most Ancient Church make it to heaven without any chance of going to hell? I think the Lord needs a lot of these innocents in heaven who don't know much about evil. But I think He also needs people who have made their natural life strong by working and suffering to shun their evils.

Maybe the reason the most ancients fell away from the Church generation after generation was because they didn't have this strength.

I think the "as of self" can be either good or evil. It is evil when a person takes what is the Lord's and claims it as his own. Actually his life and all his power and ability are the Lord's with him. If the Lord's life wasn't continually flowing into him he would be nothing. But the Lord's gift of life and the ability to choose is good.

Charis P. Cole
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

A New Beginning

A New Year's Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Andrew M. T. Dibb

Lessons: Luke 2:21-33; Genesis 12:1-9; True Christian Religion 89

Now the Lord had said to Abram:

*“Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house,
to a land that I will show you.” (Genesis 12:1)*

Human beings have a remarkable ability: they can look back over time and forward into the future. The New Year is a time when we particularly like to do that. We look back over the past year or years and evaluate them. Then we look forward and try to work out how to avoid the pitfalls of the past and accomplish new states of satisfaction. In this sermon I want to connect an event in the past with the promise of the future, partly so that we can understand our present, and partly so that we can, in the present moment, prepare for the future.

For many people the most important event of the immediate past was the celebration of Christmas. For the better part of a month people reorganized their lives, their homes and their finances to focus on celebrating the Lord’s advent into this world. But when it is all over, when the visitors go home, the decorations come down, the church services return to normal, we have a tendency to put Christmas aside for another 11 months until the next one.

We may forget all about it, except for one other festivity at roughly the same time: the New Year, when people look ahead to the coming year, often planning on how to do things differently from the past to achieve goals that may have been unfulfilled in previous years, to change their habits, and so on. Like Christmas, these intentions are often filed away in our memories and forgotten about until the next New Year brings them back to our attention.

The Christmas story often seems very self-contained: the shepherds, after visiting the infant Lord in Bethlehem, returned “glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, as was told unto them.” (*Luke 2:20*)

At Christmas we look back to the events of the Lord's life, and consider its implications in our own lives. At New Year's we look into our own future to see how to make the implications of Christmas change our lives and make us different.

Similarly, the wise men, after they had presented their gifts to the Lord were "warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, [and] they departed into their own country another way." (*Matthew 2:12*)

Sometimes at Christmas we extend our readings to include other stories related to the Lord as a very young child; for example, the story of His presentation in the Temple at Jerusalem, and Simeon's and Anna's rejoicing over Him. Less often we hear the story of Herod's vicious murder of the infant boys in Bethlehem and the flight of Mary, Joseph and the Lord into Egypt. But after this the story seems to stop. The only other image we have of the Lord as a child is when He was 12

years old and went to Jerusalem.

We know very little about the Lord's life as a child, at least from the historical point of view. Twice in the *Gospel of Luke* we are told that He grew; after His visit to the Temple at eight days old, Luke says:

And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. (2:20)

And 12 years later, returning to Galilee with Mary and Joseph, Luke says:

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (2:52)

So begins the narrative of the Lord's life in this world. His birth was, for Him, a new beginning, a new chapter in His relationship with people. Before the Lord was born, people could only see Him in shadow, in the images given in the Old Testament – images that sometimes covered over His true nature.

At times He is shown as wrathful and angry, sorry that He created people. At other times He is loving, peaceful and forgiving. It is difficult to get a clear reading on exactly who the Lord was from these conflicting pictures. But when He came into the world, He put on a new form, a human body just like ours, from which and through which He could interact with people. He could walk among us, give us His wisdom and example, and show us His power.

So Christmas, then, is the story of a new phase of life for the Lord, and a new phase with us when we turn to Him in our own lives. At Christmas we look back to the events of the Lord's life, and consider its implications in our own lives. At New Year's we look into our own future to see how to make the

implications of Christmas change our lives and make us different.

We can only really change our lives if we look backward to see where we have come from. Understanding the events surrounding the Lord's birth helps us to see the things we need to do to progress. Yet in the New Testament there is so little about the Lord's infancy. Beautiful stories as they are, they don't give us a tremendous insight into what we need to do to make spiritual progress.

In the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Church we are asked to look even further back in the Word than the Christmas story. We are invited back to another new beginning, to a time before the Children of Israel and the Hebrew nation even existed. We look to the time of Abram, even before he travelled south into the land of Canaan. In a sense, this story is to the Old Testament what Christmas is to the New. This foundational story not only tells us about the call of Abram, but in its inner meaning it speaks of the very earliest states of the Lord's infancy. By studying it carefully, we can also see what the beginning states of our spiritual rebirth are going to be.

The story begins with Abram, living in Haran, north of the land of Canaan. Abram was an ordinary person. He lived with his wife and his nephew, Lot. We know nothing about Abram in Haran, except that he must have prospered. Then, one day, apparently without warning, Jehovah spoke to him, saying:

Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. (*Genesis 12:1*)

The teachings of the New Church tell us that while this event actually happened in history, it also foreshadowed the way the Lord, as a very small infant, became aware of an inner voice that would direct Him through life the way Jehovah directed Abraham, Isaac and Jacob through their lives. This inner voice was the voice of Jehovah, the Lord's Divine Soul from which He was conceived.

At conception, every person's soul, which comes through the person's

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father, begins to clothe itself with a body drawn from the materials of the mother. This body is not only the physical body, but also has some of our inclinations and characteristics. These include not only our human strengths but also our weaknesses, which have the potential of drawing us down to hell. When a baby is born, he or she is a combination of characteristics of both parents, including their good and bad qualities. But on a higher level the soul, which gives us the ability to receive life from the Lord, remains intact. It is above our consciousness; nothing we can do will ever affect it. Mostly our lives are lived out in the world of the body.

But in the Lord's case, His soul came from Jehovah Himself. It was a divine soul that clothed itself with a body from Mary during her pregnancy. As with us, the Lord took from Mary not only the natural things of His physical body, but also her characteristics and inclinations, including her human weakness and inclination toward evil. He was exactly the same as we are. The difference, however, was that the Lord's soul, because it was divine, could penetrate into His conscious mind and make its presence felt there.

In the story of Abram, each time Jehovah speaks to him, it is a picture of the Lord's Divine Soul making its presence known and felt in the Lord's conscious human mind. This is what is happening in the story of Jehovah calling Abram to leave his country, family and father's house.

We don't know exactly when this took place in the Lord, but we do know that He was very young. The call of Abram is described as the Lord's first awareness of the Divine within Himself. In all likelihood He was still an infant and had no clear understanding of the relationship between His Divine Soul and human body. But what He did know was that there were certain states in that body that He had to leave behind if He was to grow up to fulfill His mission on earth.

These things are described in Abram leaving behind his country, family and father's house. Abram was called upon to make a leap of faith to change his state. Babies and little children tend to focus primarily on their bodies: they are hungry, hot or cold, wet or dry. They don't like to be left alone and love being picked up and held. Buried deeply within all this, and still inactive, are the potential states of human evil that will eventually reveal themselves to us so that we can fight against them and remove them.

In the case of the Lord, He became aware of these weak human states at a very early age, and recognized that He would have to put them aside so that He could come into new states of love and wisdom which would be given to Him by Jehovah as He grew. Thus He would have to leave His father's house and go to a land that He would be shown.

So the story of Christmas, as an event in the past, reminds us not only of the Lord's birth in the world, but also of the beginning of His lifelong process

of overcoming states of evil. This process actually began in His infancy and extended right up to His death on the cross.

When we celebrate Christmas, especially when we focus on the Lord taking on the infant human form, we often stop to remember that as the Lord was born into the world so He is born into each one of us as well. And as Jehovah spoke to Abram, so the Lord, through the Word, speaks to each of us, calling us to put aside our human weaknesses, our tendencies toward evil – to shun selfishness, anger, hatred, revenge and all the other destructive states that so often dominate our minds. We too have to leave behind the things that block our spiritual growth and development – things that hold us back.

There are a great many of these things in our lives holding us back.

Perhaps the primary difference between us and the Lord is that He realized this as an infant, while with us it takes years for a fully developed adult mind to realize it. The teachings for the New Church tell us that evils cannot be removed unless they appear. This doesn't mean that we have to commit the evils, but we need to explore and examine ourselves to see what our inclinations are.

We are challenged to ask ourselves what we would do if we were not afraid of the consequences of our actions. What would we do if we weren't afraid of the law, or of our neighbors, or for our reputations or jobs? By searching ourselves in that way, it becomes possible to see our inclinations toward evils, and begin the process of putting them out of our lives.

So Christmas brings with it both joy and challenge: joy that the Lord is born into the world and into us, and the challenge we face as a result. It is on the subject of facing our spiritual challenge that I want to turn to the other festival we celebrate: the beginning of a New Year. The New Year brings with it the promise of a new state, a commitment to change aspects of our lives so life may become more fulfilling, with hope for a brighter future.

It is as the New Year breaks that the challenges of our spiritual life have to be faced and overcome. The story of the Lord's battle to overcome the tendencies

As Jehovah spoke to Abram, so the Lord, through the Word, speaks to each of us, calling us to put aside our human weaknesses, our tendencies toward evil – to shun selfishness, anger, hatred, revenge and all the other destructive states that so often dominate our minds.

When the Lord is born in us, and as we commit ourselves to live according to His Word, so He fortifies us as well, and gives us the ability to resist in our temptations toward evil.

toward evil that He inherited from Mary began in His infancy, in the story of the call of Abram. It is through the development of Abram's story that we see the Lord led from one state to another until His tendencies were completely expelled and the Divine could be fully present in His human form. So it is with us. The recognition of the Lord's birth into our lives brings to mind our own shortcomings and the necessity of change.

Change is difficult. We have to fight against deeply ingrained habits of thought, feelings and action. We have

to learn to curb our natural responses to things in order to do what is right rather than what we think we would like to do. Basically we have to break down the barriers between the Lord and ourselves, and let Him into our lives, giving us love instead of hatred, and peace instead of conflict.

Change is difficult, and this is perhaps why so many people make grand resolutions at New Year's, and then give up on them soon afterward. So the Lord helps us in that state by giving us hope – the promise for the future. After Jehovah had spoken to Abram and told him to leave his father's house, He made him a promise: should Abram obey, then Jehovah would show him the way. He would lead Abram to a land that He, Jehovah, would show him, and there, Jehovah says:

I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. (*Genesis 12: 2,3*)

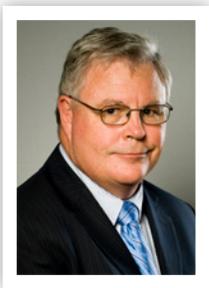
It is this hope that sustained Abram along the journey of his life. He obeyed and Jehovah fulfilled every detail of His promise. So it was with the Lord, who, having that first insight that He needed to leave worldly and physical things behind, had the fortitude to fight the temptations that assaulted Him along the course of His life. And in time, after the passion of the cross, He rose again as the Savior of the world.

So it is with us. When the Lord is born in us, and as we commit ourselves to live according to His Word, so He fortifies us as well, and gives us the ability to resist in our temptations toward evil. Gradually, over our entire lifetime, the Lord makes it possible for us to chip away at our evil inclinations, until they are broken down and the Lord flows into us with His blessing and peace.

On the calendar Christmas and New Year come only once in a year, and they provide us with a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the birth of the Lord into the world and into our lives, and then to make anew the resolutions to follow Him with hope for the future. But in our spiritual life we do not have to wait for the calendar dates of Christmas and New Year. We can, at any time, grant the Lord access to our lives and allow Him to inspire us to change, and draw from Him the power to enact that change. In this way, every day is Christmas and every day is New Year.

May your New Year be filled with the blessing of the Lord's presence!

Amen.



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Building Spiritual Reserves

A Sermon by the Rev. David H. Lindrooth

*Lessons: Genesis 41:17-36; Matthew 25:1-13;
Arcana Coelestia 1906 (portions)*

The kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but those who were wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. (*Matthew 25: 1-3*)

The Word is filled with stories dealing with scarcity in different forms. These stories point out that there are many times in life when we are confronted by various forms of insufficiency or lack of resources in our spiritual lives.

But what is meant by spiritual scarcity? What does it feel like when we are spiritually running on empty? Fundamentally, the Writings describe these states as times when we are lacking what we need to actively live a spiritually healthy life.

In explaining the famine in the Joseph story, the Heavenly Doctrines state that a famine symbolizes “an absence of religious knowledge or thoughts and a consequent deprivation of truth.” (*Arcana Coelestia 5279*) This is talking about times when we know what we should be doing but simply lack the energy or motivation to do it. It is almost like the truth is completely absent or paralyzed in our life. This is followed by a sense of discouragement and lack of motivation that is normally present in our lives, encouraging us to act upon what is good.

Think of a writer assigned an article or paper who is experiencing writer’s block. He spends hours staring at a blank page. As the time passes this is met with increasing discouragement. Writer’s block is an external phenomenon. But there are times when we experience something similar in relation to our spiritual life.

We go to church, but don’t seem to get anything out of the experience other than feeling negative or critical. Or we read, but nothing seems to sink

in. We simply struggle with feeling motivated to serve usefully, doing even simple acts of kindness. These are times when we are experiencing a spiritual famine.

What is really going on is that we are experiencing states when heavenly loves that normally motivate us are shut down by a welling up of falsity because of states of temptation. The Writings point out: “When falsities are present, no truths can remain.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 5217) At its core this is caused by a welling up of selfish feelings inspired by hell. Such temptations can be precipitated by all sorts of things in the course of our daily lives.

Jesus told the parable of the virgins to help us build up the reserves to bridge these states, lifting us up, helping us cope and deepening the breadth and reach of our spirituality. But at first glance there seems to be something harsh about the parable of the 10 virgins. They were probably very young women. They all had lamps, and the lamps were complete. They all slept when the bridegroom didn't show up as expected. The only evidence of the five virgin's foolishness was the simple fact they did not have enough reserves. Wasn't this excusable in light of their age and lack of experience?

The reality is that the Lord gave this parable in order to help. It seems that the shock value is simply to help us wake up and notice that the process of building our reserves is a necessary and important part of our daily routines. The warning is imbedded in the story because it is important to build spiritual reserves when we are experiencing times of spiritual abundance and plenty. The reality is that when things are going great, we are most likely to neglect to attend to the routines needed to prepare for and ensure that we do well when things aren't so great.

In stories like this it is always helpful to remember that the Divine Author was born on earth not to condemn or punish, but rather to save us. We are taught that the end of Divine providence is a heaven from the human race and that He is unceasingly operating for the sole purpose of leading people to heavenly happiness. There is nothing of Divine Love that seeks anything other than conferring the blessings of heavenly happiness to all the Lord's children.

Key to understanding how to build our spiritual reserves is knowing what those reserves are. In the story of the 10 virgins each had a lamp that was complete. In the spiritual sense each virgin symbolizes a person who is a member of a church and involved in its life at some level. The lamps represent truths – teachings, thoughts and facts about what is right and wrong that come from the Word. The fact that all the virgins had lamps indicates that they each possessed a basic knowledge and understanding of the truths of their church.

So the virgins represent people who all have learned truths from the Word and have thoughts and ideas about who the Lord is and what His purposes are for life. In essence the 10 virgins symbolize a group of people just like us who

attend church and enjoy thinking about the truths of faith.

But it is interesting that even though all the lamps were in working order, five of them still failed. They didn't provide the light they were designed to shed for the wedding feast. And so for us, the virgins with lamps without fuel represent those times when we simply don't have the spiritual resources to thrive in difficult times. The teachings for our church state that the oil required by the lamps represents the good of charity and love that is required to be present with the truths of faith. (*Arcana Coelestia* 4638)

Essentially the parable is saying that the reason the virgins with no reserves of oil were rejected as foolish is that their thoughts and the understanding they had developed from the Word and through the church had no connection with the desire to apply those truths to benefit others. Without that commitment to life, the truths themselves yield no light. The truths are then empty and devoid of spiritual life. If the lamp of one's understanding doesn't burn that means the truths are unable to shed any spiritual light for one's life.

So why was it not possible for the virgins with the oil to share what they had with the ones in need? The reason is that the Lord alone is the one true spiritual source of love and life. This is something that the Lord shares directly with people through a one-on-one immediate relationship with Him.

A person becomes spiritual in the degree that he or she learns to turn to the Lord to receive that life. In essence the choice to turn to the Lord with the effort to use truths for the benefit of others is what makes a person truly human. Essentially, no one can make that choice for us. No one can provide that life for us other than the Lord Himself.

In the story, to purchase oil for the lamps is a directive to us, in times of spiritual abundance, to commit to using these truths to share the Lord's love with others. Acting on the truths of faith when we are well prepares us to be able to act when times are tough. But how? How does a commitment to live according to the truth when we are experiencing times of plenty carry over and help us when we are in need?

Here the Writings offer some uniquely precious truths and teach us that there is more to it than a simple matter of developing good habits. We are taught that there are special affections that the Lord plants deep within us that are critical for carrying us through these hard times where we would otherwise feel spiritually empty.

These affections are given to us by the Lord and are distinguished by their being uniquely receptive of the Lord's Divine life. We are taught that these affections are planted so deeply within us that they are not able to be harmed by the ups and downs of our lives, nor by the negativity that assaults us when we are struggling in temptation. They are said to be the basis of what makes us

human because they give us the ability to recognize what is from the Lord and respond to situations in ways that convey His goodness and truth.

These affections are called “remains” or sometimes “remnants” because once the Lord plants them in our hearts they *remain* there permanently and are available to stimulate our lives even in times of struggle or when we feel empty. This also means that these affections are there for us when we need them most.

The story of Joseph when he is storing up one fifth of “the fat of the land” in preparation for a famine represents our storing away these deep affections so that they remain for us and provide us with the reserves we need when times become tough. These remains are implanted in childhood any time a child is drawn in and engages with worship, or with environments of innocence that reflect the Lord and His love.

For infants this could be an environment where a mother is simply nursing her child in a sphere of innocence. For a child, this could be at church where people are singing and worshipping, or it could be at school or at home. It could be a time when a family is reaching out and serving others in some special way.

Remains are implanted and strengthened during our lives as adults too. Reading the Word and reflecting on the Lord’s teachings create conditions for the Lord to plant these affections. They are established and grow in the measure that the person actually acts on and uses these concepts of truth to help others.

The parable of the virgins ends with the words: “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.” (*Matthew 25:13*) These words have special symbolism in the New Church. They suggest that as we develop in the practice of using the truths we are given by the Lord for charitable purposes we are granted a growing sense of eagerness to live according to the commandments that comprise our faith. This eagerness becomes the basis of our spiritual reserves, helping us to be active and productive in society even in times of darkness.

The wedding feast is a picture of the kingdom of heaven and its life which the Lord desires to share with all. One way of defining the Church is as a gathering of people who share an environment that develops, strengthens and nurtures the deep affections and life that the Lord alone can give us.

Think of the deep sustaining beauty the Lord provides for a church that offers His love like that. As we develop in our commitment and ability to use the truths the Lord gives us as a lamp to proclaim His love, we become true participants in the wedding feast – one where we are invited to help share the

eternal gifts that the Lord offers to all.

“Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!”
(*Revelation 19:9*)



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OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

CONATUS

This word means “endeavor” and is often so rendered in English translations of the Writings. In every affection and thought, indeed in every natural thing, there is something spiritual – a constant effort inflowing from the spiritual world to come forth and subsist by ultimating itself in forms of use; one which seeks to do so by setting in action the necessary active and reactive forces. This effort is what is meant by “conatus.” It is not force or motion, but that which animates force and through it initiates motion; and if it fails, activity and motion cease.

In man, conatus is the will united with the understanding; living forces are the motor fibers; and motion is action. The spiritual world is therefore the world of conatus and the natural world of motion. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 5173: 2-3, 8911; *Divine Love and Wisdom* 218, 219)

The Mystery of Swedenborg's Rules of Life

*The Rev. Dr. Erik E. Sandstrom
Acting Curator Swedenborgiana*

Do you remember Swedenborg's *Rules of Life*? Here they are, also in Swedish for the few nostalgic Swedish readers of *New Church Life*:

- Diligently to read and reflect on the Word of God
- To be content with God's providence
- To observe a proper behavior
- To obey what is commanded and keep your conscience pure
- To attend faithfully to your office and duties
- To be useful to society in general
- Att flitigt läsa och öfvertänka Guds ord
- Att vara nöjd med försynens skickelse
- Att iakttaga ett värdigt uppförande
- Att lyda buden och bevara ett rent samvete
- Att trofast fullgöra sina ämbetsplikter
- Samt att vara en nyttig samhällsmedlem

How many of you have received these sometime during your education or upbringing in the New Church? Do you still have them in your house somewhere? Many of you will know the story of how they came about. Yes, Swedenborg proudly presented them to the king and queen in gratitude for all their help during the troublesome Gothenburg trials, and they honored him with a golden snuff box.

Just kidding. Nothing of the sort! Instead, the original of these *Rules of Life* has never been found! Not even with all of Swedenborg's material now available on the web can we find these rules in Swedenborg's own papers, or his own hand. So even though they have been part of the religion curriculum in all our church schools, and been the subject of numerous talks at Swedenborg



birthday banquets and other occasions¹; and even though the original source of these rules can be read in *Tafel's Documents*, vol. 1, pp. 12-29, namely where the Eulogy on Swedenborg's death is printed;² there remains not one shred of evidence in Swedenborg's own papers or manuscripts.

Instead, these rules were gathered by a colleague of Swedenborg's from his Board of Mines days, where he had served for 30 years or so (ca. 1717 to 1747). Swedenborg, just a 29-year-old in 1717 and still called Emanuel Svedberg, was chummy with King Charles XII at Lund, in south central Sweden. This was due to the influence of Christopher

Polhammar, some 27 years Svedberg's senior, whose prominence earned him access to the king. Polhammar became Polhem³ after his ennoblement in 1716.

King Charles XII had returned from the disastrous war against Peter the Great. He had brilliantly beaten Peter at the Battle of Narva (1700) but then lost badly to him at Pultava (1709). He had then escaped to Turkey, hoping to raise another army. He was interned, ransomed, and finally snuck home, but was too unpopular to return to his Stockholm palace.

So he stuck it out at a palace in Lund in the western province of Värmland, where he engaged Polhammar, the "Archimedes of the North," and his assistant Emanuel Svedberg, to drag war ships overland to attack the Norwegians at Idde Fjord. "But with the help of Polhem and Svedberg they were moved overland on brush bundles and causeways and small adjacent lakes; by July nearly all the ships had been hauled to Iddefjorden."⁴

Polhammar and Svedberg were also printing the *Daedalus Borealis*,⁵ which pleased the king no end. Young Svedberg was the editor, and inserted the first

1 See at: <http://www.heavenlydoctrines.org/dtSearch.html>

2 The rules occur just one third through the Eulogy, on p. 18, Tafel Vol. i: You can also search for it in The Academy Documents Concerning Swedenborg, compiled by Bishop Alfred Acton and Beryl Briscoe, now fully searchable, <http://digitalcollections.swedenborglibrary.org/awweb/main.jsp?smd=2&nid=155/156/161>. This is accessed also by searching the web: Swedenborg Library, click Digital Collections (left column, same again center, then, Swedenborgiana, then Academy Documents.

3 Portrait of Christopher Polhem, 1741, by Scheffer.

4 Quote from Otto Sjögren, *Svensk Historia*, Swedish History, Stockholm 1911, p. 159; translation by EES

5 The Northern *Daedalus*, *Daedalus* was the Greek fellow who escaped by not flying too close to the sun, as his son Icarus did. The magazine, 1714 to 1717, was one of the first scientific journals in history, still continued to this day. Issues from the 20th century make numerous references and quotes from Swedenborg's originals.

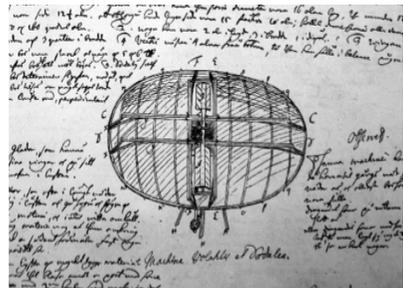
reference to his flying machine of 1714.⁶ So the king ennobled Polhammar to become Polhem, and took his suggestion to reward young Svedberg. The first offer was too vague, because it could be turned down by others, so Svedberg had the audacity to send it back for clarification.



When it was clear enough – rejecting the other two offers which included a professorship at Uppsala in Mathematics (“I am not qualified enough,” he said), Emanuel Svedberg accepted the post of “extraordinary assessor of the Bergkollegium.” But extraordinary just meant “without pay,” i.e. sort of like an auditor, probably just a pain in the neck to the others!

Shortly thereafter Charles died in 1719 attacking Norway. His successor, daughter Queen Ulrika Elenora, Svedberg’s coeval, ennobled him that same year,⁷ so he now began to attend the House of Nobles. Still, Swedenborg remained in limbo as far as having a salary. Since Charles XII (typical portrait) had become so unpopular, Svedberg’s appointment to Extraordinary Assessor was meeting resistance. But after 1719 with the ennoblement by the queen, and attending the House of Nobles in his pocket, he was encouraged to pester the royalty to become a fully active and paid member of the Bergskollegium, the Board of Mines.

Mining was a federal or crown institution, and there were only four positions of Assessor – a little like an attorney today. Finally he met with success. When the next Assessor died in 1724, Swedenborg took his place, at age 36, and now he had a salary! Down the line, his step-mother would leave him as part-owner of a mine; so in his later years, with the addition of a pension, he was providentially well enough off to pursue his last and crowning role as revelator, instrument for the Second Advent of the Lord.



6 The Daedalus journal does not have the 1714 drawing we all may have seen. 2014 was the 300th anniversary of his plane!

7 Swedenborg Epic, p.1 Queen Elenora, Charles XII’s daughter, who coincidentally was both born and baptized exactly on the same dates as Emanuel Svedberg, but at different locations; she ennobled Emanuel Svedberg who became Swedenborg, after Charles XII death, all in 1719, mostly because of Bishop Jesper Svedberg’s, his father, extraordinary services to the Crown. Emanuel and all brothers and sister now became Swedenborg; by then Emanuel was the oldest surviving brother, since older Albert had died (1696), as well as fifth born Daniel, (1691), and Eliezer (1716). The remaining siblings were Anna, Emanuel, Hedwig, Catharina, Jesper and Margaretha.

“I bear true witness that the Lord has shown Himself in the presence of me, His servant,” (*True Christian Religion* 779), an *amanuensis* for the descent of the “Doctrine of the New Jerusalem” seen by John as the Holy City, (*Apocalypse Revealed* 896), that city constituting “The Word in heaven, ... Heaven’s Doctrine..... in these books.” (*New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* 7)

Swedenborg had served on the Board of Mines so loyally, and with so many publications, that the king, now Frederick I, offered him the post of Director of the Board of Mines. Swedenborg, whose spiritual eyes had been opened first in 1743, was by then, in 1747, well into his spiritual journey. He had finished and printed the first two parts of the *Worship and Love of God* (1745), which Samuel Coleridge later called the greatest poem ever written.

He had prepared for the Magnum Opus, the *Arcana*, by making several unpublished studies.⁸ None of these, not even the largest one, *The Word Explained*, (*not* the same as *Apocalypse Explained*), was ever printed. So, after humbly declining the royal offer of Directorship at the Bergskollegium, Swedenborg asked King Frederick instead for a half-salary pension, which was readily granted.



By this time, Swedenborg had moved into his new Hornsgatan quarters.⁹ Today a plaque on the wall nearby commemorates his residence. When he died in London, in 1772, eventually several cart loads of his books and papers were trundled off to the Royal Academy of Sciences. That sets the stage for the Rules of Life. Samuel Sandels was to give the eulogy. He began to examine Swedenborg’s papers and somehow he extracted from them the Rules of Life!

Samuel Sandels (1724-1784, ennobled 1772), a former colleague and fellow Assessor of

8 *The Principia*, 1736, dealing with Copper and Iron, plus anatomically inspired works, *The Soul’s Domain*, its Economic working etc. – *the Animal Kingdom* to you seniors! The works never published, preparing for the *Arcana*, were: *The History of Creation*, also called *The Adversaria* or *Word Explained*, *The Messiah About To Come*, *Index Biblicus* – a vast alphabetical index of the internal sense; *On Gad and Asher*, *Schmidius Marginalia* - notes he made in his Latin Bible margins, *The Greek Religion*, *Experientiae Spirituales* or *Spiritual Diary* and *De Miraculis*. Swedenborg also renewed his studies in Hebrew.

9 Maybe as early as 1743. The property would today run into busy traffic, since the property lines have altered. A replica of Swedenborg’s Summer House sits just about where the original stood, inaugurated in the 1990s, inside a gated courtyard surrounded by flats. The original Summer House was moved to Skansen, Stockholm, in 1896, where New Church visitors can pretend to idolize Saint Swedenborg, just to amuse themselves by irritating our critics! The original house where Swedenborg lived was razed, though it was offered to any New Church organization in 1890s.

Emanuel, gave the Eulogium to Swedenborg on October 7, in the Great Hall of the House of Nobles, Stockholm. It was printed on October 23, 1772, headed: "Stockholm, October 7, a Eulogy over Assessor Emanuel Swedenborg, the deceased member of the Academy of Sciences, was held in the Great Hall of the House of Nobles, by Councilor and Knight of the Royal North Star order, Mr. Samuel Sandels." Then followed the Eulogy.

So how did Sandels find the *Rules of Life*? He says he had examined Swedenborg's papers, even read through some of his books, presumably the theological ones, and gathered these rules of life which he found "in several places." Well, since no "smoking gun" listing of the *Rules of Life* has been found anywhere, we assume that Sandels simply gathered them from hither and yon! And the mystery deepens, since in 1810, these same rules were claimed to be seen among Swedenborg's papers at Mr. Shearesmith's, in London, where Swedenborg had lodged until he passed away, March 1772.

Two sets? One seen by Sandels, and another 38 years later in London? So there have to be some originals somewhere. These London *Rules of Life* were inspected by Robert Armitstead, in London, on November 28, 1811, so many years after Swedenborg's death, and forwarded to the Rev. James Clarke, of Manchester.¹⁰ Rev. Robert Hindmarsh received the anecdotes of Swedenborg from him, and printed them in his 1861 *Rise and Progress*, (p. 473) but did not include the *Rules of Life*.

The same event was briefly recorded in an early New Church publication, *The Intellectual Repository*, 1817, p. 19. Clearly, none of this could have been seen by Sandels in 1772. He presumably gathered the same rules from elsewhere. Perhaps Swedenborg just jotted these rules down to hang up wherever he resided. We suppose the rules remained the same. An actual though elusive original sounds plausible.

So here is what Sandels actually said: "Add to all this a genuinely good disposition, proved by the *Rules of Life* which I found among Mr. Swedenborg's manuscripts in more than one place, and which he wrote down for his own use: First, diligently to read and meditate upon the word of God; secondly, to be content under the dispensations of God's Providence; thirdly to observe a propriety of behavior, and preserve the conscience pure; fourthly, to obey what is commanded; to attend faithfully to one's office and other duties, and

10 *Academy Documents Concerning Swedenborg*, #1517.11, see web access above, in footnote #2.

Digital Collections update

Hidden away in the library's Swedenborgiana vault is an amazing collection of letters and documents which were actually signed by Emanuel Swedenborg over 250 years ago. A few were also written by him. Dated from 1726 – 1756, these documents present an intriguing view of Swedenborg's activities as an official on Sweden's Board of Mines.

However, the contents of

some of these documents had never been recorded. A grant was recently received from the Carpenter Fellowship Fund to translate eight documents, including 29 pages of material, and Rev. Dr. Erik E. Sandstrom, our Swedenborgiana Curator, agreed to take on the project. As expected, the greatest challenge was to decipher the original handwriting and produce Swedish transcripts

of the text. Then came the task of translating the formal, 18th century Swedish into modern English. The tedious process has been completed and we now possess English translations for all the remaining documents signed by Swedenborg in this collection.

Images of these documents with their new translations can now be found in the Swedenborg Library Digital

Collections at www.swedenborglibrary.org/digital (Select: Swedenborgiana> Swedenborg Documents> Swedenborg Letters and Documents> Recently Translated Documents).



From the Swedenborgiana collection, 1740

From the Swedenborg Library web page: www.swedenborglibrary.org



in addition to make oneself useful to society in general.” (Tafel, ii, p. 18)

Even if we cannot find an original list, can we still recreate these Rules from “Swedenborg’s papers”? The Writings say the same rules, everywhere! “Read the Word.” “Be content with your lot.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 8478) “Behave in a friendly manner.” (*Heavenly Doctrines* 92) “Have a true conscience.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1063, *True Christian Religion* 666) “Obey the commandments.” (*Heavenly Doctrines* 106, 129 – referring to *Arcana passim*) “Perform duties for the sake of use and the neighbor.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 7038) “Enter into uses in society.” (*Ibid.* 1103.2, *True Christian Religion* 406) We see that the *Rules of Life* could easily have been re-created by Sandels, even without an original listing by Swedenborg.¹¹

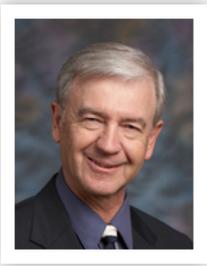
We close with some more of Sandel’s Eulogy:

“Our Swedenborg was not satisfied with knowing much; he desired to know more than can be comprehended by any man here below, in that state of perfection which belongs to him while the soul dwells in a frail material body.

“Of the gentle and earnest piety of his soul we have a striking proof in his *Rules of Life*. More need not be said on this head, than that he kept these vows.... At no time did Swedenborg insult his Maker with upbraiding that his

11 Portrait, Emanuel Swedenborg, artist unknown, 1771. Lately turned up after centuries of private ownership.

fate was to live in an evil world and with a wicked generation. He received life with thankfulness, partook temperately of all its lawful pleasures, did his duty, and took care while living with the world to keep himself unspotted from its evil.... He lived a life of utmost purity That he was no harsh despiser of the sex, we know well from his writings; and that his life was in agreement with his books we also know. The loveliest descriptions of female grace and beauty we have ever met with, are contained in his works, chiefly in his treatise on *Conjugal Love*.” (Tafel, i.p.12-29, Document 4)



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What Is New Church Education and Why Should We Care?

The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.

Assistant To The Bishop With Oversight Of General Church Education

When you hear the phrase “New Church education” I wonder what comes to mind. I believe many people think of a system of schools, from preschool through college. Others might think of Sunday School settings, videos and other child-related programs sponsored by the General Church. Still others may think of a church-sponsored commitment to education as a core use.

For the purposes of this article, I ask you to set aside all those manifestations of New Church education. There is value in rising above any attendance or budgetary issues, as well as debates about the best delivery methods or curricular decisions, to focus on the use itself.

What does the Lord’s Word say about it? How would He have us hold it? When we open ourselves to this exploration, we discover things not only about the use, but also about who is to carry it out, and some inspiring descriptions about how to do so. The first half of this article focuses on defining the use. The second half, to be published in the next issue of *New Church Life*, will delve into teachings about who and how.

EIGHT WAYS OF FRAMING THE USE:

For the purposes of this article, I would like to offer eight ways of defining the use of New Church education. Each one springs from a few key quotes in the Word, and seeks to capture in simple form what the Lord is calling us to rally around.

1. “Bringing the Lord to Children and Children to the Lord.”

There is a famous episode from the Lord’s life recorded in three of the Gospels, where parents brought children to Him “so that He might touch them.” (*Mark* 10:13-16) The disciples, as you may recall, rebuked those parents, apparently thinking that the Lord was too important to be bothered with children. But the Lord said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of God.”

This quote, perhaps more than any others in the Word, has become a focal point for the use of New Church education. The image of the Lord surrounded by children has long been portrayed by artists. In my own family my mother did a beautiful rendition of it which hangs in my office.



The Lord’s love for children is further taught in the Heavenly Doctrines, where we learn that “all children are under [His] direct care...” (*Heaven and Hell* 332) So it is that a team of people at the General Church central offices came up with the beautiful way of framing the use of New Church education as “Bringing the Lord to children and children to the Lord.”

It is an intentional acknowledgement that the Lord wants to influence their lives, and that they have been created to have an almost innate openness to Him. Surely it is easy to see many manifestations of this goal, in classroom and home worship settings, blessings before meals, conversations about the Lord, Sunday School and so on. Every time parents take their children to church, they are bringing them to the Lord. Every time they talk to their children about the Lord, they are bringing Him to them. Perhaps obviously, the more this happens, the more children grow with the living sense that the Lord is a part of their lives.

2. “An Extension of the Home.”

Another key quote from the Word that speaks to the use of New Church education comes in *Deuteronomy*, when the Lord was establishing His covenant with the ancient Israelites. After calling them to love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul and strength, the instruction continues, “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when



you rise up.” (*Deuteronomy* 6:6-7) Many a parent correctly hears these words as speaking to them, urging them to raise their children with the Lord in mind, and teaching them the Lord’s commandments.

This willingness of parents to focus on the spiritual welfare of their children is further taught in the Heavenly Doctrines: Spiritual parents love their children for their spiritual intelligence and moral life, loving them thus for their fear of God and for their piety of conduct or life, and at the same time for their affection for and application to useful endeavors of service to society, thus for the virtues and good habits in them. Out of a love for these traits principally do they provide for and supply their needs. (Conjugal Love 405)

This spiritual calling is what inspires many parents to turn to the Church for support. In response, the Church has developed venues such as Sunday Schools or day schools which strive to cooperate with parents in the spiritual education of their children.

While we may acknowledge that not every home is perfect, and that sometimes the school or Sunday School can become a substitute for what is not happening in the home, the goal is to engage with parents in what they most want for their children – to help them launch into life with a strong desire to be good people.

3. “Success in This World and the Next.”



Success is a word with many connotations, some of which lend themselves to getting ahead in this world, and striving for a kind of worldly stature or opulence that is not always healthy. Today we remind ourselves that success can capture a much more noble pursuit. Nowhere is that better captured than in *Joshua*, where the Lord instructs Joshua himself to meditate in the Book of the Law, ensuring that he “do according to all that is written in it. For then [he would] make his way prosperous, and then [he would] have good success.” (*Joshua* 1:8)

Ask parents if they want their children to be successful, and you will get a resounding yes. If you dig a little deeper, most parents would welcome the qualifier of “goodness” along with that success. The phrase “good success” brings into the equation the Lord’s definition of achievement.

It means being a good person. It means successfully living according to the teachings of the Word, so that the Lord is able to form them into people who can live in heaven. It means framing our goals on, and celebrating, milestones that accord with what the Lord says is most important. That could include successfully raising a family, or serving in a job that intentionally makes the world a better place, or developing skills of truly wise friendship.

In terms of New Church education in a school setting, this concept of good success is captured in the phrase, “success in this world and the next.” It implies a trajectory of life that is eternal. The beauty is that it can include the pursuit of excellence in science or math or any other educational discipline, because these can help people to be useful human beings. But ultimately it is the spiritual focus of the education that ennobles the whole educational process. It is, again, the focus on what is eternal, as stated in this compelling teaching: “What more ought anyone to have at heart than his or her life which lasts to eternity?” (*Arcana Coelestia* 794)

4. “Opening the Eyes to Spiritual Reality.”

In the *Psalms* we read, “The eyes of all look expectantly to You...” (*Psalms* 145:15) Implied is a conscious turning to the Lord as the One who provides what we truly need. In the *Gospel of Luke*, we learn of two disciples on a journey to a town called Emmaus shortly after the sad story of the crucifixion. The Lord joined them, but they did not know Him until He dined with them and broke bread. Then it says, “Their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.” (*Luke* 24:31)



So it is with the use of New Church education. The goal is to open the spiritual eyes of children and young people, so that they may come to know the Lord, and behold the things that the Lord would most want them to see.

There is a learning component in this description of New Church education. Seeing with the eyes corresponds to seeing with the understanding. In this vein, we could ask ourselves what we most want children to come to understand as they grow. One teaching lists for us:

The truths that people learn and believe in their earliest years when they are young children but which later on they either endorse, have doubts about, or refuse to accept, are in particular these: There is God, and He is one; He created everything; He rewards those who do what is good and punishes those who do things that are bad; there is life after death, when the bad go to hell and the good go to heaven, and so there is a hell and a heaven; the life after death lasts forever; also, people ought to pray every day and to do so in a humble way; they ought to keep the Sabbath day holy, honor their parents, and not commit adultery, kill, or steal; and many other truths like these. (*Arcana Coelestia* 5135:3)

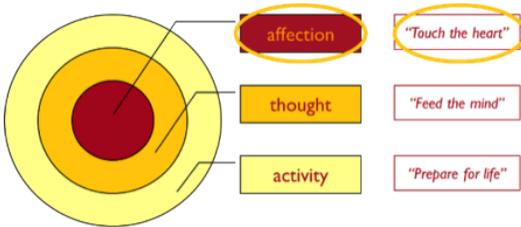
There is a world of spiritual information in the Word that the Lord would have us all learn. So it is that parents might rightly turn to the Church for help in the systematic exposure to all that the Word contains.

But there is another related way of answering the question, “What would we most want children to see as they grow?” Wouldn’t we want them to see people worshiping on a regular basis, praying, opening copies of the Word and learning from them, and so forth? And wouldn’t we want them to see

examples of honesty or kindness or usefulness, because these things are taught in the Word? Opening the eyes to spiritual reality, then, includes learning as an intellectual process, and also as an experiential process.

5. “Helping People Become Loving, Wise and Useful Human Beings.”

There is a phrase that captures the goal of some of our General Church schools,



namely to “feed the mind, touch the heart, and prepare for life.” The purpose for now is not to focus on the school setting but to see this as another example of how to regard the use. This three-part purpose was chosen because it describes who we are as human beings. We have

minds that can think and learn, we have hearts that can care and love, and we have bodies that are incredibly capable of useful action. It is this essential trilogy which makes us the human beings we are.

The clearest teaching I have found on the subject comes in *True Christianity*:

There are three things that flow as one from the Lord into our souls. These three-in-one, or this trinity, if you will, are love, wisdom and usefulness. Love and wisdom do not actually take shape, except in some conceptual form, because they reside solely in the feelings and thoughts within our minds; but in usefulness they become real, because then they come together in some activity and work on the part of the body. (*True Christianity* 744)

Other teachings focus on parts of that three-fold picture. For example, concerning our ability to learn and love, we read: “The Divine resides in a person in these two faculties, in the faculty for becoming wise and in the faculty for loving – or rather, that he is able to do so.” (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 30) Another, focused on the goals of these things, states: “We are not born for our own sake; we are born for the sake of others. That is, we are not born to live for ourselves alone; we are born to live for others.” (*True Christianity* 406) All of these things together – a desire to become wise and loving and useful – is what makes us “truly human.” (See *Conjugal Love* 269)

The beauty of framing New Church education this way is that it accords with the coaching and guidance that most parents and teachers do on a daily basis. “Was that kind?” “What a thoughtful thing to do.” “Was that smart?” “What would be a wiser way of handling the situation?” “Can you help me?” “Hey, you’re really good at...” And so on.

6. “Forming Spiritual Habits.”

Another useful question that could be asked with regard to children is what we most want to become habitual with them. As the picture associated



with this way of framing New Church education indicates, we learn through repeated trial and error, or through practice. One teaching makes the claim that “people are not even able to walk, or to talk, until they learn how to do so; and the same applies to everything else.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1050) It continues, “The things they learn to do become, through the performance of them, habitual and so to speak natural.”

Consider almost anything you know how to do, from driving a car to looking both ways before you cross the street, to calculating times-tables in your head, to exercising, to playing an instrument. All of them involve habits – habits of practice or diligent effort, habits of frequency or things we choose to do on a regular basis, and habits of skill or things we become proficient in. So we can see the whole process of education as a series of habit-forming activities.

The amazing thing, though, is that it’s not just about developing certain skills. It actually gets to the heart of character formation, and in spiritual terms, of the development of a heavenly disposition. We read: “Everyone acquires a disposition or nature from frequent practice or habit, and that practice or habit from the things he or she has learned.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3843) This teaching goes on to say that what becomes internalized through frequent practice or habit “flows into action spontaneously.”

So we ask again, what do we most want to become habitual with children as they grow? What do we want to flow spontaneously into action? The list includes such things as praying, frequent reading of the Word, considering the usefulness of what they are about to do before they do it, apologizing and taking responsibility for their actions, responding with kindness, speaking truthfully, treating others with respect, being generous with their time and energy, persevering, and many other things.

An intriguing teaching along these lines says: “It is easy for manual laborers, porters and farm workers to work with their arms from morning till evening, but a delicate person of the nobility cannot do the same work for half an hour without fatigue and sweating.” (*True Christianity* 563) Along these lines, we’d love spiritual practices and good actions to become increasingly easy for children as they grow.



7. “The Formation of Conscience.”

A seventh way of viewing New Church education regards the intrinsic motivation of each child. Yes parents, teachers and others provide useful boundaries for children as they grow. “No, you are not allowed to walk home after dark by yourself.” “You need to say sorry for what you just said.” “It would be really great if you took better care of your things.” But isn’t the goal not to have to say these kinds of things as often? We rejoice when children choose to do the right things without being asked or corrected.

The word that the Word uses for this process is conscience. Conscience is that “still small voice” in our minds where the Lord speaks to us, letting us know what is good and what is bad. (See *1 Kings* 19:12) It is formed “from knowledges of goodness and truth which children have taken in from parents and teachers and later on from their own devotion to doctrine and the Word.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2831)

Since “conscience is formed from things revealed in the Word” (*Ibid.* 371), it is important that information from the Word is shared with children as they grow. Distinguishing good from evil, and coaching in what works and doesn’t, gives the Lord the tools to form that voice of conscience within a person.

But conscience is also strengthened by the use of it, and weakened by the ignoring of it. We learn that people who act in accordance with conscience, experience “the quiet of peace and internal blessedness,” whereas those who act against conscience “experience disturbance and pain.” (*Heavenly Doctrine* 133) A wise parent or teacher might say to a child, “If you feel bad about it, it’s probably a good thing”; or “The best way to avoid a guilty conscience is to be honest”; or “Notice how good it feels to do something that really helps someone else.”

Another beautiful teaching says that “those who possess conscience speak from the heart what they speak, and do from the heart what they do.” (*Heavenly Doctrine* 131) It’s not someone else making them behave; it doesn’t even have to do so much with correction; it’s about helping people to experience the joy of doing things that work.

8. “Fostering Innocence.”

A final way we could define the use of New Church education is as an effort to foster innocence. Innocence is a fascinating word. To most of us, it calls to mind childhood purity and naïveté. It invites us to think about sheltering children from what is harmful or disorderly about society.

While it is certainly true that parents, teachers and others may choose to steer their children away



from certain things, most of us wouldn't say that mere avoidance is the life-long goal. Innocence has other dimensions, valid and beautiful as an untainted nature is.

One place where the concept of innocence is expanded for us was when some people asked the Lord who was greatest in the kingdom of heaven. The Lord took a young child, set him in the midst of them and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." (*Matthew* 18:3)

It isn't hard to see that the Lord's urging is toward internal purity, the kind of purity we see in little children. For adults, and even for children as they grow, there can be great use in looking within at what's going on with an eye to work on what needs to be changed. It could also include the life-long goal of living with less to hide, less that we are ashamed for others to see about us. Our efforts to work in these directions, and to help children do so as well, will result in more of this quality of innocence.

But there is another facet of innocence that is key. Children generally have an openness to learning and being taught. Of course they can be stubborn and self-centered at times, but more often than not they know they're not the ones in charge, and submit to the authority of the adults in their lives.

This willingness to follow those in charge, or openness to guidance, is captured in a far-reaching definition of innocence given in the teachings of the New Church. We learn that "innocence is a willingness to be led by the Lord and not by ourselves." (*Heaven and Hell* 280) The innocence of wisdom – an adult version of innocence – is to freely submit ourselves to the Lord's leadership, just as children so often submit themselves to the leadership of their parents. We learn further that this innocence or openness to the Lord is "that essential human quality into which love and charity from the Lord can enter." (*Arcana Coelestia* 4797)

The goal in terms of education then, whether in the home or in a church or school setting, is to support that openness and willingness to be led, to guide young people to that "nothing to hide" state more and more often in their lives, and to bring the Lord into the equation as often as possible. By doing so, we are laying a vital foundation for them in terms of their willingness to be led by the Lord – a willingness which allows the Lord to guide them by means of conscience, to become loving, wise and useful human beings, to see and honor the reality of the spiritual dimension of life, to live lives of success and usefulness in this world and the next, and to experience greater joy within their homes together with their families.

So we gather up all these teachings, and all these concepts about the use

of New Church education. Is it not evident that the Lord has a great deal to say about the importance of this use? There is a calling to every parent to provide for this level of guidance for their children. Those parents who are so motivated will naturally turn to the Church for support in this endeavor. And the Church can and should respond by providing a rich array of support for children as they grow.



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OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

CONCUPISCENCE

Here we have another term which should be retained as marking an important distinction, even though it may fall strangely on the unfamiliar ear. Concupiscence is voluntary evil; yet not so much the evil of the will itself as the continuous lust of evil, and therefore the life that is breathed into it by the loves of self and the world that sustain it.

The various and distinct evils that make up man's ruling evil are called concupiscences; and the derivations of infernal love, which are affections of evil and falsity, are called concupiscences, the term "affection" being reserved properly for good and truth. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 10,283:12; *Divine Providence* 296, 106)

Love in the Celestial Spheres: Seeing Our Relationships in Earth, Moon and Sun

E. Kent Rogers

You may be surprised that the sun accounts for more than 99% of the mass in the entire solar system and that it is believed to be brighter than 85% of all stars in the entire Milky Way galaxy. As by far the brightest and warmest object in our stellar vicinity, the sun is readily understood to be a symbol of the Lord. We even read that the “sun of righteousness risen with healing in its wings” is a clear reference to the coming of the Lord. (*Malachi 4:2*)

Indeed, we often read in the Heavenly Doctrines that the Lord is seen as the sun of the spiritual world, (*Heaven and Hell 116-119*), and that the sun is an image used in the Word to represent the Lord, especially as to His Divine Love. (*Ibid; Apocalypse Revealed 332*)

In the natural sun, we see intense heat and light wedded as one. Just as these produce life on earth we read that the fundamental qualities of Divine Love and Divine Wisdom perfectly united within the Lord are the foundation of all spiritual and natural creation; it is also the fountain of true love.¹ (*Conjugial Love 60-61; 75:7, 83-88, 261*)

These correspondences make exciting intuitive sense. It isn't just the sun; the entire natural universe displays the Lord and spiritual reality which is the hidden essence and wellspring of the material realm. (*Divine Love and Wisdom 29, 52, 169, 283*) As we try to learn this secret language of meaning, *sun* is a first vocabulary word that spurs us on to search the material universe for entities, relationships and processes that mirror spiritual truths which we

¹ Once translated exclusively as conjugal love, there has been recent debate as to the best term to represent this idea. Though as far as I know not included in the debate, I am personally disposed to the concise, accurate and universally understood term, true love. True love is understood by all English speakers to mean exclusive, eternally devoted love between a man and a woman. Even the term contains the spiritual elements that source this kind of love: truth and love. I will therefore be using this term throughout the text.

have first learned from revelation. We may even be able to see a few extra details based on what we find. For this paper we turn our eyes upward into the natural heavens, to the celestial spheres: sun, earth and moon.

The earth revolves around the sun directly, whereas the moon revolves around the earth, and thereby the sun. In this we see a fitting symbol of the doctrine that women receive an inclination toward true love directly from the Lord, whereas a man, having “not an iota” of this directly, receives it only through his wife when he dedicates himself to her as his beloved. (*Conjugal Love* 161, 263)

Men typically represent the intellect and women volition. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 620, 910; *Arcana Coelestia* 3134) Intellect in isolation is cold, distant and without passion, just as the moon is cold, distant and lifeless. Volition on the other hand is where we experience vitality. Interest, desire, emotion, affection and love are the stuff of volition and are what make us feel alive.

Similarly, earth teems with an astonishing array of extravagant life – not just species and specimens, but the interwoven connections necessary to sustain each individual life form. These ecosystems, too, can be considered life-forms in their own right. Even the seas surge and rage with a kind of life, the streams laugh and babble, the lakes rest serene. Earth is alive.

If we had to choose one property that makes earth unique, it is that she is full of opulent life. The earth loves her children. She bears the burden and strife inherent within sentient life, a strife that reminds us through contrast of the unsearchable value of life and a burden that she bears selflessly for the sake of life. As a mother gives of herself to her children without thought of herself, so earth gives all she has to us. Blessed are we when we also care for our mother earth.

But the moon is special, too. It is the second densest of all known satellites in the solar system and boasts the largest relative to the object of its orbit. It is the second brightest object in the skies of the earth, after the sun. Though all life (of which we are sentient) of the earth-moon system exists on earth, the moon shares an essential part in that life.

Believing that lunar tides play an important role in the vacillation between ice ages and interglacial warming, Bruce Bill speculates in *Scientific American*: “Such glaciations caused migrations of animal and plant species that probably helped speed up speciation.” (Dorminey, Bruce, 2009: *Without the Moon, Would There be Life on Earth?*)

In the same article Peter Raimondi says: “Without our moon, our marine environment would be much less rich in terms of species diversity.” The article says that because the moon was once significantly closer to the earth, its gravitational influence may have pulled the seas deep inland to create tide pools where many believe the very first rudiments of life evolved.

Based on the spiritual parallels, we might speculate that without the moon life on earth would not exist at all, given that marriage is the primary source of all love, and therefore life, (*Conjugal Love* 143, 376), and also that without marital union, offspring do not occur.

Though the moon seems lifeless and less important than earth, it is the earth-moon system that allows for life to exist. A perfect parallel is the relationship between heart and lungs, which Swedenborg often uses to describe the relationship between love and wisdom and also wife and husband.

Being animated by surrounding muscles, primarily the diaphragm, the lungs have no active life of their own, neither do they have direct or obvious communication with the rest of the body. In contrast, each and every cell of the entire body has immediate connection with the cardio-vascular system, without which they would perish. Nevertheless, it is the heart-lungs system that allows for the body's survival.

It is believed that the moon and earth were first forged into their present forms when two lifeless, planet-sized objects collided and in the process threw out a great deal of matter which coalesced into the moon. This is a fitting image of the fact that when a man and woman marry, they are forged into wholly new creations. (*Conjugal Love* 199) We also read that marriages are initially born of love of the opposite sex, but as marriages mature, love of the opposite sex is replaced with true love which is something entirely different. (*Ibid.* 48, 98)

The forward momentum of the proto-planets initiated their collision and binding, but the elegant balance between gravity and momentum resulting in the celestial dance of the earth-moon system is entirely different and more exalted.

Genesis 2:24 tells us a man must "cling to his wife." If he is to receive any measure of true love, he must abandon all wandering desires and cling to his beloved. His mind must revolve around his beloved, which is exactly what the moon does in relation to his beloved, earth.

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But what is wisdom?
Is it being able to
quote verse three
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hopes and dreams?

In *Married Love* 75 we read of an angel whose every thought and affection is refulgent with the presence of his wife because of the true love they share. Even this is represented in the relationship between moon and earth: as the result of what is called a synchronous orbit around the earth, the moon constantly keeps his “face” to her. It is as if he gazes only at her, his beloved, in devotion.

Upon first consideration, these ideas may appear to conflict with the doctrine that the fundamental life of a male is a love for growing wise and that of a female is a love of the wisdom in the male. (*Conjugal Love* 90-91) The basic idea is that a man loves to learn about spiritual truths and the wife, adoring his wisdom, loves to reify it in her activities. This would seem to place the male in the position of the earth, orbiting the sun (God), directly, and the adoring wife (moon) orbiting her husband.

But what is wisdom? Is it knowing about how many heavens there are and who lives in which quarter of the heavens? Is it being able to quote verse three of the first chapter of the *Second Book of Kings*? Is it expounding such wisdom upon the eager ears of his orbiting wife? Or is real masculine wisdom learning to hear the voice of his wife; to be sensitive to her concerns, needs, hopes and dreams?

Perhaps the wise husband is the one who learns to cast away unswerving confidence in his own understanding in favor of an open-minded exploration of life – spiritual and natural – with his wife. Having an immediate relationship with God through study and devotion can never be done away with, but when a man’s devotion to ideas about God supersede his devotion to the wellbeing of his wife, wisdom has fallen.²

The moon has a direct and unique relationship with the sun. In fact, because of the virtual lack of atmosphere, the sunlight that touches the moon

2 In a number of traditional cultures, including Australian Aborigines and some Native American nations, moon is understood to be male, even a universal husband of sorts to the women of the culture. Even in our own culture we speak of “the man in the moon” when the image could just as easily have been construed as “the woman in the moon.”

is many times brighter than what is experienced on earth. The Writings talk about a man's special ability to see the light of truth in a rarified, abstracted form. It is abstract because it is not bound to concrete experience, just as light that touches the moon is not immediately bound to life on earth.

The value of both kinds of light, that of the moon and that of abstract thought, is in the ability to reflect back onto real life, either biological or in terms of living out life in a good way, respectively.

Interestingly, the sun's radiant heat is also much more intense on the moon than on the earth – intolerably so. But while earth's atmosphere keeps the heat of day throughout the night, when night falls upon the moon, the temperature becomes deadly cold. Heat that is not subjectively felt due to the absence of life forms is not in fact heat; it is merely a wavelength in the electromagnetic spectrum. The heat of the sun is not perceptibly reflected back to earth by the moon, and so there are no sentient beings to perceive it. However, we on earth do enjoy the light of the moon.

Thus the primary value of the relationship between the moon and the sun is that the moon shines his light down onto the earth when the dark of night has fallen to provide comfort and hope and recollection that the day will again dawn. It isn't a harsh glaring light, but a sweet, gentle light. Darkness is vital to our spiritual lives.

The happiness of dawn only exists because of night. Just as our bodies need sleep, our minds also need time away from intense spirituality or we begin to burn up. But how lovely it is to have the moon smiling down his comfort as we slip into bed.

Likewise the primary purpose of the intellectual wisdom of a husband is to comfort his wife with a soft, gentle presence. When his wife is in a difficult place, he can draw on his own faith in the comforting truths about the Lord – His infinite love, His perfect providence and wisdom, the doctrines of how we must cycle through states of warm and cold, dark and light – to help him stay strong and stable enough to be there for her through the darkness of her nighttime.

He need not necessarily rattle off information about this or that truth, but rather to live out his faith in those comforting truths by being a calm, loving presence for her. This emotional communication of truth is a deeper communication than verbal and is more likely to be heard in a meaningful way. Surely this, more than intellectual, verbal truth, is a wisdom which a wife can love and from which she can effect good. A well-supported and loved wife will likely have an easier time in being a stable mother and is a ready example of this idea.

The moon's gift to earth is not only light and life-supporting tidal motions. The moon is responsible for the stability of earth's axial rotation. Were it not

for the moon, earth would wobble along like Mars. This stability is another important element in development and preservation of life on earth as we know it. Similarly, a husband's calm, steady presence can stabilize his wife when she is feeling out of kilter.

Just as does the moon, earth has her own relationship with the sun. She too receives light and warmth directly from the sun. How beautifully earth shines, marbled blue, green and white, out into the heavens. Astronauts have told us that seeing her brilliance from space – the moon even – caused a spiritual, life-changing experience.

How blessed the moon is to call her his own, to share with none her exquisite radiance which he beholds day and night; and not only to bask passively, but to play an essential role in her vibrant vitality.

The moon loves his earth. Blessed the man who so adores his wife.



Kent Rogers graduated from Bryn Athyn College in 1995 with a BA in Religion. He founded the Loving Arms Mission, which raises funds for New Church orphanages. In 1999 he established New Life Children's Home in Nepal, where he and his wife, Shova, have been father and mother, including their own two children. In 2011 his book, *12 Miracles of Spiritual Life*, was published by the Swedenborg Foundation. In 2012 he received his Master's in Mental Health from the University of Massachusetts in Boston. Contact: nlchkent@gmail.com.

How the Academy/General Church Was First Launched in England in 1874

Patrick L. Johnson

(This talk was given at the British Academy All Age School at Purley Chase, England, in September 2014.)

Why are you here today? I don't mean for what purpose; I know you have come here for inspiration and instruction. I mean why is the British Academy meeting at Purley Chase in the depths of the Midlands, rather than at Colchester, Hoddesden, Swedenborg Hall or somewhere nearer your homes?

It is a long story beginning at the Camden Road Church in London where "Academy ideas" were first launched in 1874. 1874? Assuming you are into dates, you won't believe me – which does not surprise me. I know it probably isn't what you have read or been told. Let me explain.

As many readers will know, the Academy was first organized in 1876 and the General Church was not founded until 1897. But of course these organizations were not born fully formed. Many informal events led up to their founding, some more and some less significant. I am suggesting that possibly the earliest, although not very significant, of these was at an Annual Meeting of the Camden Road New Church Society in 1874.

Camden Road was a General Conference society in North London. The church building was a fine Victorian structure, complete with a lofty spire, fine organ, lecture hall and library. It had just been built and had been consecrated by its new pastor, the Rev. Dr. Rudolf Tafel, who compiled *Documents Concerning Swedenborg*. He was assisted by the Rev. William Bruce, who wrote the well-known Bible commentaries, and the Rev. Samuel Warren, who edited the *Swedenborg Compendium*. Certainly a good send-off!

Sometime later in the year, the members of the church held an annual meeting at which the costs and furnishing of the new church must have been

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discussed at great length. Just when the members thought they could at last go home, Dr. Tafel announced that he was going to read a paper: *The Authority of the Writings*.

Tafel undoubtedly considered the matter of great importance, but it could be questioned whether this was the best time and place to introduce it. However, he went ahead and read it, which introduced such questions as whether Swedenborg's Writings were "The Word" and whether it should be taught by properly trained and

ordained ministers. These were questions which his English audience took seriously enough, but had never defined in detail and were inclined to leave to individual conscience.

Tafel, however, as a tidy minded German, believed these ideas should be given official concrete form. He felt these wooly minded English needed discipline.

The Society's minutes recorded the reading of the paper and that a short discussion took place. Had the members realized what would be the eventual results of the document they had been privileged to be the first to hear, they might have had a longer discussion. With hindsight one realizes they had the opportunity to become the first society of the future General Church, and they casually threw it away. But after all, they were the direct descendant of the Great East Cheap Society in London, the first New Church in the whole world, and they could afford to rest on their laurels.

There it was, however. Tafel had hopefully scattered his portentous seeds of a more distinctive religion on the soil, but the soil seemed not to be fertile. The Society itself took no immediate action; the bulk of the members seemed unmoved. I believe, however, although I have no written evidence, that two little seeds – falling by the wayside, so to speak – may have found fertile spots. Two youngish members, who would almost certainly have been present, were Camden Road's organist, C. J. Whittington, and Alfred Johnson, my grandfather.

Not to be put out by his congregation's lack of interest, Tafel sought out a more widely informed audience and delivered *The Authority of the Writings* to the Swedenborg Society, where several fellow ministers would be present. Here, however, his ideas were not just doubted but actually rejected. The ministers scented controversial implications.

There the paper might well have been left to gather dust had Tafel's parents not decided to celebrate their golden wedding anniversary and gather together the very extensive Tafel family in Pennsylvania, which included several ministers (and still does). The event happened to coincide with the Annual Meeting of Convention at which Tafel was given the opportunity to address the ministers meeting.

So *The Authority of the Writings* was aired once again and this time in a country where crazy revolutionary ideas had a better chance of survival than in tradition-bound England. No immediate judgment was passed, but it was agreed that the paper deserved serious consideration and should be published so that it could be better digested. So it rapidly acquired a wider audience. The seeds Tafel wished to sow now had a much better chance to germinate – and germinate they did.

The rest is history, as they say. As a result, in 1876 a group of 12 men, including Tafel and several of his relatives, got together and formed an “academy” (discussion group) to explore the new ideas. This is the ancestor of The Academy (College) we know today. Tafel had been its instigator, but he returned to England and the main impetus was carried forward by [William Henry] Benade and [William Frederic] Pendleton, and would lead to the foundation of the General Church of the New Jerusalem. That story readers will probably be aware of, but let me return to Camden Road and the two seeds that had fallen by the wayside.

Now that *The Authority of the Writings* had acquired fame in America, the English Swedenborgian publisher James Spiers felt encouraged to publish it in London in 1877. So Tafel's seeds began to germinate in a number of English minds too. Because the New Church College for the ministry had temporarily closed, Tafel had grasped the opportunity to start his own New Church Educational Institute, offering ministerial training along Academy lines. Several men applied. One pupil was Robert Tilson, who was to launch an Academy-style church in England in 1890, well before one was given definite

So The Authority of the Writings was aired once again and this time in a country where crazy revolutionary ideas had a better chance of survival than in tradition-bound England. The seeds Tafel wished to sow now had a much better chance to germinate – and germinate they did.

form in America.

Tilson was the pastor of the Conference Society in Camberwell. When he aligned himself with the Academy position he resigned from the Conference ministry and took half the Camberwell congregation away to worship in a rented hall. It was initially a rather one-man show until the group was joined by C. J. Whittington, the Camden Road organist, upon whom I claim one of the very first seeds had fallen. Whittington had taken Tafel's ideas to heart – particularly his ideas on education.

When the “split” – as we call it – first became apparent, however, Tafel decided – to people's surprise – that secession in England was undesirable and unnecessary. He seems to have felt that his seeds, given time, would be able to take root within Conference – probably because its members were woolly minded and undisciplined, which to some extent has indeed turned out to be the case.

So, when Whittington discovered that Tafel was not going to take Camden Road down the Academy road he felt betrayed, resigned from Camden Road and threw in his lot with Tilson. This was a stroke of luck for Tilson as Whittington was a rich man and able to give concrete form to his ideals.

Whittington purchased land not far from the Camberwell Church and erected a building we know as Michael Church. It was a modest but adequate two-story structure, with a chapel above and schoolrooms below, where Whittington's children and others could receive a distinctive Swedenborgian education. The story is well-documented in Nancy Dawson's little book, *Michael Church: The First Hundred Years*.

Whittington is probably even better known for his contribution to the first General Church *Book of Worship*, where he composed or set many hymns, psalms and responses to four-part harmonies. Perhaps he lacked a great gift for melody, but he nevertheless made possible a full congregational involvement



The gathering at the British Academy All Age School at Purley Chase in September 2014

not always found in other denominations. Thus the little seed planted several years before at Camden Road did indeed appear to bear fruit.

Whether the other hypothetical seed that was sown in Alfred Johnson's grey matter definitely took root can well be questioned. It is a long and wandering story, leading eventually



The venerable Purley Chase

to the reasons why the General Church's British Academy today finds a home at Purley Chase. But you might find the trail worth following.

Alfred Johnson was not just a member of Tafel's congregation. His mother was widowed, but her husband had left her with a large house where she was able to let rooms to supplement her income – a common custom at the time. When Tafel and his wife arrived from Germany they initially took rooms with Alfred's mother, and so for several years, when at an impressionable age, Alfred had frequent contact with Rudolf Tafel.

It would seem that as a result Alfred developed a considerable knowledge of and enthusiasm for Academy ideas. That could have led to him becoming a minister – he did become a lay preacher – but he had a natural gift as an artist. He could sketch anything perfectly at a moment's notice and so that became his obvious career choice. In addition to drawing, he was also a competent calligrapher. One year he even won the London City and Guilds top prize for copperplate handwriting, the highest award attainable for the subject.

I cannot record that the particular respect and enthusiasm for the Writings that Tafel had planted in Alfred Johnson took formal shape. In due course, however, he had a son to whom he passed on the knowledge, respect and enthusiasm for the Writings: the Rev. Philip Johnson.

Philip Johnson became a minister, but the Tafel/Academy seed came to show itself more particularly in associated activities. Alfred had seen that Philip was given a good education, which in the early 20th century meant you had a firm grounding in Latin, and it led to BA and BS degrees. This qualified him to serve on the Swedenborg Society's translation committee.

Apart from his sound Latin he also brought another gift to the committee. His father had passed on to him the ability to write, and appreciate the intricacies of copperplate handwriting. About this time the Society was

acquiring copies of the Photolithographs of Swedenborg's original manuscripts in the Academy of Sciences in Sweden. Swedenborg would never have gotten a prize for handwriting; most of the committee members found the copies unreadable. To do him justice, Swedenborg did make acceptable "fair copies" for the printers; but they stayed with them so we only have his rough copies.

Swedenborg was naturally in a hurry to get his message down and – expecting a fair copy later on – was not bothered about the legibility of first drafts. However, Philip Johnson's eye for the intricacies of handwriting meant that he soon got the hang of Swedenborg's scrawl and became an expert at reading his manuscripts. When the Swedenborg Society decided to publish the much-needed new Latin edition of *Arcana Coelestia* he was employed as full-time editor, to combine the apparent best wording from the manuscripts and printed texts.

That was a very indirect result of the Alfred Johnson seed, but there were to be more obvious fruits. Serving in the Swedenborg Society, Philip Johnson was to rub shoulders with other Academy sympathizers. Also working in the translation committee was the Rev. William H. Acton – always known as "W. H.," elder brother of the better known Dr. Alfred Acton – who was revising the *Spiritual Diary*.

W. H. Acton was English but had finished his ministerial training at the Academy in Philadelphia. He was ordained into the ministry of the General Convention and took up a pastorate in Glenview, Illinois, about 1896. Within a year, however, the Pennsylvania Association and Glenview seceded from the Convention to form the General Church. This was more than Acton had bargained for. Much as he liked Academy ideas, he did not accept the General Church's theological position on the inspiration of the Word.

So in due course Acton returned to England. He now had a growing family and was concerned that they should have a New Church education, and so went to live near Michael Church. He was unable to find a paid pastorate in London, but became a member of the Kensington Society, as he much admired its pastor the Rev. J. F. Buss, who promoted a very positive approach to the Writings. He had to take a teaching post, but spent much of his time with Swedenborg Society interests.

Also on the translation committee was the Rev. Eugene Schreck, who was not only Acton's brother-in-law but had a similar life story. He had actually taught in the Academy in Pennsylvania, but had defected to Convention, yet ended up in Conference with a pastorate in Birmingham. However, Schreck is best known for launching the Summer School at Purley Chase near Birmingham.

Although "universal" education originally had been introduced by both Anglicans and Non-Conformists (with a significant Swedenborgian

contribution), by the 20th century it had mainly been replaced by free state education. Both Conference and the Academy have always found it economically difficult to compete with that system. Schreck, however, realized the possibility of providing supplementary education in summer schools. [While in Convention, he founded the Almont New Church Assembly, or “summer school” as some still refer to it, in the Michigan countryside north of Detroit.]

When a large deserted mansion at Purley Chase, owned by a local New Churchman, Thomas Slack, was put at his disposal, Schreck grasped the opportunity to launch a “part-time Academy.” He recruited W. H. Acton and Philip Johnson as teaching staff, and also the Derby building contractor, Harold Morley, to look after domestic concerns, as well as many other enthusiasts too many to mention. They offered a course with distinctive Academy features, such as elementary Hebrew and the doctrines of correspondences and the Grand Man (where Johnson’s BS in biology was useful).

The Summer School was a great success until brought to a close by the 1935-45 war, during which Purley Chase was requisitioned to house a Canadian Army unit, which left it in a dilapidated condition. After the war the Summer School found satisfactory accommodation in a Methodist retreat center at Barnes Close – Purley being forgotten. It came to the fore again, however, when Thomas Slack died and left the mansion to the General Conference in his will.

The Conference Council was not overjoyed with the gift of a dilapidated structure now suffering from dry rot, which many regarded as a white elephant, and they initially decided to sell the property. However, many ex-Purley students in Birmingham, Derby and elsewhere wished to grasp the opportunity to give the Summer School a permanent home.

Schreck and Acton were now dead, but the old guard gathered around Harold Morley and Philip Johnson and persuaded Conference that they could raise funds to repair the structure. Harold Morley, as a building contractor, was able to promise to carry out repairs at minimum cost. What was also essential was a resident warden to take care of the building and grounds throughout the year – not an ideal job, as Purley Chase is fairly isolated.

However, as Philip Johnson was due to retire from the ministry, he offered

Although Purley Chase was owned by Conference, they were very happy to welcome its use by the General Church British Academy, now one of the most regular bookings.

to fill the post and promote Purley's active use. Many ex-students, including W. H. Acton's children, undertook to give seven-year deeds of covenant to ensure financial stability.

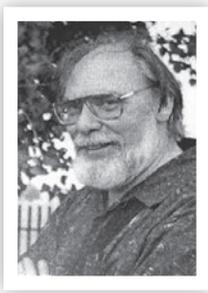
Within a couple of years Purley was ready for use and the Sunday School teachers Summer School ran two sessions each summer. The young people in the Midlands started a weekend school. It must be remembered that car ownership was still quite low in Britain in the '50s and '60s, but by the '70s it was common, and happily the first motorways all led toward Purley so people could come from all over the country.

Philip Johnson died, but his wife and children launched a Family School and W. H. Acton's daughters helped launch the Autumn Studies for the retired. By the '80s Purley was fully booked throughout the summer with all manner of institutions, more or less promoting "Academy Ideals."

So, indirectly Alfred Johnson's seed did germinate through his son and grandsons. Today his great-grandchildren participate in family schools, and his great-great-grandchildren thoroughly enjoy them too. Alfred Johnson's seed turned out to be a hardy perennial.

Although Purley Chase was owned by Conference, they were very happy to welcome its use by the General Church British Academy, now one of the most regular bookings. That would certainly please Rudolf Tafel's bipartisan feelings, but the school that would please him most would be the annual Ministers' School, which is attended not only by Conference and General Church ministers, but also by men from the Continent where Tafel was born and had his roots.

He would love to attend such a school and, if invited, he would no doubt be delighted to offer them a lecture: *The Authority of the Writings*.



Patrick L. Johnson was born in South Africa when his father was Superintendent of the Conference Mission in Johannesburg. Although raised in Conference, his family interacted with the General Church through the Swedenborg Society and the Acton family. He is a member of Conference in England but says, "Somehow I got baptized into the General Church in Durban." He worked as an architect, specializing in historic buildings and monuments. In retirement he edited the Conference magazine, *Lifeline*, and later launched and still edits the Swedenborg Society's newsletter, *Things Heard and Seen*. He also compiled *The Five Ages* – Swedenborg's view of spiritual history. Mr. Johnson is married and has four children.

Helping Children in Crisis in Kenya: Proud to be a Part of this Work

*By Kay R. Alden
Chair of Helping Children in Crisis (HCIC)*

The following is a report on a July 2014 trip to Etoro, Kenya, by four volunteers for Helping Children in Crisis (HCIC). See photographs on pages 90 and 91.

Vignette: On the grounds of the Rev. Samson Abuga's New Church School, Etoro, Kenya, July 2014:

I sit at a roughly made wooden desk transcribing background information on orphans into my battery powered computer. The building I am in is made of corrugated metal and the floor is hard-packed mud. There is no electricity or running water on the premises.

To my left is a bookshelf full of New Church printed materials, including books of the Writings, curriculum and collateral works. These materials are familiar to me and represent the connection I have to this place that is halfway across the world from my home. To my right are large sacks of rice and beans – two weeks' worth of food for my friends here.

The door stands open to the warm African air and the sound of children's laughter. The students are on break from classes and waiting for their cooked lunch of kale and ugali.

I glimpse the Rev. Samson Abuga making his way across the red mud yard. His progress is slow. As he passes through the throng of children, each face lights up with delight and a small group of them gather around him like a human skirt as he walks. Some tuck in their chins and tilt their heads in a gesture of contentment; others reach out a hand and tug at his suit coat to gain attention.

He warmly touches their shoulders and bends down to listen to their whispered

messages. His laughter joins theirs as they joke about the day's events.

Samson's love and care for these children is humbling to witness, especially considering that many of them would not be alive if it weren't for his immense loving heart. I swallow the lump in my throat that seems to have taken up permanent residence since I arrived in Kenya, and contemplate how much I have to learn and how proud I am to be a part of what is happening here.

So how did a retired teacher like me come to be a witness to the scene above? In the fall of 2012 Helping Children in Crisis (HCIC) was formed in response to a dire situation that had arisen in Kenya when more than 30 New Church orphans were thrown out of their home after their care-giver committed suicide as a result of accusations of abuse. They walked miles through the night to the home of the Rev. Samson Abuga, a neighboring New Church minister, for help.

Samson was already taking care of more than 30 orphans, using his own meager salary. Those first 30 children had been farmed out to congregation members, but he was paying for their food and clothing. Despite his best efforts, during the previous 18 months seven of those children had died. Now with more than 60 children to care for, his resources were overwhelmed.



Jackline and Samson Abuga

A small group of us became aware of the situation and decided to form HCIC. This was a situation that compelled us to action. Not only were we called to serve the needs of these children, but we also saw it as an opportunity to expand the formal uses of the General Church to include acts of charity.

We are a volunteer committee working under the auspices of the General Church Office of Outreach. The names of the two girls whose picture accompanies this article are Faith and Charity. They are two of the orphans we care for. Their names embody the work of HCIC. We seek to live our faith through acts of kindness to others, but particularly to children in need of help.

After committing to the care of these children, Samson contacted the Kenyan government and, with the help of his congregation, legally formed an orphanage they named General Church Sacred Care (GCSC). Samson, his staff and the GC Sacred Care board provide the hands-on care for these

children; HCIC provides the funding for that care.

We are proud to be a part of this life-changing/saving work. Our recent trip to Kenya assured us that our donation dollars are indeed being well used and that the children are thriving under the care of Samson and his staff.



The Abuga family, left to right: China, Dorothy, Jackline, Samson, Helga and Heather. In front, Andy and Nicole.

When we formed two years ago, HCIC knew that our first order of business was not only to stabilize the situation for the children but also establish policies and procedures that would assure a professional level of transparency and accountability for our donors. Our 27-page document draws on best practices in the field. It can be found on our website: www.helpingchildrenin crisis.com. The staff in Kenya has been eager to learn and meet these requirements.

GCSC cares for 65 orphans ranging in age from 7-20. Five of them have graduated from high school and we are supporting them through two years of vocational school so they can become useful members of their community. After age 18 the children cannot legally be housed in the orphanage, so members of Samson's congregation take them into their homes.

The members of the Etoro congregation actively support the orphanage as an integral part of their church life. They see it as a way they can contribute to their local community and live the doctrines they love. The New Church is truly the family of these children. The younger children all attend Samson's New Church elementary school, while the older ones attend nearby religious boarding schools.

The first phase of HCIC's support was to set up a sponsorship program for each of the children. Sponsorship currently is \$800 per year and covers the day-to-day needs of the children, such as food, clothing, education, childcare and medicine. It took us two years but we have all of the children sponsored. Some people only commit to sponsor for a year or two so there is always a need for people interested in sponsoring a child.

The next phase of support is to provide the physical structures for an



Faith, left, and Charity



Kathy Schrock works with two girls in the school

on-going orphanage. In December 2013 we purchased a plot of land adjacent to the church for this purpose. Until recently the children had been housed in rented rooms nearby, but the conditions there deteriorated to the point that the government said they were no longer safe. As this goes to press a small, temporary structure is being built that will allow the children to live on the land until we can raise funds for permanent brick

structures that follow the Kenyan codes for a legally registered orphanage.

In anticipation of this phase of support four HCIC volunteers traveled to Kenya: Roger and Kathy Schrock, my husband Mark Alden and myself. We timed our visit to coincide with the episcopal visit that the Rt. Rev. Brian Keith reported on in the October-November issue of *New Church Life* (The Lord is Smiling on the Church in Kenya). Kathy and I traveled to Kenya a week before the others to provide school support on New Church education and to get a head start on HCIC work.

Roger has a background in construction, so he focused on researching building policies and practices. He found that to meet building codes we need to build two dormitories, an eating pavilion and latrines, bring water and electricity to the site, and construct a solid brick security wall with locking gate around the perimeter.

Roger and Mark familiarized themselves with the kind of construction and materials commonly used in Kenya. They toured similar structures, both complete and under construction, met with a builder and researched material and labor costs. The conclusion is that the whole project will cost about \$300,000, although we don't have to have all the money before we start construction.

To raise these funds, HCIC has launched a capital campaign: "Buy a Brick, Build a Home."

During his time in Kenya, Mark put his medical background to work researching the different levels of medical care that are available for the children in the area. Long rainy seasons mean that the children often suffer from pneumonia and malaria. Samson constantly monitors the health of the children and is quick to take them to the appropriate healthcare facility.

Kathy and I focused on gathering and documenting information on the children. This involved interviewing each child and transcribing the

information already available. The children wrote letters to their sponsors (or future sponsors). We also visited the boarding schools the older children attend.

We visited a local vocational school to determine the costs of supporting the children through this phase of their development. While we were there, I wrote regular reports back to the committee and sponsors. These were posted on our website and Facebook page as well. Here are some of the entries:

July 2: Samson and Jackline’s devotion to looking to the Word and Lord as the starting point for all they do is truly humbling to witness. Oftentimes we go to give them advice and find that what they are already doing far exceeds what we were going to suggest. We are the ones being humbled.

July 7: In rural Kenya children are just a breath away from living a life of abuse and death on the street...Samson and Jackline have a deep-seated calling to help children in need and to do so with a flavor of loving kindness that well represents the life we are called to live in the Heavenly Doctrines. This amazing couple and their children welcome others into their home and provide them not only with food and clothing but with love as well. Truly all the children in their care are treated as their own.

July 9: At one point I asked Samson if he thought the children in the orphanage would be New Church when they left. He looked at me and said, “Honestly, considering all these children have been through, Jackline and I will be happy if they are good people.”

Our time in Kenya went by too quickly. The pressure to get everything on our list done was eased by the fact that a few weeks after we were to leave two interns would be going to Kenya to work for GCSC for 10 weeks. They were the first interns to be sponsored by the newly formed organization Charity Works. It supports young people who would like to volunteer for internships for the General Church.

Our interns, Cailin Elphick and Kira Kerr, picked up the work that still needed to be done after we left and took it to the next level. Both HCIC and GCSC are extremely grateful for the work they did. You can look forward to a report on that exciting chapter of our work in the March-April issue of New Church Life.

During our time with



Kay Alden surrounded by the orphans she quickly grew to love



Meeting with builder: Roger Schrock, center, with Samson and Bishop Brian Keith to his left, meet with the prospective builders

the children, Kathy and I put a big effort into learning their names. Several times a day we played various name games with groups of them. They were patient with us as we learned to identify all three Eunices, three Naomis, and two Brians and Shems. We weren't perfect but we got pretty good at it. We sang and played and worshipped with them.

Along the way one of the most powerful aspects of the trip unfolded. The list of names that we knew well at the beginning of the trip transformed into real personalities of children we quickly grew to love. We cheered Hesbon on in soccer, learned clapping games with Vanis, and nursed Keziah's leg wound.

As we matched the sad stories of how each child was orphaned with the happy laughing children we played with, we were often moved to tears by the power of their transformation.

We profoundly admire and trust the work that the staff of the GCSC orphanage are doing there and are humbled to be a part of it. Those of you who support our work, whether it be through prayers or dollars, are a part of it as well. You can be proud too.

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If you would like to partner with us in providing a future for these children we would welcome your help. One priority we are focusing on is our "Buy a Brick, Build a Home" fund. We have a long way to go before we reach our goal of \$300,000 and every dollar helps.

Credit card donations can be made on our website helpingchildrenincrisis.com or checks can be made out to the General Church, ear-marked "HCIC Capital Campaign" and mailed to HCIC, PO Box 204, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009.

Please contact us at gchelpingchildren@gmail.com if you would like more information or would like to talk about other ways you can help.



The Rev. Erik J. Buss

Spiritual ‘Genes’ With a Personal Fit

With “the minister gene” running strong in Erik Buss’s family, it may seem he had no choice but to become a minister himself. But the decision – and the passion – were his own.

Included in the gene pool are: Grandfather, the late Rev. Erik Sandstrom, and uncle, the Rev. Erik E. Sandstrom; father, the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss (retired) and brother, the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. His son, Jared, married to Justine (Brannon), is in his final year of Theological School. And daughter Rachel is about to marry theolog David Steen from Rochester, Michigan. So it may have seemed inevitable that Erik would choose that course, but the attraction came from inside, not outside – beginning about age six.

He was born in Durban, South Africa, to Peter and Lisa Buss and lived there until age 11, then moved to Glenview when his father was called to be the pastor there. His education progressed from the Kainon School in South Africa, the Glenview New Church School and the Midwestern Academy, to the Academy Boys School and two years at Bryn Athyn College. He transferred for his final two years to Williams College in Massachusetts, then returned to Bryn Athyn for Theological School.

Through all of this, he says, “I had known I wanted to be a minister since about six. I’ve always loved the doctrines and knew I wanted to help people with them as much as I could.”

“I was certainly influenced by growing up in a minister’s family where we talked about the Word and the Lord a lot. Having the experience of what life as a successful pastor could look like gave me a working vision to aim for. I also started reading the Word as a child and found I loved the insight and peace it gave me and wanted to share that. This started because I heard a children’s talk about how if we read the Word we can develop the strength of Samson in our spirit. This appealed to me a lot!”

He formally made the decision as a late teen as he thought about what life would look like in various possible careers. “I realized that I would do all that I wanted to do in any other career before my working years were done, but that I would find unending challenges and opportunities in being a minister. That sealed the deal for me.”

He says the biggest impact on how he approaches the ministry is his wife, Ann (Gladish), whom he married while in Theological School. “I have found that over time I study the things she is interested in and have learned to become more gentle and human as I seek to express the things I see her valuing.”

He adds: “Having a chance to put together doctrine to form a big picture was so exciting to me. I love gathering diverse teachings about a subject and bringing them together, hopefully in fresh ways. Going to Theological School was a joy because I had a chance to spend time in that kind of study.” He has been able to nurture this love in writing books and developing papers for the clergy.

He looks back on his Theological School candidacy in Glenview as another formative experience. “I loved seeing a working congregation under a highly effective pastor (the Rev. Brian Keith), seeing how the doctrine I was learning could be applied in ways that brought the love within it to the fore.

“I was also excited to be involved with (the Rev.) Grant Schnarr in his work in the Chicago New Church. This kindled a much stronger love of evangelization that has been an enduring interest and passion for me.”

Erik was ordained in 1990 and served as an assistant pastor in Glenview for three years under the Rev. Brian Keith and then the Rev. Eric Carswell. He loved the opportunity to develop the outreach program, and was also instrumental in establishing an informal service.

In 1993 he moved with his family to Seattle to help work for the growth of the church there. “They had had no pastor for a number of years and were eager to try to grow. We were able to grow from worship attendances in the teens to the mid-40s over seven years. I learned a lot there and enjoyed the amazing people in that congregation. We met in an old school building in the University of Washington part of town, and had many very lively characters join us for church.”

In 2000 they moved to his hometown of Westville, South Africa. “It was

a wild experience for me to become pastor of the congregation I grew up in, and share the running of the congregation with my former schoolmates. A highlight was being part of shepherding through a new strategic plan that led to a major building program that has borne good fruit for the congregation and for the school, which has increased to 120 students.”



Left to right: Jared and wife Justine, Derek, Ann, Shaun, Tania, Erik, David Steen and Rachel.

Because he and Ann did not get to see the completion of the project, the congregation has offered to fly them back there this year, for which they are very grateful.

In 2010 Erik was called to be the Assistant Pastor in Bryn Athyn. “It was a challenging time for the congregation here,” he notes. “In doing my small part to help navigate the ship back to calmer waters, I was heavily involved in the Appreciative Inquiry and strategic planning processes. I have also taken on a significant role with young adults in the congregation.”

Through all of this he has also found great satisfaction in writing two books: *Freely Give* and *One Heart*. He is also working (“slowly”) on a book on the spiritual practices of charity.

“One of my hopes,” he says, “is that we can develop to be a church that truly puts charity first. If we have an absolute adherence to what the Lord says in His Word, and a strong commitment to using those truths for healing, then the Lord’s power and presence will transform the Church. I see the truth as a vehicle for healing and compassion.”

He and Ann have been married for 26 years and have five children: Jared, Tania, Rachel, Derek and Shaun. He loves gardening, music, travel, reading, running, qigong, healing and homeopathy, and admits, “I absolutely love beautiful ceramics.”

Among his favorite passages from the Writings are:

“Innocence is loving the Lord as one’s Father by doing His commandments.”
(*Apocalypse Explained* 996:2)

“Innocence is a willingness to be led by the Lord and not by oneself.”
(*Heaven and Hell* 341)

“I love the concept of learning to truly trust the Lord enough that His will may be the only thing that matters,” he says. “We all know in theory that

the Lord's way is the right one, but the practice of actually trusting the Lord enough to be a child following his Heavenly Father is one I find much harder to apply. Yet it is so inspiring to think of this as a goal to strive toward. What would my life look like if I were to trust the Lord more completely than I do?"

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OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

CONFESSION

This term has two usages – confessions of the Lord and confession of sin. In the first of these it can mean simply a declaration of one's faith before the Lord, but interior confession involves humiliation and the affection of good. Confession of sins is to know evils, to see them in one's self, to acknowledge them, to make one's self guilty, and to condemn one's self on account of them – this as contrasted with the idea of a general confession. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 2329, 3880, 8388)

Expanding Your Wisdom and Influence

A Sermon by the Rev. Erik J. Buss

Lessons: Genesis 26:1, 6-14; Arcana Coelestia 4067:2, 6599, 6600

We often say in the New Church that the basic principles of spiritual living are very simple: Love the Lord above all else and your neighbor as much as yourself. Obey the Ten Commandments. Thinking of spiritual living that way you could never go to church again, focus on living these basic rules, and be just fine. On one level we should acknowledge that reality intuitively and joyfully. A loving God would not make it hard to get to heaven. He wants as many of us there as possible, and He gave us simple rules that get us there.

So why do we continue going to church? Why do we acknowledge that it is important to try to read the Word regularly? Many people do not. They take the simple principles approach. Are you really getting anything extra out of church? Or are you just a slow learner?

Again, we know intuitively that the simple version of spiritual rules is, by itself, simplistic. It will get you to where you want to go, just like walking will. But why walk a distance when you can drive? And why drive a great distance if you can fly?

Today we'll explore the ways in which ongoing learning and spiritual work enable you to fly, spiritually speaking. And the approach to that topic is to think about our spiritual connections.

If I asked you what you are feeling or thinking right now, you would say: "I think such and such," or "I feel happy, or lonely, or interested." We talk about our feelings as our own, yet we know from teachings such as those in our reading that our feelings and thoughts in fact come from the spiritual world. Each of us is connected to certain heavenly and hellish communities that are the source of our thoughts and feelings. Right now every one of us is in some heavenly or hellish community as our spiritual home. We are affected by the place we are – it defines our character.

But as our reading said, the reality is far more than that. Our thoughts and our affections spread out, as it were, into neighboring communities. By way of example, how many of the neighboring towns and communities could you comfortably drive around? Your knowledge of the roads in the area extends so far and no farther. Our spirits are just the same. We are in a certain spiritual space; we know certain things and we love certain things. And then our spirits extend, as it were, into neighboring communities.

Our “thought spreads out into the communities of spirits and angels round about” and our “ability to understand and perceive is determined by its extension into them.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 6599) “Therefore when a person is being regenerated his enrichment in good is nothing other than being introduced into angelic communities, and in this way being joined to them.” (*Ibid.* 8794:2)

Is that a confusing idea? It’s basically saying that the spiritual space each person lives in is based on a certain way of seeing things and on a corresponding affection for those things you see. Assuming you are a good person, it is a good and beautiful thing to be where you are. But it is limited. You see things the way you see them and if people don’t put them the way you see them your tendency will be to think they are wrong.

A wiser person can stretch his or her mind a bit. He can see that even though someone doesn’t see it quite the way he does, maybe that person sees something good that he does not. A wiser person still can extend his or her thought and affection even further. Even though that person may have very specific personal ideas, his thought extends so broadly that he can understand many spiritual challenges, and interact effectively with many people.

What does that mean, practically speaking, for someone’s thought to extend more broadly? It means they can know what to do in more situations they face. It means they can understand more often why the Lord acts as He does. It means they can understand and respect others more fully. It means they can be around people who are different from themselves more easily because they can see similarities and differences without being threatened or losing their own sense of identity in the process.

Consider the political arena. What do people do all too often these days? They take a very narrow position and pound away at anyone who doesn’t see things as they do. And because of this we’re getting an increasingly polarized political landscape around the world. That’s not a very wise environment.

Most people who present doctrinal errors and heresies do the same thing. They take one point and hold to it relentlessly. In itself the point may be true, but they don’t modify or soften their view when other passages suggest a broader approach. Their minds are not willing to extend that far. “From all this it is also evident that the more external a person’s thinking is, the less distance

it spreads; and the more internal it is, the greater distance it spreads.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 6612) This teaching gives new meaning to the idea of being narrow minded. How broadly does your thinking extend?

We can see this obviously with anyone we’d call an expert. Would you consider someone who listens only to Beethoven a truly musical person? Probably you’d say that she has very limited musical tastes and ability and would likely not go to her for advice about music – perhaps not even for advice about Beethoven.

How about someone who listens only to classical music, and cannot see any good in any other music? Probably not a musical expert. There is much good in jazz, folk, contemporary, religious and ethnic music. A true expert would have specific music that she enjoyed most – her musical home – but would also be able to understand and appreciate lots of kinds of music. We would likely trust such a person’s musical opinion more, and we should.

Hopefully all of us want to become spiritual experts. The reason is very simple: The more truth you see and the more you love it, the more you can help others and the more you can protect yourself from any dangers that might come up. This is far more the case spiritually because your spiritual spread, as it were, comes from your heart as much as your head.

The journeys people take to Gerar and Egypt depict this spiritual need. Several people, including Isaac, travel to Gerar, and many, including Abraham, Joseph, the Israelites, and the Lord, travel to Egypt. Each trip involves struggle and conflict, because real learning involves effort and putting our heart into it.

Each of these journeys represents our willingness to go back to the Word to learn more about what the Lord says. Egypt was the source of ancient learning, and it represents our going to the one true source of learning – the Word. We don’t go to church as children, then stop going and simply get on with living the simple rules. We learn and learn again. We wrestle and ponder, trying to bring more ideas into our lives, just like people kept on going back to these places that mean learning from the Word. And in each of these stories the people who go to Gerar and to Egypt come away enriched. Ongoing learning in the Word is so important because that spread of understanding is what the world needs.

Consider this analogy. A baby is born with about 100 billion neurons in his brain, which is about the same as what an adult has. What’s the difference between an adult and infant brain? It’s the connection between the parts. A baby has relatively few connecting links between these neurons. But as the child grows the brain forms trillions of connections. If you continue using those connections, they stay. If you stop using them they disappear, which is why you can’t remember the French you learned in school if you have not used it.

Our job as human beings is to make connections. Think about someone who knows only one way to resolve a disagreement, compared to someone who knows 15. That second person is much wiser. Someone who understands why the Lord allows evil or how the levels of the mind work – teachings that don't necessarily seem immediately applicable to life – will be better suited to deal with having a child with a disability or to help a friend through a hard time.

The very highest angels, we're told, love truth so deeply and have studied it with such diligence and affection that their understanding extends through the whole of heaven. Think about what that means. A celestial angel could talk to any good person in the world and find the good in what that person was saying. And he could do this without whitewashing what was wrong. And since we know the same truth looks different in different contexts, a celestial angel would be able to apply the truth wisely in its proper way

Imagine what this world would be like if more of us truly and deeply understood the Lord's Word and could talk broadly on topics that came up. We yearn for a sense of community, of belonging. And here's the path. Grow in spiritual knowledge and application and you will be able to connect to more people.

Where do you go with an idea like this? One takeaway is to observe the times when you feel isolated from others or annoyed with their opinions or actions. Consider ways in which you might get into the deeper part of yourself, the part that can see the genuine good and connection in the world.

Far more importantly, though, is to realize that throwing yourself into spiritual living makes a difference. Take time to read the Word every day this week. Say prayers morning and evening, as the Lord says. Tackle that challenge head on that you need to face. Jumping in deep on spiritual living not only enriches your life, but it enables you to be so much more useful.

“Teach me, O Jehovah, the way of Your statutes, and I shall keep it to the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart.” (*Psalms* 119:33, 34)

Amen.

An Interview with Donnette R. Alfelt: My Changing View on Women in the Ministry

(Editor's Note: The following interview with Donnette R. Alfelt was conducted by Sasha Silverman for New Church Perspective, and is reprinted with permission.)

Question – Did you grow up in the Church?

Answer – Yes. I was born in Bryn Athyn and have lived here for most of my 85 years. I attended New Church schools through two years of college. I moved away from Bryn Athyn in my 20s but returned when I got married.

Question – I understand that until recently you were against women being ordained as New Church ministers. Can you tell me about that?

Answer – I grew up in a culture where it was a given that ministers were men. I accepted this. I also grew up with a great appreciation and respect for the beauty of the differences and complementary natures of the masculine and feminine. I was turned off by some of the hostile actions of the women's liberation movement that seemed to be fighting to prove women were just like, just as good as, even better than men. They seemed to want to replace or compete with, rather than cooperate with, men. In the process there was a lot of male bashing that was painful to me.

I was disturbed by many of those fighting for women's rights who were aggressive, angry and unfeminine. A very small example: angry demands that women reporters should be allowed in men's locker rooms after sports events.

This and some other demands struck me as childish and eroded my sympathy for needed change.

Some early New Church women advocates for women in ministry (WIM)

also came across as angry and combative. Perhaps they felt this was the only way to be heard, but it sounded too much like other women-libbers, and turned me off rather than awakening or inspiring me.

Because the world seemed to be trying to blur or eliminate differences, I felt the Church needed to be a beacon protecting the beauty of the complementary differences. I saw women becoming ministers as a threat to the preservation of this ideal.

Question – Can you tell me what changed your mind?

Answer – My change of heart came rather suddenly about a year ago. There had been ongoing debate for some time, and even though I admired some of those who spoke up for WIM, I kept my distance.

The shift for me began when I decided to look at myself to explore how much my position was based on my judgment of others (angry women from the past) and the culture of my growing up. I didn't talk about these new thoughts to family and friends who were for WIM. I did not want to be persuaded by them. I wanted to work it out for myself first. I am grateful that in prior brief conversations with them on the subject they were always patient and non-aggressive. We agreed to disagree.

Of course I am not a doctrinal scholar, so I began to read both sides of the debate in *New Church Life* and on Facebook. In my reading I began to notice that the same teachings were often used to support both sides of the debate. I found nothing that presented clear, indisputable answers. I slowly felt as if I were waking up to the obvious.

I began to think about the days when there were no women on any church boards. I think most people in the Church would now agree that including women on boards was a good move. Having them join the male clergy, it seemed, might be the next logical step. It suddenly disturbed me to think about the annual ministers meetings where only men deliberated without the balance of feminine perspective.

Asking for input from women (part of the laity) is very different from having them involved in discussion or study. The Lord needs all of us to work for Him and has provided this beautiful balance of male and female to serve Him. Why not as male and female ministers?

It is absolutely crucial that we keep studying doctrine. There is so much the Lord wants us to understand and share with others. I appreciate the men who have been devoted to this. I do understand that we must also keep searching for application.

We are taught that truth apart from good or wisdom apart from love are nothing at all. The joining of love and wisdom, good and truth, male and

female, is what makes the world go around. Wouldn't women in the mix of church leadership provide this essential balance?

Question – How do you understand the role of a New Church minister?

Answer – “To teach the truth and lead to the good of life” is, I believe, a minister's job description. They might be sent to a society with a school where they will be expected to teach. They would also be expected to preach, comfort the dying, counsel the troubled, raise money, provide marriage guidance, baptize babies and the ever-present “do something for the young people.”

Though teaching and leading can be part of all of these duties, no one can be expected to be experts in all of them. There is great variety in expectations and also in the strengths of male ministers, as there would be with women.

My stance a year or two ago was that perhaps when the Church was larger, men would be able to specialize in their training. Not every minister is cut out to be or wants to serve as a pastor. We do have ministers who have made a choice to become teachers or translators. Perhaps they have different requirements or training than the potential pastor. I don't know. However, most are ordained and then are expected to serve and take care of everything.

I thought that perhaps in the future there would be opportunities for all theologians to specialize. I thought this might also open up opportunities for women to attend the Theological School to become New Church chaplains or counselors or leaders, etc.

I was still anxious about the preservation of the feminine qualities. It is clear they could do a better job if schooled from doctrine in professions that helped people, taught people, led people out of their struggles to the “good of life.” I resisted the idea of them being ordained as ministers for reasons stated earlier.

Question – In some ways, all women (all people) “minister” to others. Any thoughts on this?

Answer – Of course mothers and teachers try to teach the truth and lead to the good of life in these roles. There are also numerous examples of women “ministering” from church doctrine – mostly as volunteers.

I am a Stephen Minister and most of us are female. This strikes me as evidence that the call for this kind of ministering is stronger with women than with men. For women who go into ministering professions, wouldn't it help the world more if their training included the precious insight of the Second Coming?

I don't know how many of the women who have graduated from the MARS program did so looking toward careers. I do believe the curriculum

of the Theological School will need to be changed somewhat if it includes women. The fact that they have already made changes that include counseling and experiential training almost seems to be leading up to a male and female student body.

Question – Do you think this ongoing debate is damaging the Church?

Answer – It is, of course, a threat to the church organization. There are strong feelings at work here. However, it is as true for any organization, as it is for each individual, that upsets are painful but present opportunities for growth. They force us to reflect and evaluate our beliefs. Chaotic as it might feel, I think it is good for us. I am certain that the organization is not “The Church,” and “The Church” will survive.

Question – Are there any particular teachings you want to comment on?

Answer – I have read a lot of what other people have found in the Writings on this topic and I sometimes interpret their selected teachings differently from what the writer intended. No two people have ever read the same book, because what we read is always colored by our particular loves and biases. And we never read the same book twice because we change and our new thoughts and feelings affect our perception of what we read. We bring who we are, what we love and where we want to go to our reading. I’m sure over the years it is likely I have read or heard *Arcana Coelestia* 5364 before. As I read it today, it says that women should be ministers. It most certainly never said that to me before.

In the early stages of man's regeneration, truth is multiplied, but not good; and as truth has then no good with which to be conjoined, it is drawn in and stored up in the interiors of the natural mind, that it may be called forth thence according to the increasing of good. In this state truth is in need of good, and moreover conjunction of truth with good takes place according to the inflow of good into the natural; but still no fruitfulness is effected by this conjunction. But when man has been regenerated, then good increases; and as it increases it is in need of truth, and also procures truth for itself with which it may be conjoined, and thereupon there is conjunction of good with truth. When this takes place, truth is made fruitful from good, and good from truth.

It seems that in the early stages of the Church (led by the masculine) truth has been multiplied more than good. **I don't mean this as judgmental, but as a natural development.** After learning the truth, there is a need of good. Only recently has the Church promoted good works of charity as part of what the Church is and does. Only recently have women been in positions in the Church to promote these efforts. Only recently has the Theological School included counseling and experiential learning.

There seems to be a new hunger not only to learn but to find ways to use

truth. “*But still no fruitfulness is effected...* [but as the Church progresses or as we regenerate the good is in need of truth] ... *truth is made fruitful from good and good from truth.*” I think that what applies to individuals also applies to organizations.

Question – Do you find that your new position is surprising to others in your age group?

Answer – Yes. It is interesting when this topic comes up with people of my generation. It is evident in people’s remarks that there is the assumption that we are all opposed to women in the ministry. Sometimes I respond and make my feelings known and sometimes I let it go.

Question – What do you think about the future?

Answer – One thing I am sure of is that when we awake in the next life we will not be judged by what church we attended or what gender our minister was. We will be judged on our efforts to follow the Lord and how we treated one another. My present hope is that the promised plan to look for ways to involve women more may eventually lead to a new consideration of their ordination.

Donnette R. Alfelt, wife of the late Lennart Alfelt, has been a widow since 1981. She has been leading groups for widows and widowers for many years, and has written three booklets: *Comfort and Hope for Widows and Widowers*, *When a Spouse Dies* and *From the Top of the Yardstick*. The latter is based on the much-loved course she taught for many years in the Academy Girls School, *Formative Years*, which helped students prepare for the life issues and choices of adulthood. She lives in Bryn Athyn and has five children: Christine McDonald, Lisa Eller, Karin Childs, Anders and Sten. She looks forward to being reunited with Lennart and Sten in the other world. Contact: dalfelt@aol.com

A Website for Papers on Gender Issues in the Church

The Rev. Brian D. Smith, Assistant Pastor of the Olivet New Church in Toronto, Canada, has collected 36 papers and studies, plus additional materials, on the question of women in the ministry and other gender issues in the General Church. The site to find all of these is: www.newchurchperspective.com/possible-ordination-of-women

This is a most useful repository of diverse, doctrinal viewpoints which can be read at any time. You can pick out some to study, some to browse, some to share. Many of these have been published previously, from *New Church Life* to *New Church Perspective*. Now they are all collected at one website.

The list includes papers going back to 1972, studies for a General Church Governance Study on Women's Roles in 2001, and all of the papers presented at the Council of the Clergy meetings in June 2014. We have been asked to publish several of these papers but they are too long for these pages. Now you can choose to read any and all, plus responses, on your own schedule.

Here is a list of the papers posted, in the order they appear:

- *Collection and Reflections* – **The Rev. Willard L. D. Heinrichs**: *Ordaining Women into the Priesthood: Of Order, Or Not of Order?*
- *A Name of Glory and Honor* – **The Rev. Robert S. Jungé**
- *Women in the Ministry* – **Gertrude Tremblay** (1972)
- *Leadership, Women and Men* – **The Rev. Eric H. Carswell** (*New Church Life*, July 1996)
- *Male and Female in the Organized Church* – **The Rev. Robert S. Jungé** (*New Church Life*, September 1982)
- *Cycle of Life: A Model for Viewing Gender-Related Concerns* – **The Rev. Erik J. Buss**: Prepared for the Council of the Clergy, 1995 (*New Church Life*, October-November, 1995)
- *Gender and the Representation of the Lord* – **The Rev. Stephen D. Cole** (*New Church Life*, May-June-July, 1995)

- *The Church as Bride, Wife and Mother: From a Presentation at the Women's Symposium* – **Amanda Rogers-Petro** (*New Church Life*, May 1996)
- *Paradigm Shift: The Issue of Women in the Clergy* – **Vera Goodenough Dyke** (*New Church Life*, May-August-September-October-November-December, 1996)
- *Feminine Wisdom* – **The Rev. Erik Sandström Sr.** (*New Church Life*, May-August 1997)
- *Gender Issues, the Laity, and the Uses of the Church* – **The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss** (*New Church Life*, September-October, 1997)
- *Paradigm Shift and the Issue of Women in the Clergy* – **Eva Sandström Lexie** (*New Church Life*, December, 1997)
- *On Women and the Priesthood: Questions Regarding the Uses of Women in the General Church* – **The Rt. Rev. Louis B. King**
- *The Priesthood and the Doctrine of the Church: Why a Male Priesthood?* – **The Rev. Erik Sandström Sr.** (*New Church Life*, July, 2001)
- *Sourcebook: A Quick Reference Guide to Some Passages from the Heavenly Doctrines on the Subject of Women's Roles, the Priesthood and Related Topics* (Prepared for the General Church Governance Study on Women's Roles, Bryn Athyn, 2001) – **The Rev. Jeremy F. Simons**
- *Hazards of Ministry: Is the Priesthood a Spiritually Dangerous Profession? Is it More Dangerous to Women Than to Men?* (Prepared for the Council of the Clergy, 2002) – **The Rev. Jeremy F. Simons**
- *In Response to "Hazards of Ministry"* – **Julie Conaron** (*New Church Perspective*, 2002)
- *The Role of Women in the Church – Specifically the Priesthood* (Final paper in Master of Arts in Religious Studies program) – **Julie Conaron** (2005)
- *Priests, Prophets, Pastors and Preachers* (General Church clergy paper, 2006) – **Rev. David C. Roth**
- *Male and Female He Created Them* – **The Rev. Dr. Erik E. Sandström** (*New Church Life* editorial, July, 1908)
- *Women and Men in the Church: A presentation in Glenview, Illinois, September, 2011* – **The Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.**
- *Partnership: The Path to the Internal Church* (Unpublished paper, 2013) – **The Rev. Charles E. Blair**
- *Gender and the Priesthood of the New Church in the 21st Century* (A paper for the Council of the Clergy) – **The Rev. N. Bruce Rogers** (*New Church Life*, September-October, 2013)

- *Letter to the Regional General Church Clergy* – **Balance Group**, Glenview, Illinois (2013)
- *Why the Representative and Functional Roles of the Priesthood in the New Church Require an All-Male Clergy* – **The Rev. Michael D. Gladish** (General Church Council of the Clergy, 2014)
- *There is No Deficiency, Only Blessing: An Argument in Favor of Ordaining Women in the General Church* – **Shada Sullivan** (2013)
- *Examining the Policy of Male-Only Clergy in the General Church* – **Shada Sullivan** (2013)
- *Benefits of Women in the Clergy* – **Jonathan and Karin Childs** (General Inclusive Clergy Workshop, 2014)
- *The Doctrine of Accommodation* – **The Rev. David C. Roth** (General Church Council of the Clergy, 2014)
- *A Doctrinal Foundation for a Gender-Inclusive Clergy in the General Church* – **The Rev. Solomon J. Keal** (General Church Council of the Clergy, 2014)
- *Gender and Serving in the Uses of the Priesthood: What Did the Lord Do, and Why?* – **The Rev. Kenneth J. Alden** (General Church Council of the Clergy, 2014)
- *Masculine Initiative in the Things of the Church* – **The Rev. Grant H. Odhner** (General Church Council of the Clergy, 2014)
- *Misdiagnosis – Mistaken Solution* – **The Rev. Jeremy F. Simons** (2014)
- *Responses to Arguments Against Women's Ordination* – **Julie Conaron** (General Inclusive Clergy Workshop, Bryn Athyn, 2014)
- *Rethinking the Representative Nature of the Priesthood in the New Church* – **The Rev. David H. Lindrooth** (General Church Council of the Clergy, 2014)
- *What We're Hearing: Current Discussion of Women in the Priesthood* – **The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.** and the **Rev. Brian D. Smith** (Collection of comments prepared for the General Church Clergy Meetings, 2014)

Additional Resource Links:

- *Love First* – **The Rev. John L. Odhner** (General Church Council of the Clergy, 1986)
- *Balance of Spiritual Leadership in the General Church* – Video: Balance Group Letter to the General Church Clergy (2014)
- *Can We Have the Benefits of Women in the Clergy?* – Four videos (2014)
- *Varieties of Pastoral Leadership* (Slide show and speaking notes) – **Dr. Soni S. Werner** (Balance Group Colloquium, 2014)

BOOK REVIEW

Spiritual Law: The Essence of Swedenborg's Divine Providence

By Joanna V. Hill

*Published by Rock Point Press
Santa Fe, New Mexico*

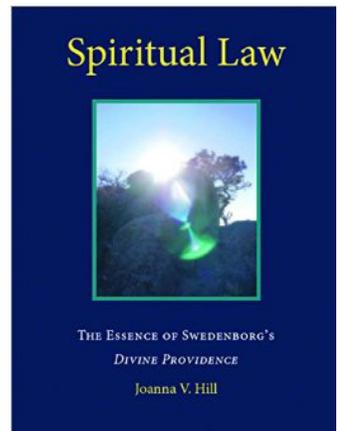
Reviewed by Roslyn Taylor

A longer version appeared in *The Messenger*, October 2014. Reprinted with permission.

As I skimmed the Contents page of Joanna Hill's latest book, which offers "the essence of Swedenborg's *Divine Providence*," her paraphrase of the five Spiritual Laws drew me in right away. They were direct and clear, promising a discussion that would be accessible to the reader from the very beginning. The rest of the book certainly lives up to that promise.

Besides clarifying the author's purpose for distilling Swedenborg's theological text for today's spiritual seeker, the author's preface sets up two tensions. Is this book about Divine governance of our physical world, or is it about spiritual transformation? By the end of the preface, the reader is also feeling the tension between Swedenborg's "old fashioned" ideas and his "new view of Christianity."

As I moved into the body of the work, I found myself getting out a traditional translation of



Swedenborg's *Divine Providence* to compare as I read along. Could this facile discussion of spiritual laws, although familiar sounding, really be based closely on a Swedenborg text?

In fact the author has done exactly that. Ms. Hill has faithfully followed the flow of the original text, using chapter headings that initially reflect the chapter titles that Swedenborg used. Later in the book she uses some creativity to combine a few chapters under a more general heading, distilling pages of explanation into concise and easily readable sentences and paragraphs. The rendition into accessible language and current spiritual concepts transports Swedenborg alive and well into the 21st century.

The resolution of the initial tensions also flows along throughout the book. In various ways, the message becomes clear that the focus of spiritual law is on the action of the Divine in our lives. To bring that message home, the author repeatedly spells out the spiritual process of reflection, self-examination, making better choices, and developing a more heavenly life.

The tension between old and new theology is resolved more subtly. The writing is dignified and at times poetic, a spiritual guide as hoped for in the preface, with evidence of the theological heritage of the era in which the original was written. Yet today's theological questions work their way into today's rendition of *Divine Providence*, just as Swedenborg grappled with the theological issues of his day in his original theological work. Ms. Hill writes about "a hellish state" rather than "hell," refers to "any Higher Power" as well as traditional concepts of the Divine, and fleshes out wonderfully Swedenborg's teachings about spiritual law applying to all people on all spiritual paths.

Throughout the book, Ms. Hill selects out themes that are particularly relevant to today's spiritual seeker. She artfully provides a guide for a serious inquiry into the nature of spiritual transformation and spiritual growth. Her including the futility of forcing beliefs and worship on other people is well suited for outreach today in a culture that is wary of proselytizing church organizations, and in which many do not feel the need for church attendance.

This gem of an introduction into Swedenborgian teachings ends with a useful list of his theological works, with pithy explanations of their contents and purpose. Any spiritual reader, whether searching for an overview or wanting to pursue a deeper exploration of Swedenborg, will appreciate this resource. Another helpful resource is a manageable list of books for further reading. These suggestions fit right in with Ms. Hill's purpose in offering *Spiritual Law* to share "spiritual jewels" in a manageable distillation of Swedenborg's work on *Divine Providence*.

I can imagine many ways in which this 114-page book will prove itself valuable to the Swedenborgian community, besides its obvious benefits to the wider community of spiritual seekers. To start with, the intriguing

mystical nature of the cover will attract attention wherever it is displayed or offered. Once it is off the shelf and opened, it brings relevance and new life to Swedenborgian teachings. Already at least one congregation is planning to use it in their book club readings.

It is an excellent book for people who have just come across the works of Emanuel Swedenborg, or who are engaging in some way with a Swedenborgian community or church. My hope is to see more and more ripples of benefits from accessible distillations such as *Spiritual Law* from Ms. Hill in the near future.

Roslyn Taylor is a graduate of the Master of Arts in Religious Studies (MARS) program of the Bryn Athyn College Theological School and is a theological student at the Australian New Church College.

Church News

Compiled by Bruce Henderson



RE-DEDICATION OF THE WASHINGTON NEW CHURCH BUILDING

By Bonnie Cowley

This church has been rebuilt from a love of worshipping the Lord God Jesus Christ, the one God of heaven and earth. This building will provide a setting in which people can come together to be supported in their paths of life. For

here their spirits can be uplifted. Here the glorious truths of the Lord's Threefold Word will be preached fearlessly. Here, in the sphere of worship, the Lord can flow into their hearts, blessing them with warmth and joy. And here they can feel the Lord's presence bringing holiness to their very lives. (*The Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith – Re-Dedication Service, November 23, 2014*)

It is hard to describe with words the changes that have been made to the building at the Washington New Church. Even pictures of the new and remodeled facility can't convey the feelings of promise and hope that the completion of this project has brought. But when planning began it was even harder to visualize what form this building would take that could suit the future uses of the church, nor what the focus of the next generation would be.

Yet this is what the congregation did nearly 50 years ago. They knew that change was needed for the society to grow and flourish. They knew not the future any more than we do now, yet with leadership, planning and vision they moved The Washington Church of the New Jerusalem from Washington, D.C., to what was then farm country in Prince George's County, Maryland. They built a modest but functional building which housed several classrooms, offices, an all-purpose room and a beautifully designed sanctuary.

The society did grow, adding a school in 1970 which subsequently afforded a New Church education to two generations of children. The school became a real focus for the church in Washington and quickly gained a reputation for being a top-notch feeder school for the Academy Schools in Bryn Athyn.

The little school that began with only nine students grew into the 40s and 50s, necessitating a building addition of four classrooms and a library, which was completed in 1993.

But as soon as the finishing touches were being put on the school addition, plans were being made to upgrade and add to the complex, focusing this time on church uses. **Pastor Jim Cooper** formed the Development Committee, led by **Brent Hyatt**, along with 10 or 11 members, to study the needs and hopes of the society and to design what was hoped to be a new church building.

In a society as diverse as Washington's, with the growing need to serve a diverse surrounding community, and with the hope of meeting the needs of a new generation, this turned out to be a most difficult task. Very little is straightforward when it comes to finding true consensus in a church congregation. So I think it is important here to mention some of the process that the committee went through during the 20 years of planning.

First, **Stewart Smith** – an architect and a leader on the committee – took the group through a series of exercises designed to take a holistic approach to planning. The group was first asked to think only about the uses of the congregation and rank their importance, then think about how these many uses related to each other and how closely connected they were.

Then the committee broke into smaller groups and each created a “bubble chart” illustrating these uses – large bubbles for primary uses, like worship – and large connecting lines for uses that shared resources with other uses. Interestingly enough, committee members were not permitted to think about “space” or buildings while doing this process – only uses.

Along with many other similar exercises the Facilities Committee wrestled with what seemed to be an impossible task: how to please everyone with a limited budget. There were many bumps on the road, most particularly the economic slump that hit not only Washington but also the General Church as a whole in 2008. Though grandiose dreams were still alive, many of the drawings met the cutting floor.

The **Rev. Garry Walsh** (following Jim Cooper as pastor in 2005) worked hard to restart the process. He formed a new Development Committee from Board members to create a long-range plan. Although this was incredibly useful the sluggish economy continued to stall the project.

In 2009 the **Rev. Mike Gladish** became the pastor and took a great interest in moving the project forward. With a fresh perspective he inspired the re-formed committee to think outside the box and not be tied to old concepts. Charged with renewed need and enthusiasm the Facilities Committee took up the project again. Combined with hiring an outside architectural firm and standing on years of planning, the committee wrote the following vision to guide the design of any addition and/or renovation:

1. The Church is primarily about people, not buildings. Thus it is of utmost importance that any addition or renovation takes into account the needs of visitors and members by providing an entrance and meeting area that is obvious, attractive, comfortable and convenient, with simple flow patterns to and from the sanctuary.
2. To eliminate many of the overlapping uses that exist in the building, a large multi-use space needs to be created.
3. To enhance the comfort and worship experience the nave should be remodeled to address lighting, environment and aesthetics.
4. To provide for the continuation of the excellent academic programs of the Washington New Church School, two additional classroom spaces need to be created.
5. To address the critical need for office space (currently housed in storage areas and other shared space) two offices need to be added.

This vision allowed us to move forward with the confidence of knowing that as long as we focused on these priorities we could weather the ups and downs of designing and building and all the large and small decisions that accompany a project like this.

The first shovels went into the ground on March 28, 2014, with hopes of occupancy by the end of August. The plan was to gut and remodel most of the original building and add three new classrooms, an office and restrooms. This meant that most of the building had to be vacated as soon as school closed in June – proving to be a monumental task! Sunday Services also would have to be held outdoors or in local homes until the project was completed.

Heavy rains in May set the project behind but by summer bobcats and other large machinery could be heard rolling around inside the building, knocking down walls and carrying out the debris. For some, this was a very

sad time, seeing their beloved church building torn apart, especially the sanctuary where so many special occasions were held – Tableaux, weddings, baptisms, etc. – and rightly so!



Yet, around the middle of July, as the demolition dust settled and new construction began in the sanctuary, a special visitor – a pure white dove – took up residence in the sanctuary, sitting on a new beam just above where the chancel was to be. She stayed for around two months, coming and going daily, sometimes perched above the workers as if supervising the construction. The dove gave many of

us hope through some difficult weeks.

In August a major setback pushed occupancy into the school year. What

were we to do? Could we possibly hold school in local homes, or find a place suitable to rent for the duration? Again, the Lord did provide, for just two miles down the road the Largo Community Church was willing to rent (at a reasonable rate) eight classrooms and an office until we could move back into our building. Although it was difficult to hold classes off-site, we cannot say enough for the charity and kindness shown us by the Largo Community Church and we hope this will be the beginning of a lasting friendship.

Finally, at the end of October we began the move out of LCC and back HOME! Yes, more work needed to be done, but the congregation rose to the occasion, along with help from Bryn Athyn College CARE one weekend and a group from Kempton another weekend. They helped us unpack, move furniture, landscape, organize and clean in preparation for school.

Finally on Sunday, November 23, **Bishop Brian Keith** led a re-dedication ceremony during the children's talk at the beginning of the service. It was a moving ceremony. Bishop Keith called the children forward to sit on benches and carefully explained what the dedication was all about.

He then called forward the chairman of our Board, **David Radcliffe**, who came carrying the ceremonial key from the first dedication, as well as a basket of keys for our new spaces. While presenting the keys David said: "Bishop Keith, I present to you the key from the dedication of our original building in November, 1965 - 49 years ago. I also present to you these keys (the basket of keys) that enable us to open and bring our Church and School to life every day. With the presentation of these keys, we pledge that we will serve the Lord in everything we do."

The dedication was followed by a sermon by Pastor Gladish that focused on the personal rededication of our own lives and "the honest work of repentance, reformation and regeneration." He added, "In the end, physical things – even our material bodies – are really only means to an end, and that end is a heaven, not just from the human race broadly speaking but from us, you and me specifically, if we are willing to receive that precious gift."

In attendance were many from our congregation, along with friends old and new from other parts of the church, as well as the lead architect, father-and-son team, Mark and Eric Beck.

Following the service everyone gathered in our new spacious lobby for toasts to the Church and for many, many a thank-you to key members. A soup and bread lunch was served to all in the larger multi-purpose room just off the lobby. This celebration gave us a chance to show off our new place and to realize how our vision had indeed become reality.

As noted in the sermon that day:

This new sanctuary has been designed not only to lift our spirits in joyful anticipation and acceptance of all the good that the Lord offers us, but to strengthen and confirm our solidarity in that effort whenever we turn to Him as

a congregation. It (the building) is not better than the old one, which had its own majesty and grace, and which served well for two generations, but it is new, and different, and planned, so as to emphasize the light and warmth that will appeal to a new generation, even as we build on the critical foundation laid by those stalwarts of the 1960s.

The new school rooms and social spaces, including the beautiful new front lobby, have been designed to welcome people from all backgrounds and walks of life, to enhance their experience of the Lord's love and wisdom, and to give them a reliable, functional base of operations for the life of charity and faith... *and* we could expand our school enrollment from the present 45 students to almost twice as many, giving them all the solid grounding in the faith of the New Church that could ultimately change the world.

Projects like this can only be accomplished by a collaborative effort, so it is impossible to mention even key figures without missing a few, but I must mention and thank our owner's representative, **Kathy Johns**, who gave thousands of volunteer hours working with contractors and architects to see the job through; and pastor Mike Gladish, who led the entire project by example, attending endless meetings of planning and finance and working side by side with his congregation, from demolition to occupancy – all the while providing uplifting services held mostly outdoors. Thanks also to all of the members of the congregation who raised a phenomenal amount of money to complete the project and who also gave their time and “sweat equity,” weekend in and weekend out.

Of course there still is lots of work to be done. As our pastor reminded us: “In a sense it will always be a work in progress – just as our own regeneration is a work in progress. But if we believe that the Lord can help us He will, and if we pray for His mercy and guidance He will give it. Remember this is not only for ourselves, but as Solomon said of the Lord, ‘that all people of the earth may know Your name and fear You... and that they may know that this temple which I have built is called by Your name.’” (*I Kings 8:43*)

CHANGE AT BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE

Dr. Kristin King has decided to step down as President of Bryn Athyn College of the New Church at the end of the current fiscal year, June 30, 2015. She had intended to relinquish the presidency a year ago but was asked to extend her term when no viable candidates were available at the time.

The Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith, Chancellor of the Academy and the College, said: “Kristin has been a tremendous leader for the College. She restored stability and confidence after a difficult time and has brought the College a long way toward financial equilibrium. Her willingness to step in last year when we could not find a viable candidate to replace her is especially appreciated. We

wish her all the best in her continued career in teaching at the College. She is a wonderful asset for the College, the overall Academy and the New Church.”

The Academy Board of Trustees considered this development at its January 14 meeting and a search committee has been appointed to find and recommend a replacement. We will update the process as information is available.

DEDICATION OF THE NEW CATHEDRAL ORGAN

A special dedication service was conducted at the Bryn Athyn Cathedral on November 21, 2014, for the new **Chara Aurora Cooper Haas** Pipe Organ. This world-class organ was a gift of **Frederick Haas** in memory of his mother, who grew up in Bryn Athyn and loved the Cathedral and loved music. Fred played *The Holy City* as part of the service, which was led by **Pastor Eric H. Carswell**. Fred also made the formal presentation of the organ at the conclusion of the service.

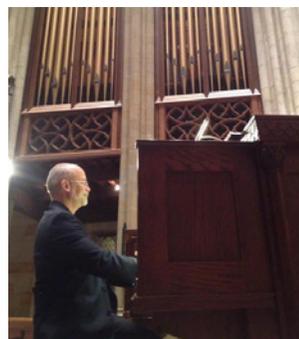
Also participating in the service were **Terry Schnarr**, Principal Organist at the Cathedral; **Bryan Dunnewald**, Assistant Organist; **Peter Richard Conte**, guest organist; **Graham Bier**, Director of Music for the Bryn Athyn Church; and the Bryn Athyn Cathedral Choir and Choristers.

Following are excerpts from the program for the service:

Organ Details: In the spring of 2012, Mr. Frederick Haas proposed a gift to the Bryn Athyn Church in memory of his mother, Chara Aurora Cooper Haas, a beloved member of our church and community. This fully restored and expanded Skinner pipe organ is an instrument uniquely appropriate to the architecture and history of our special cathedral building.

The Chara Aurora Cooper Haas Pipe Organ is a 46-rank instrument containing 3,230 pipes. It has significant historical resonance with the Bryn Athyn Cathedral. In 1918, architect **Raymond Pitcairn** chose the Ernest M. Skinner Company to build an organ for the new Cathedral. Through meetings and correspondence, a design took form that bears many similarities in size and style to the organ being dedicated today, not least of which is the involvement of Skinner.

Due to various circumstances, the planned organ was never installed at Bryn Athyn, though the regard with which Skinner’s work is held among organists today is a testament to Pitcairn’s good judgment. How fitting that, nearly a century later, this organ should be installed that shares so much with the one originally and carefully selected for the building.



Fred Haas playing the Chara Haas organ

Organ Dedication Anecdotes

Chara Aurora Cooper Haas

By Marvin Clymer

Chara Aurora Cooper was born on March 21, 1927, in a modest home at 2553 Woodland Road in Bryn Athyn. The sixth child of **Frederick J. and Aurora (Synnestvedt) Cooper**, she was baptized a month later by her grandfather, the **Rev. Homer Synnestvedt**.



Despite difficult times, Chara had many fond memories of growing up in Bryn Athyn. She loved to play in the local woods and fields, and attended the Church schools there from kindergarten through two years of college. The New Church played an important part in her childhood. In addition to her religion classes, her family had worship at their home every night during the week, Sunday dinner always included a toast to the Church, and they always sat in the same pew (#20) in the Cathedral.

While helping **Henry and Joan Dunlap** with their children in Houston, Texas, Chara met **John C. Haas**, a son of Otto Haas, co-founder of the Rohm and Haas chemical company. They were married in a beautiful candle-lit service in the Bryn Athyn Cathedral on June 21, 1952. They raised their five children in Wyncote and at *Stoneleigh*, the beautiful estate of John's parents in Villanova. For many years they invited Bryn Athyn community members and friends to explore their lovely spring gardens on the annual Stoneleigh Stroll-About.

Chara has said, "The purpose of having money is to make things better." She never forgot her humble beginnings in life and has done much to help less fortunate people. John and Chara always considered helping people "a privilege." As lovers of classical and religious music, they were especially supportive of the Philadelphia Orchestra and often enjoyed the Christmas Sing at Glencairn.

There is no doubt that Chara would be very happy to know that her family has played a prominent role in encouraging inspirational sacred music in the Bryn Athyn Cathedral.

Symbolism in the Woodwork

By Stephen Hendricks

The classical design principle of *decorum*, or *appropriateness*, has as its goal that everything in a space be arranged in an order suitable to a building's purpose. The Chara Aurora Cooper Haas Pipe Organ would fulfill, even

RE-DEDICATION OF THE WASHINGTON NEW CHURCH BUILDING



The old sanctuary, completely gutted for its makeover



The steel skeleton erected for the new academic wing



An outdoor service conducted by Pastor Michael Gladish while the church was being refurbished



One of the new classrooms, now filled with children and activities.



Ready to welcome people to the spacious and nearly completed new lobby are Ginny Gladish, left, and Monica Hyatt

The new chancel, ready for the re-dedication service





Nancy, the orphan girl sponsored by the Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools



Mark Alden attracts a gathering of happy children



Children are always glad to hear from their sponsors



Young people gathering water from a nearby stream



Proud children outside of their school



Happy girls with letters from their sponsors



Samson and Jackline, left, with their beloved children



Everything is "thumbs up" for these boys



Samson meets with some of the boys on the athletic field



Lunch is served



Vanis skipping rope

CHURCHES AND CHANCEL THROUGHOUT THE GENERAL CHURCH



The Buccleuch Church in Johannesburg, South Africa



The chancel in the Buccleuch Church



A Thanksgiving chancel in Glenview, Illinois, New Church



The Sunrise Chapel in Tucson, Arizona



The Carmel New Church in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada



An Oak Arbor Christmas chancel in Rochester, Michigan



The Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, New Church

surpass, the longest of held hopes for providing melody, harmony and rhythm suitable to worship in the Cathedral.

Our challenge in designing and fabricating woodwork to frame this instrument was to add a visual harmony worthy of it and the Cathedral that would soon be filled with sound. Precedent for the design of the façade woodwork was taken from elements of the Cathedral building itself.

The talents of many people have collaborated to see this project through from inception to completion. From donors and musicians, priests and instrument builders, to administrators, carpenters, woodworkers and electricians, many hands have combined to attain the final result.

Within all of this is promise that, long after everyone's human touch has faded away, music and harmony will fill the Cathedral – and everyone who worships here, with joy. And perhaps it will even bring them a little closer to hearing angels sing.

From the Builder

Charles Kegg, President and Artistic Director

Kegg Pipe Organ Builders

While every instrument we build is near and dear to our hearts, there are always instruments that are extra special and will be a point of comparison and reference for us for years to come. The Bryn Athyn Cathedral organ is one of these.

We would like to thank Mr. Fred Haas and the Wyncote Foundation for their confidence and support in this project. Also we must give thanks for the inspired leadership of Graham Bier and Terry Schnarr for their daily care of the Kegg crew, and all the people of the Church who have given us help and care, both directly and indirectly.

The pipe organ is an art that is a collaborative effort. There must be those who are inspired to finance such an endeavor. There must be those who build the instrument. There must be those who play it. Without any one of these, we have no art. When we have an art that also glorifies God, it is specially blessed. Thanks be to God that these are all present at the Bryn Athyn Cathedral.

From the Director of Music

Graham Bier

The Chara Aurora Cooper Haas Pipe Organ is truly an instrument in the spirit of the Bryn Athyn Cathedral. It takes a community to build an organ, and Fred Haas and the Bryn Athyn Church have brought together the best.

It has been a pleasure every step of the way to work with so many personable and intelligent craftspeople and co-workers. Every note sounded

tonight to the glory of the Lord and His Church is a testament to the faith and love of those who have dedicated so much of themselves to this magnificent building, from the stonemasons of a century ago to the tuners of yesterday. May it stir the affections of generations to come.

THE CHURCH IN ASIA

The following report is from the annual fund-raising letter of the Philadelphia Korean New Church, led by the **Rev. Yong Jin**, pastor of the church. He is also responsible for outreach to the Korean-speaking community in the United States, is regional pastor for Asia, and Dean of the Korean New Church Theological School:

United States

Attendance at the Philadelphia New Church has always fluctuated but in 2014 attendance was the lowest yet. Still, we are working on growing internally and spiritually, and we have witnessed much progress in this area. We have been focusing on meditating on the Word, day and night. For the last three months, our services have centered around the 15 characteristics of love, with follow-up discussions on how to apply these principles to our lives.

As a result, there has been a positive shift in the atmosphere at church. Members have become kinder in their words, friendlier in their interactions, and have let go of complaining. There is a stronger sense of living the Lord's truth and also wanting to take responsibility for supporting the Asian Mission, thus overall New Church growth.

Our sister church in California is growing as well. It has been encouraging to see a small church do well under lay leadership.

Asia

Last August, 11 ministers gathered in Japan for their annual meetings. The sense of shared friendship and commitment to New Church teachings promoted a strong sense of camaraderie and momentum for Asian New Church growth.

The New Church in China

(See a related report in Life Lines, page 100.)

Three years ago, Timothy, our first minister in China, launched the student care center to support one of the poorest areas in China by offering education and New Church teachings. He began the program with 12 students and it has grown and done wonderful things. It has had a good influence on the surrounding Chinese communities, prompting them to give support,

including financial. This institution is now self-supporting!

Currently, 42 students attend the junior high school. In addition to standard academics, they are learning New Church teachings and English in the evenings and on weekends. They were fortunate enough to receive online English lessons from a member of the General Church, with the generous support of the Asian Mission Committee.

Of the 42 students, 15 will begin a teachers training school program in 2015 to receive their teacher certifications. These students will train for five years and then return to their hometowns to develop New Church schools and missionary centers.

Because of the Chinese government's regulation on religion, Tim has not yet been able to open a public church. However, they are still working on starting a Swedenborgian Society as a first step, where members can meet to worship. In China the General Church has four adults and eight young people who have been baptized.

The New Church in China has also been working on translating the Writings and putting them on the Internet. Currently any translator can do the work and put it online. However, once this initial step has been completed, a group of translators (including some who are studying through the Theological School) will work together to analyze all translations and choose one standard version.

So far, any Chinese person can go online and read the following works in their native language: *Heaven and Hell*, *Divine Love and Wisdom*, *Conjugal Love*, *True Christian Religion* and *Apocalypse Revealed I*. Also available is Helen Keller's *My Religion*, as well as other secondary books. One very exciting online development is a group of about 300 young people that meets online to discuss the Writings.

Japanese New Churches

Sadly, in October 2014, our minister, the **Rev. Jiro Kumazawa**, passed into the other world. He was ordained in the spring of 2013 and he served the Tokyo group with love and gentle leadership. Now **Rev. Seiich Sakae** has taken over the responsibility and is working hard.

Since the Japanese group is still quite small – in part due to the fact that only 1% of the Japanese population are even Christians – Japanese ministers and lay leaders have created a small group that gathers to diligently discuss ways to grow the New Church in Japan.

One of the best ways this is happening is through translation work. Lay members from the Japanese Church have been working on translating and publishing the Writings, which they have been able to do without any financial support from the General Church. They plan to translate and publish three to

five books of the Writings – and New Church-related secondary books – into Japanese every year.

Korean New Churches

The Korean New Church is relatively bigger than the other Asian New Churches, with eight churches and three small groups. For this reason, they began working toward self-sustainability by establishing the Korean Project. With the generous support of the General Church Healthy Match Program, this project has the goal of raising \$3 million. This financially self-supporting model is an exciting milestone for the Asian New Church. In 2014 the Korean Project has reached two-thirds of its target!

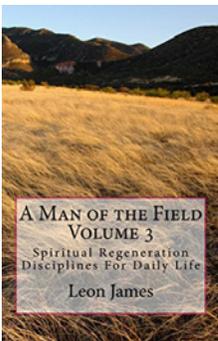
Although this project will not be able to support fully every aspect of the New Church in Korea, it will go a long way in supporting the Theological School, training young people for missionary work, and planting more new churches. It will also provide some support for the Asian Mission, with the goal of not asking for General Church funds by the year 2018.

The Gift of a Cow

Hwa Y. Kim, treasurer of the Philadelphia Korean Church, says in this fund-raising letter: “Without your help this year, our hope and resources for helping others and growing our church will get very difficult. In thinking back to my childhood in the home country, we used to help our neighbors in a special way. We would give a cow to a family in need. This cow would support them through many years and then would ensure that one day the family that received the cow would then be able to give back by giving away their calf. I would like to ask you, in the spirit of this story, to help us. Please support us in building the Lord’s Church here on earth.”

Contributions can be sent to: Philadelphia Korean New Church, 537 Anne Street, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006.

THREE NEW BOOKS



A Man of the Field, Volume 3: Spiritual Regeneration Disciplines for Daily Life (Eagle Pearl Press)

By Leon James

Dr. Leon James is a professor of Psychology at the University of Hawaii. Articles and books by him can be seen at www.theisticpsychology.org.

He says that this volume “is purportedly written for husbands, but it says that wives may have an interest in knowing what men go through mentally during regeneration

as a ‘New Church mind.’ I have used this expression throughout the book’s three volumes to refer to men who have chosen to regenerate on the basis of the principles found in the Heavenly Doctrines exclusively and acknowledged as the Word.”

We hope to have a review of this volume at some point. Meanwhile from the back cover:

“Volume 3 of *A Man of the Field* discusses the details of regeneration based on the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). We are born with a natural mind that develops all concepts and principles from a materialistic environment, culture and education.

“Guiding these naturalistic ideas are unregenerate natural loves and interests that cause all our daily willing, thinking and enjoying to be motivated by self-interest. If we do not become spiritual as well as natural we are unable to break the inherited traits that favor self over others.

“Swedenborg’s eyewitness accounts of the afterlife prove that the unregenerate character is bound to the hells in the mind and develops into eternal insanity and misery. Therefore regeneration is critical if we desire to be bound instead to the heavens in our mind and to enjoy its eternal felicities.

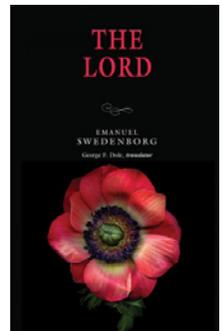
“Regeneration is the spiritual discipline of monitoring our affections, intentions, thoughts and enjoyments in our daily tasks and roles, and holding up each to the light of the spiritual principles given in the Writings by which we judge whether these favor self over others, binding us deeper to hell, or whether they favor others as well as self, thus binding us to heaven.”

The Lord (Swedenborg Foundation)

The Rev. Dr. George Dole, translator

From the Swedenborg Foundation: “In his short work, *The Lord*, Emanuel Swedenborg presents an answer to the time-honored question of how Jesus Christ and God are related: he argues that they became in every way one and the same. He emphasizes that the trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not three separate Divine Persons that have always co-existed but are three aspects now present within one Divine Person – Jesus in His resurrection. This single entity is both omnipotent and omnipresent. Throughout his works Swedenborg used the term ‘Lord’ to refer to Jesus as the embodiment of God.

The Lord also includes key themes in Swedenborg’s theology such as the spiritual reasons why the Lord came to earth; the significance of the death and resurrection of His human form; and how the Old Testament foretold His coming. Swedenborg provides extensive biblical references to



support his arguments. He concludes with a brief chapter describing the New Jerusalem, a reference to both the city described in the book of *Revelation* and the new spiritual age that is now unfolding.

“This new translation is part of the *New Century Edition of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg*, an ongoing translation series that incorporates the latest scholarship and translation standards for a more accurate and accessible rendering of Swedenborg’s works.

“*The Lord* is often published with *Life, Faith and Sacred Scripture* under the title *The Four Doctrines*, which the Swedenborg Foundation will publish in the forthcoming NCE hardcover annotated volume, *The Shorter Works of 1763*.”

Spiritual Growth: Lessons from Emanuel Swedenborg (Swedenborg Foundation)

From the Introduction:

“Swedish scientist and philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) is probably best known for his vivid description of the afterlife, but one of the strongest recurring themes in his theological works is spiritual growth or *regeneration*. Regeneration is the word that Swedenborg uses to describe a process of being ‘created anew’ as a spiritual person. He tells us that while we have no choice about physical birth, our birth into spiritual life is indeed a matter of individual choice.

“Practically speaking, how can individuals go about setting aside the selfish impulses that rule them from the time they’re born in order to become more loving, spiritual people? Swedenborg writes that it’s not just a question of saying or even believing the right thing. Regeneration is a long-term process of transformation that can be encapsulated in four steps.

Examine ourselves

Recognize and admit our sins

Pray to the Divine

Begin a new life

“This book contains a series of short paragraphs from Swedenborg’s Writings about how those four steps to regeneration can be put into practice. Taken together, these passages describe a path to spiritual growth that echoes other traditions but at the same time is uniquely Swedenborgian.

“Following each passage you’ll find a short explanation and reflection intended to help illustrate the key concept and how that concept can be directly and meaningfully applied to daily life. You are invited to read the passages from Swedenborg when you need inspiration, use the quotes and reflections as a starting point for group discussion, or simply enjoy the reflections as food for your own spiritual journey.”

HOW DOES THAT HAPPEN?

You may have been surprised with an item in Church News in the November-December issue of the Life (page 557) to see a repeat of the Rev. Göran Appelgren’s family instead of the 1934 class banner, which was supposed to run with the photo of 99-year-old Academy alumna, **Kathleen Fuller**, of Glenview, Illinois. So were we.

In the last proof we checked before the issue went to the printer the photos were correct. That was true also when the issue was posted online. So what happened? Apparently when the electronic file for issue was being “compressed” for the printer, a computer glitch switched the photos.

So we reproduce them here, with apologies to Mrs. Fuller.

Also, some readers in Canada no doubt were surprised to see in the November-December issue a death notice for **Evelyn Jane Barber Romero**. So was her family as she is still alive, although in a nursing home.

Mail to her from the General Church had been returned stamped “Deceased.” A check of obituaries in the Toronto area turned up apparently another Evelyn Romero, so it was an honest if unfortunate mistake.

Our apologies to the family of our own Evelyn Jane Barber Romero.



Life Lines

THE FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

The United States celebrates in February the birthdays of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln – our two greatest presidents, and men respected throughout the world as visionary leaders for freedom. They are also revered as men of faith, who openly acknowledged God and His providence in their lives and in their approach to government.

Washington stated – as no world leader would dare to say today – that “it is impossible to govern without the Bible.” He believed that virtue and morality are kept alive by “that little spark of celestial fire called conscience,” and that morality – which is essential to democratic government – cannot exist without religion.

He wrote: “Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education of minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.”

In a moment of despair in the depths of the Civil War Lincoln confessed: “I have been driven to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me seem insufficient for the day.”

As he left Springfield, Illinois, to assume the presidency, he acknowledged that he was facing a task “greater than that which rested on Washington,” but was confident in his faith: “Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him who can go with me, and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well.”

(BMH)

PRESIDENTS’ DAY

On February 16 Americans observe Presidents’ Day, commemorating the birthdays of George Washington (February 22) and Abraham Lincoln (February 12). So this is a good time to recall the qualities these men possessed

which enabled them to perform such great service to their country.

George Washington's outstanding virtue was self-control. He had some natural traits (pride, ambition, a hot temper) which he perceived were not good and would be a hindrance to his life's work, so he made a deliberate, sustained effort to gain mastery over them.

He very carefully taught himself to rule over his own passions rather than let them run away with him, and this exercise in governing himself prepared him to be the great leader he became of the new republic, whose survival depended upon the people's ability to govern themselves.

The fledgling nation was inspired by Washington's heroic self-discipline, self-sacrifice, devotion to duty, bravery, and willingness to relinquish power when the time came. His strength of character gave strength to the new country.

As one historian recently wrote: Washington was a "pragmatic visionary, who embodied the spirit of the nation before the nation existed except as an idea." (*Myron Magnet, The Founders At Home, pp. 93-94*)

No one admired Washington more than Abraham Lincoln, who devoted himself to following in the first president's footsteps and saving the republic Washington did so much to establish. In the words of his Gettysburg Address, Lincoln's task was to lead the nation to "a new birth of freedom" for the United States. Washington, "the Father of his Country," was the spiritual father of Lincoln, who was regarded by many as "Father Abraham."

So much has been written about Lincoln's greatness, and it is so universally acknowledged, that I will just mention one key character trait that gave his thought such depth and his words such power – namely, the way he always went right to the heart of a matter. In the debate over slavery, while others obscured the real issue with theories and speculation about the political, economic and social difficulties of ending it, Lincoln persisted in raising the simple, essential question of whether it was right or wrong.

The spiritual use in commemorating great historical figures is to remember the virtues they lived by and represented. Then even a holiday as mundane as Presidents' Day can have elements of holiness about it.

(WEO)

LINCOLN AND SWEDENBORG

We know that Lincoln knew about Swedenborg and was exposed to the Writings. Just how much he was influenced by them is subject to debate. The Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, Dean of the Swedenborgian House of Studies at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California, wrote an article for the April 2014 issue of *The Messenger: Was Lincoln a Discreet Swedenborgian?* He

traces Lincoln's interaction with Swedenborgians, especially while living and working as a lawyer in Springfield, Illinois, before he was elected president.

He notes that although Lincoln was exposed to religion throughout his life he is the only U.S. president never to join a church. What seems likely, Dr. Lawrence says, is that he "certainly appreciated the company of some Swedenborgians and was more acquainted with Swedenborg and Swedenborgians than any president in U.S. history. He took a reasonably thoughtful interest in Swedenborg's views on Christianity, as he did perhaps in other viewpoints and authors as well, but he certainly did not regard himself as a Swedenborgian, but merely as a Christian – one who might have some perceptions on the nature of God shaped in some ways by Swedenborg the prophet."

Dr. Lawrence notes that Isaac Britton, who became superintendent of schools in Illinois, was a close friend of Lincoln's and that they often discussed religious ideas. "It is claimed that Britton had given Lincoln copies of some of Swedenborg's works, and that Lincoln's views on Divine Providence especially were influenced by Swedenborgian thought."

That seems evident in a quote from Doris Kearns Goodwin's classic biography of Lincoln, *Team of Rivals*, in which she quotes him about the Civil War: "If I had my way, this war would never have been commenced; if I had been allowed my way, this war would have ended before this, but we still find it continues; and we must believe that He permits it for some wise purpose of His own, mysterious and unknown to us; and though with our limited understanding we may not be able to comprehend it, yet we cannot but believe that He who made the world still governs it."

Dr. Lawrence quotes Lincoln as saying: "I have never united myself to any church, because I have found difficulty in giving my assent, without mental reservations, to the long, complicated statements of Christian doctrine which characterize their Articles of Belief and Confessions of Faith. What any church will inscribe over its altar, as its sole qualification for membership, the Master's condensed statement of the substance of both the Law and Gospel: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself,' that church will I join with all my heart and with all my soul."

We cannot know if Lincoln ever read *Arcana Coelestia (Secrets of Heaven)* 1799.4, but he may well have given his assent:

In the Christian world, it is doctrine that differentiates churches. Doctrine is the basis on which people call themselves Roman Catholic, Lutheran (or Evangelical), Calvinist (or Reformed), and other names as well. These names grow out of doctrine alone, which would never happen if we considered love for the Lord and charity for our neighbor the chief concern of faith. If we did, those distinctions

would simply be differences of opinion on the mysteries of faith. True Christians would leave such issues up to the individual and the individual's conscience. In their hearts they would say, 'A person who lives as a Christian – who lives as the Lord teaches – is a real Christian.' One church would come out of all the different churches, and all disagreement due to doctrine alone would vanish. Even the hatred of one denomination for another would melt away in a moment, and the Lord's kingdom would come on earth.

That sounds like the faith of Lincoln – and perhaps the influence of Swedenborg.

(BMH)

THE CAKE AND THE ICING

Here is a simple metaphor to describe the essential difference between the faith of the New Church and the "faith alone" theology it replaces. Think of a cake and the icing on it. The cake is the main thing; the icing goes with it and adds to it, but the cake is primary.

According to the old doctrine of "salvation by faith alone," the cake is faith, and charity is the icing. The icing (charity, good works) was important as a sign of one's faith, but faith was the main thing.

The situation is reversed in the doctrine of the New Church: the cake is charity, and the icing is faith. How someone actually lives is what determines whether he or she goes to heaven or not, not what he or she professes to believe. The icing is certainly good, too; it rests upon the cake and is what you see first. The truths of faith are necessary to inform and elevate and guide charity, but the chief thing is charity.

(WEO)

A THREE-LAYER CAKE

As long as we're talking about cake, a cake with three layers makes a nice model for the three main levels of human society – namely (from top to bottom): the spiritual, moral and civil.

Note that the middle level connects the layers above and below. This is very important. Life from the Lord and the influence of heaven flow into the top layer, and then on down through the middle and into the bottom layer.

For the civil arena to be healthy and happy it needs to receive spiritual life from above. This is the use of the middle level and why it is so important. Moral order is derived from the spiritual order formed by the Divine truths of revelation from above, and then operates in the civil order of human society.

All three layers are needed. Life from the Lord doesn't just float around in the clouds of heaven but flows on down, into and through the moral order of human life, and on down into the outmosts of earthly existence.

(WEO)

THE THREE-STORY MIND

The human mind also has three levels: the spiritual, the rational and the natural. And again, the function of the middle level is to connect the higher and lower levels, and serve as a conduit by which the love and wisdom that flow into the top level from the Lord can be brought down into the natural level and transform it.

We can see, then, how similar and related are the uses of the rational level of the mind and the moral condition of individuals and of a society.

The rational part of the mind is at first just open below, enabling us to understand and manipulate the natural knowledges that reside in the lower level of the mind. But the Divine plan is for it to be opened to the influx of spiritual light and warmth coming down through the spiritual mind above, in which case it becomes a spiritual-rational and can bring a whole new, distinctly human quality to how we see things naturally.

(WEO)

WISDOM IN MEN

Male wisdom begins with a “love of truth,” but there are many different kinds of intelligence that fall under the general heading of men’s “wisdom.” Wisdom, therefore, is not just something saints and scholars have, but something every man needs and can attain to in various ways.

There are two basic kinds of male wisdom: intellectual and moral. (*Conjugal Love 163-164*) Intellectual or rational wisdom has to do with understanding, while moral wisdom involves both understanding and how we actually live.

The fact that men have a particular responsibility to cultivate moral wisdom might come as a surprise to many people. Men, especially young men, sometimes behave in less than rational and moral ways – as is often portrayed and even celebrated in movies.

But there is another side to manhood – spiritual, idealistic, rational – that also appeals to men, including idealistic young men. Moral wisdom, springing from the love of God and the neighbor, is the more positive and constructive side of the male character. Young men need to be taught that this is the real challenge of manhood, and that they have a special contribution to make to the moral fiber of society.

(WEO)

INTELLECTUAL WISDOM

Excerpt from *Conjugal Love* 163:

Various terms are used to designate the things having to do with men's intellectual wisdom. In general, they are called knowledge, intelligence and wisdom; and in particular, rationality, judgment, genius, learning, sagacity.

But because everyone has special kinds of knowledge peculiar to him in his occupation, these kinds of knowledge are therefore many and various. For there are special kinds of knowledge peculiar to clergymen, to civil officers, judges, physicians and pharmacists, soldiers and sailors, craftsmen and workmen, farmers, and so on.

To intellectual wisdom belong also all the fields of study to which adolescents are introduced in schools, and through which they are afterward led into intelligence; such as philosophy, physics, geometry, mechanics, chemistry, astronomy, law, political science, ethics, history, and many more, through which, as through gates, one enters into intellectual pursuits, from which comes intellectual wisdom.

(WEO)

MORAL WISDOM

Excerpt from *Conjugal Love* 164:

Virtues which have to do with men's moral wisdom likewise have various names, such as: temperance, sobriety, integrity, kindness, friendliness, modesty, honesty, helpfulness, courteousness; also diligence, industriousness, skillfulness, alacrity, generosity, liberality, magnanimity, energy, courage, prudence, and many others.

Spiritual virtues in men are love of religion, charity, truthfulness, faith, conscience, innocence, and many more.

These virtues, both moral and spiritual, can be attributed in general to a man's love and zeal for religion, for the public good, for his country, for his fellow citizens, for his parents, for his wife, and for his children.

In all of these justice and judgment prevail. Justice has to do with moral wisdom, and judgment has to do with intellectual (rational) wisdom.

(WEO)

PRISON AND HELL

Part of this year's *What Would Love Do?* Journey Program focuses on the virtue of "coming to" those in prison and what this means in our lives. Few people really experience coming to someone in prison. It is not as easy or appealing as visiting someone in the hospital. Back in my journalist days I spent a day touring a large state prison and it was a chilling experience. Once those gates

clang shut behind you, you know you are in a very different and very scary place.

Some years ago a man in Ohio in prison for the first time in his life wrote a letter to the judge who sentenced him, describing his experience as a warning to others. It was reminiscent of the parable of the rich man in hell who wanted desperately for someone to go to his family and warn them what hell is like. This man wanted people to know how terrible prison is so that they would live their lives to avoid it. But there is another warning in the letter as well.

A reader at the time who feared that churches were not talking enough about hell – or the fear of it – and that people did not seem much concerned about it anymore suggested that when they read the letter they substituted “hell” every time he says “prison”:

Prison is where one ceases to live and merely tries to exist as best he can in an unbearably noisy atmosphere. It is a place of frustration and futility, a place of little hope and much hopelessness.

Prison is too many days without beauty or the sound of honest laughter, too much time in emotional and spiritual darkness a place where true smiles are rare and kindness almost non-existent. It is the vacant, sick feeling that grows within the minds of those who wait for letters that never come, for visitors who never appear.

Prison is a narrow steel cell where one has no privacy, a box which magnifies the constant, ungodly noise. It is living locked in a steel box, listening to the strains of an old song on the radio – a song that brings back memories of happier days that are lost forever.

Prison is a nothingness of days and nights that never change, a place where only those who have existed there can ever know what a living hell it is.

This man is not complaining about torture, or hellfire, or lack of food, but of “little hope and much hopelessness” and “too many days without beauty or the sound of honest laughter.”

Sounds like hell to me.

(BMH)

PRISON AND HOPE

Many of those who do come to people in prison – especially those trying to bring the Lord into their lives – say they love to do it because it is an opportunity to bring hope into hopeless lives.

People are in prison because of their choices and because society needs to be protected from them. But while we may have given up on many of them, God has not. He still loves them and is doing all He can to raise them into heaven. We have to hope that at least some of them will come out of prison ready to become responsible citizens rather than preying on us, although in the “hopeless” sphere of prison such positive outcomes are all too few.

So we have to be grateful for those who try – who “come to” those in

prison with messages of hope and trust in the Lord.

One such man was Chuck Colson, whose own life was transformed by the “living water” that he found God offering to him.

You may remember the name. Colson was a young, ambitious lawyer in Washington, DC, who became the chief legal counsel for President Richard Nixon. He described himself as a ruthlessly loyal hatchet man, which got him involved in the Watergate scandal and then sent to prison for obstruction of justice.

He came out a changed man, often quoting Russian martyr Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who said: “Bless you, prison, for having been in my life.”

Colson had an apparently sincere religious conversion before he went to prison, and began focusing on “the least of our brethren” in place of the selfish obsession that had driven his life.

He began working with prisoners on the inside, then devoted the rest of his life to them until he died in 2012 at age 80. He founded the Prison Ministry to help prisoners and their families. He mobilized thousands of volunteers to give them hope, established programs to help them find jobs, and made society a little better and a little safer.

He was a poster boy for all that was wrong in government and with people in power turning away from God, and became a model for what it means to “come to” those in prison, in the name of the Lord.

(BMH)

WHAT DO ANGELS TALK ABOUT?

One of the advantages of knowing about life in heaven is that it gives us an ideal to aim for in this world. We shouldn’t expect life on earth to be exactly like life in heaven because heaven is populated by angels, while in this world, even at our best, we’re still in the process of becoming angelic. But we should strive to adopt as many angelic habits as we can. This will make life on earth happier, and it will make us better prepared for life in heaven when we leave this world.

Among the many useful and delightful things that have enriched human life in the past, and that will be revived and renewed in the New Church, is the art of conversation – especially about spiritual matters.

Many will perhaps be wondering what angels talk about to one another and consequently what people after death who become angels talk about. Let those who so wonder know that angels talk about the kinds of subjects contained in the internal sense of the Word – that is, about the Lord’s glorification, His kingdom, the Church, the regeneration of man by means of the good of love and the truth of faith.

(Arcana Coelestia 5249.2)

Contemplating such topics – and especially how the Lord saved the human

race by making His Human Divine – gives the angels their “deepest joy and greatest delight,” and they love to speak with each other about them. We can now also speak about these things because the truths that constitute angelic wisdom have been revealed in the Writings.

Not every conversation has to be on some deep philosophical or theological subject, of course, but one of the blessings of life in the New Church is that we have been given so much knowledge of the kinds of things the angels discuss among themselves. The more we think about these things, and the more satisfaction and delight we find in thinking about them, the more natural it will be for us to talk about them.

(WEO)

THE REACH OF ANGELS

Many people throughout the Church are familiar with the story of seven stained-glass windows produced in 1902 by Louis Comfort Tiffany for the Cincinnati New Church. The windows were put into storage in 1964 when the church was demolished for highway construction, rediscovered in 2001, restored to all their translucent beauty, and put on tour throughout the United States.

It is fortunate they were saved because many such Tiffany windows were lost to bulldozers when buildings were demolished. A December 10, 2014 article in *The Wall Street Journal – Glass Shining With Inner Light* – notes: “For decades they sat in crates, hidden away in basements and garages of parishioners, and eventually a barn in Pennsylvania. Only when the barn began to leak in 2001 did a newly appointed minister open the crates. To her astonishment, that which was lost was found again – and even covered with decades of grime, the unique Tiffany beauty of all seven windows, each emblazoned with a life-size stained-glass angel, made a powerful impression.”

The restoration was made possible by a nonprofit organization, *In Company With Angels*, with a mission to share these windows as widely as possible and to educate people about their historical, religious and artistic significance.

The seven windows represent the seven churches addressed in *Revelation*, each featuring an angel with the message for that church – and for each of us.

The *Journal* article states: “According to Swedenborgian teaching, angels are actively present in daily life. So the pictorial composition of each window was restricted to a single angelic figure, each representing one of the Seven Churches of Asia . . . Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Leodicea. The lancet shape allowed no room for Tiffany’s usual naturalistic backgrounds. Yet these limitations resulted in a mesmerizing visual rhythm coursing through the series.”

The writer, who covers music and fine arts for the *Journal*, notes: “Because faces pieced together with leaded glass eyes and lips can border on the grotesque, he (Tiffany) compromised, allowing faces, hands and exposed limbs to be painted, but in a Tiffany way. The heads of these angels are each distinctive, the delicate facial features and hair painted with such tender care that they convey the appearance of softness and diffusion. Whether painting on glass or essentially painting with glass, Tiffany and his associates endowed these angelic figures with a compelling sense of inner light emphasizing their divine nature.”

This exhibit was in the Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute in Utica, New York. True to the mission of *In Company With Angels*, the windows have gotten around, from the Glencairn Museum in Bryn Athyn to art museums, galleries and universities all over the United States.

There is an excellent website – www.incompanywithangels.org – which includes the Story of the Windows, Meet the Angels, Spiritual Inspiration (including information about Swedenborg, The Seven Churches of *Revelation* and the Seven Stages of a Spiritual Journey), and an Angels video.

Like a treasure that was lost and is found, these wonderfully restored windows continue to inspire with their beauty, with the story of the letters to the seven churches, and with the revelation of what those messages mean to our own lives right now.

(BMH)

THINE IS THE POWER

“The Lord’s kingdom on earth consists of all those who are in good, who though scattered over the whole earth, are still one, and as members constitute one body.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2853)

Back in the late 1980s, when I was still working as a journalist, I attended a conference in the U.S. State Department on international defense and security issues. After a full day of hearing from four-star generals and top government officials the audience was mesmerized by a tiny woman who could hardly see over the podium. Her voice was soft but compelling and attention was riveted on every word.

She was Suzanne Massie, a Russian scholar at Harvard University, who traveled to the Soviet Union every year and whose husband, Robert, was the author of *Nicholas and Alexandra*. She worked closely with President Ronald Reagan in understanding the Russian people and is credited with playing a key role in the end of the Cold War.

She told this Washington audience that she was seeing a change in the Soviet Union – before it actually crumbled in 1991 – rooted in people fed

up with being lied to and “hungry for something to believe in.” She felt the communist empire was ready to crumble, and that religion would have more to do with the transformation than politics. Indeed this hunger was fed with shipments of Bibles from all over the world – and copies of the Writings from Bryn Athyn.

Now the same sort of hunger for spiritual truth may be transforming China, where a brave New Church minister is feeding it at great personal risk. We identify him only as Rev. Timothy. For his own protection we do not publish his last name, but hopefully that will be changing. (See the report in Church News on the New Church in Asia about encouraging happenings in China – page 94.)

Denis de Chazal recently forwarded an article from the *Financial Times* of London on *The Rise of Christianity in China*, which also has implications for the growth of the New Church in this officially atheist country.

The article states that the amazing spread of Christianity in China is being met with an escalating campaign of government repression, but it may be like King Canute trying to hold back the tides.

Last April the Chinese government destroyed a towering Protestant cathedral in the coastal city of Wenzhou to try to stem the rapid growth of primarily Protestant churches. The article notes: “There are now about 100 million Christians in the world’s most populous nation, eclipsing the 86.7 million-strong membership of the ruling Communist party. According to western intellectual tradition, modernity is supposed to bring secularization but in modern Communist China it has been accompanied by an extraordinary rise of religions formerly banned as ‘opiates of the masses.’

“Perhaps most surprising, given its status as a ‘foreign’ religion and its close association with an earlier era of gunboats and imperialism, Christianity (particularly the Protestant variety) has been the big winner in the competition for Chinese souls. If it continues to spread at its current pace, the country is very likely to be home to the world’s largest Christian population within the next 15 years. For China’s authoritarian leaders, who despise and fear any force not under their direct control, this seemingly unstoppable trend is very disturbing.”

And no wonder. The Chinese government may be able to control most of what its people do, but it can’t control what they think – and certainly can’t stop the “tide” of influx from the Lord. Imagine what this “unstoppable trend” may do to transform China, and to help with the spread of the New Church there.

The Chinese government is fighting a losing battle but probably still thinks it can control the outcome. Its constitution technically guarantees freedom of religion but it monitors and regulates whatever it can. That is becoming more

and more challenging because, “Not only are there far more than 23 million worshipping at official ‘legal’ congregations but China also has tens of millions more believers attending underground ‘house churches’ not recognized or approved by the state.”

During the bloody days of the Cultural Revolution from 1966-76, when the official “Three Self” church was charged with wiping out Protestantism, the number of worshippers in underground churches in Wenzhou increased ten-fold. There is even a Bible factory in a suburb of Nanjing where the government-controlled China Christian Council publishes and distributes Bibles to 57,000 churches throughout the country.

Victor Hugo once said, “An invasion of armies can be resisted, but not an idea whose time has come” – especially if the idea is Divine and powered by providence.

(BMH)

IN HARMONY WITH ORDER

American novelist Henry Miller, author of such controversial novels as *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn*, isn’t a man I would normally turn to for guidance in this chaotic world. But in a moment of moral clarity he once said: “The world is not to be put in order; the world is order incarnate. It is for us to put ourselves in unison with this order.”

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